Balancing Teacher Training and High Quality English Language Teaching

I–TESOL 2019 Conference
October 11, 2019
Our Context

The Mission of BYU's English Language Center
As a lab school, the English Language Center supports BYU's Department of Linguistics by facilitating the teaching, learning, and research of English as a second language. The ELC achieves this mission by:

1. Providing BYU students with opportunities to apply university study in practical contexts and to develop excellence in English language teaching, tutoring, curriculum design, materials development, technology use, assessment, evaluation, and research.

2. Providing ELC students with the highest quality teaching of foundational and academic English in a research-based curriculum.

3. Sharing our scholarship by presenting and publishing our relevant experience, research, and resources for the benefit of others.
Our Context

- ~220 students each semester
  - Students placed in a track, not individual courses
- ~35 teachers
  - 5 full-time, Part-time: 15-20 students, 8-15 non-students
- Four classes
  - Grammar, Listening/Speaking, Reading, Writing
- 6 Levels
  - Foundations A, B, & C, Academic A & B, University Prep
- Teachers are paid to go to meetings
Principled Pedagogical Practices

1. RELY ON COURSE OUTCOMES
2. PLAN LESSONS EFFECTIVELY
3. OPTIMIZE CLASS TIME
4. CULTIVATE A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
5. EVALUATE LEARNING EFFECTIVELY
6. UTILIZE HOMEWORK STRATEGICALLY
7. PROVIDE MEANINGFUL AND TIMELY FEEDBACK
8. EXEMPLIFY PROFESSIONALISM
ARISE
Aware
Ready to Learn
Intentional
Strategic
Evaluative
What is your context?

What is your mission?

What is your purpose?

Who are you?
Our Practices

- New Teacher Orientation
- Skill Area Training
- Faculty Orientation
- Level Training
- Mentoring
- Peer Coaching
- Observing
- Early Semester Student Evaluations
- End of Semester Student Evaluations of Teaching
- Student Evaluation Follow-up
What are your practices?

What do you do to help teachers?

What do you do to ensure high quality teaching?
New Teacher Orientation

Who comes: First semester teachers, practicum students, interns, anyone else who wants to come

Who presents: Curriculum Coordinator, Student Life Advisor, Office Manager

What do we talk about: The mission, policies, procedures, expectations

Why: Because our work is tied closely with teacher training, we want to arm our teachers with the best tool—correct information.
What can you do in your context?

Do you have a new teacher orientation? What do you talk about? What can you add, change, or remove?

If you don’t have a new teacher orientation, what do you need to implement one? What would you talk about? Who would conduct it? Who would come?
Skill Area Training

Who comes: Teachers who are teaching in that skill area (Grammar, Listening/Speaking, Reading, Writing)

Who presents: Skill Area Supervisor

What we talk about: Skill area supervisors present teaching tips, classroom management tips, and other principles relevant to teaching that skill area.
What can you do in your context?

If you do something similar to skill area trainings consider the following: Who comes? Who leads? What do you talk about? What can you add, remove, or change?

If you don’t do something like this, how would you begin implementing a skill area training? What would you talk about? What would the meeting look like?
Faculty Orientation

Who comes: Everyone who works at the ELC.

Who leads: Program Coordinator assisted by Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction and the Coordinator of Assessment and Technology.

What we discuss: Announcements, policies, pedagogical practices
What can you do in your context?

What do your faculty orientation meetings look like? What would you change, add, or remove? How can you make it benefit teachers and students?

If you don’t have a similar meetings, what would it take to implement one? What would you discuss?
Level Training

Who comes: Teachers who are teaching in that level

Who presents: Skill Area Supervisor

What we talk about: The skill area supervisor might review level descriptors (general proficiency level of students) with teachers. Teachers teaching students the same group of students meet to coordinate their efforts.
What can you do in your context?

If you do something similar to level trainings consider the following: Who comes? Who leads? What do you talk about? What can you add, remove, or change?

If you don’t do something like this, how would you begin implementing a level training? What would you talk about? What would the meeting look like?
MENTORING

Weekly meetings with an experienced teacher

Discussion of outlined items to help orient teachers

Observations (recorded and live)

Goal-setting and reflections
What can you do in your context?

How can you provide support for first semester teachers? How do you communicate institutional expectations/policies?

What opportunities do you have for providing feedback?
Peer Coaching

Additional point of contact for teachers (mentoring constellation)

Day to day assistance (shared office)

Weekly list of suggested activities to help teachers integrate into institutional community

Observations and help with assessments and materials

Assigned based on experience

Mutually beneficial for professional development
What can you do in your context?

How could Peer Coaching be implemented in your context?

How do you foster an environment of collaboration and supported professional development?
Observing

Undergraduate and graduate courses require observations
Mentor/Peer Coach observations
Invited to observe/be observed by supervisors
Recordings of previous lessons
What can you do in your context?

What is your philosophy on observations and their purpose? How do you currently provide opportunities for observations?

In your opinion, how can you best reduce the stress around observations? How do you manage the scheduling? How do you communicate the expectations of behavior for an observation?
Early Semester Student Evaluations

First week of the semester. All students were placed according to data from end of semester testing (if returning) and from arrival testing (if new).

After a few days of study students are sent an email survey.

- Asks about their level, rigor, correctness of placement.
- Asks about their first week experiences including teacher promotion.
- Asks about plans and situations relevant to language learning.

Level adjustments are made when student preferences/teacher observations and data indicates change and program can accommodate change. Teacher Promotion data can help direct mentoring resources.
What can you do in your context?

How do you manage level verification?

When do you first ask for student experience input? Is this early enough?

In what ways is student’s first week experience predictive of semester success? In what way is it limited?

How can a teacher make week one a strong one?
End of Semester Student Evaluations of Teaching

Student surveys are sent out with at least 4 class days left in the semester.

Qualtrics built survey is emailed directly to students. Reminders are sent strategically to maximize completion. Students must complete evaluation in order to remain in good standing. Completion rate of over 98%.

Both discrete point and open response questions.

Teacher promotion scaling “1-10” How likely to recommend teacher is asked to teach similar course?

1. Primed by Pedagogical Practices.
2. Collect information about courses/curriculum.
3. Collect information about ‘whole program experience’.
What can you do in your context?

What do end of semester evaluations look like in your program?

How much control do you have over content/timing?

How helpful have student response evaluations been in shaping your teaching?

If institution level evaluations are rigid how could you better evaluate at the level of your control?
Student Evaluation Follow-up

Our evaluations generate a lot of data: teacher, course, and institution.

Teachers receive a summary report about a week after the teaching semester concludes.

Scores against pedagogical practices, promotion, open responses.

Teachers are divided into groups depending on the time of commendation/remediation needed.

Track across semesters to see teacher growth and make staffing decisions.
What can you do in your context?

How could you better follow-up on student evaluation data?

How can administrators help make end of term evaluations more meaningful and positive for all stakeholders?