Learning to TEACH, Teaching to LEARN

A Guide for Social Work Field Education

2nd Edition

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The ability to be awed, excited, and inspired by ideas is a practice that radically opens the mind. Excited about learning, ecstatic about thoughts and ideas, as teachers and students we have the opportunity to use knowledge in ways that positively transform the world we live in. (hooks, 2010, p. 188)

The authors hope that this second edition of *Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn* will inspire field instructors and students to transform the world we live in by passing along the legacy of our profession through field education. This second edition is written in a very different time from the first edition. The 2008 worldwide recession affects every aspect of service delivery, locally and globally. Therefore, these effects demand a new look at field education, how it is taught and how it is learned. We cannot ignore the need to address social and economic justice, and we need to facilitate our students’ understanding and preparedness to apply a human rights framework to their practice. It is our position that we cannot teach social work practice without teaching about the struggle for human rights and social and economic justice here and around the world. Furthermore, field education needs to model a human rights framework rooted in history and societal structures. Students are called on to be advocates and organizers as much as managers, clinicians, and educators for
increasingly diverse client populations and their communities. For example, the Affordable Care Act is reshaping health care delivery, and social workers are called on to use their advocacy and leadership skills as the implications and implementation of this new legislation unfold for our clients. Field educators will need to consider the best ways of preparing social workers for these future trends. These are major themes in the training of new social work professionals that will be woven into the fabric of this second edition.

Second, developments have occurred in social work education. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) identified field instruction as the signature pedagogy of social work education (Appendix A contains the full CSWE EPAS document). Social work scholars have long considered field education the heart of social work education, but it is highly significant that the 2008 version of EPAS puts field education front and center as the arena where professional practice is taught, integrated, and refined. This edition will incorporate the EPAS explicit curriculum’s10 competencies throughout the chapters. We will also give attention to the special role of the implicit curriculum, which refers to “the culture of human interchange; the spirit of inquiry; the support for difference and diversity; and the values and priorities in the educational environment, including the field setting, that inform the student’s learning and development” (CSWE, 2008, p. 10). Finally, our awareness of the increasing diversity, assets, and needs of our students and the communities they serve demands new approaches to field education. This second edition incorporates educational perspectives that have particular relevance to meet these challenges and changes, to address competency-based education, and to support our teaching.

The first edition was concerned with building the central role of field educators as collaborators in the educational process. We began with the premise that field education is pivotal in social work education. This premise was counterposed with existing gaps in resources and changing conceptions of field instructors’ contributions to social work education (Lager & Robbins, 2004; Rogers, 1995). We concur with Rogers (1995) who proposed that shifts existed but that more was needed. That is, shifts existed from seeing field instructors as offering education supplemental to classroom learning and as belonging to the
domain of agency practice; to acknowledging field instructors as complementary to classroom learning and being perched between the various components of the agency, school, and home; and, finally, to appreciating field instructors as integrated and collaborative components to social work education. EPAS 2008 has advanced field education. Therefore, our current responsibility is to strengthen field instructors’ inclusion of competency-based social work education into their work. This is done by highlighting theoretical and skill-based processes that inform field education and by focusing on the interchange between field instructors and students.

At this printing, despite the advances achieved, a gap remains between the designation of this expanded vision and the “eclectic” or often unstructured approaches to the training and support provided to field instructors. This inconsistency may reflect the time needed to meet current challenges as we shift to competency-based education; the continued lack of attention to field instruction models, tasks, and procedures; the complexities of contemporary social work practice; and the general lack of support for the role of field instructor in today’s agency-based environments. This text aims to bridge these gaps. It is a book for field instructors and students. It supports the shift to competency-based social work education and strengthens field instructors in their role. This book attempts to lay out the steps for achieving a high-quality field education experience for both students and field instructors by placing the field instructor–student relationship as central to achieving learning goals and objectives. It emphasizes the best way to teach adult learners and highlights the student and field instructor as active participants in a mutually collaborative process. This book continues to be a good how-to in competency-based field education. It lays out in detail the tasks of field instruction—developing assignments, teaching agency-based practice, evaluating students’ abilities to learn social work practice skills and achieve learning goals—but it offers more than that.

HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

We continue to “re-image” field education as an interactional approach, a “sacred space” (Okundaye, Gray & Gray, 1999), an interconnected experience, in which students learn–teach and field instructors teach–learn in the tradi-
tion of Freire (1993): “Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher–student with students–teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students” (p. 80). In other words, “No longer can we tell whether it is the student offering himself to the teacher or the teacher offering herself to the student. We see each of the two beings mirroring the other in pure reflection” (Huang & Lynch, 1995, p. 4). In this kind of “connected teaching” the teacher welcomes diversity of opinions as the truth inside students is uncovered in an objective manner, which is seeing students in their own terms. “Connected teachers are believers. They trust their students’ thinking and encourage them to expand it” (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 227). The spirit behind this text draws the reader to focus on the process as much as the content of field education.

NEW EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

This book has integrated a wide range of knowledge and information available on field education and presents it in a systematic manner that guides field instructors from the beginning orientation stage to the final evaluation process and termination of the placement. Field instructors can choose from the models presented, freely creating their own field instruction style and approach. The text presents content in what appears to be a linear fashion; however, real life does not always fit the linear design. For example, field instructors are often faced with teaching issues of termination long before this content is presented in the classroom. Field instructors may need to provide students with special knowledge about different populations, needs, situations, or settings that may not be covered in curricula. As a consequence, field instructors are often the students’ primary source of information and support. This book is a guide to generic aspects of field education, and it can be adapted to specific geographic locations, communities served, and placement settings. The book addresses the role transition from practitioner to educator of social work students and how best to adapt teaching styles and practice preferences to student learning preferences, patterns, and styles. Like the practice of social work itself, this book is rooted in time and will need revisions as the profession continues to evolve in
response to the social, political, cultural, and economic landscapes (Hancock, Waite, & Kledaras, 2012). For instance, the use of the terms client or client system does not sufficiently capture the complex units of attention represented in service delivery. These include the environmental systems in which clients interact with the interdependent systems of the individual, family, group, community, and organizations. Throughout this book, the term client or client system is used in the broader context of the people and communities we serve.

It is also clear that field instructors continue to face challenges in creating organizational environments that protect student learning that parallels the profession’s commitment to the person-in-environment perspective. Providing appropriate learning opportunities for students despite these challenges can be daunting (Carlson et al., 2000; Jarman-Rohde, McFall, Kolar, & Strom, 1997; Lager & Robbins, 2004; Raskin & Blome, 1998; Reisch & Jarman-Rohde, 2000). The intent of this book is to highlight the knowledge and skills needed to pass on the art and science of professional social work practice in the context of competency-based education and in the face of current and future challenges. Challenges include preparing the agency for students in the midst of reduced agency resources, pressures on staff time, and the demands for productivity; preparing students for self-directed and self-reflective learning in an increasingly technological era; embracing the complexity of diversity and culturally competent practice; focusing an international, global lens on practice for the 21st century; responding to the impact of national and local initiatives such as the Affordable Care Act and managed care on service delivery and professional education; providing reasonable accommodation for the special needs of students; and teaching advocacy skills in a reactive and conservative political environment. Each of these challenges requires creating space for reflection and for crafting innovative practice approaches to progressively complex social problems and situations.

**COMPETENCIES**

We have included a summary of the 10 competencies and their accompanying 41 practice behaviors as presented in CSWE’s EPAS 2008 at the end of this Introduction. The intent is to measure the students’ practice behaviors
and report on their achievement of the 10 competencies. This is not the only way to measure a student’s achievement in BSW and MSW programs, but they are the competencies that are required for reaccreditation of social work programs, and as such they possess considerable power in transforming social work education and practice. In addition, CSWE expects each program to translate these competencies to the particular program’s needs and populations served. In the end, the success of the competencies is based on how well we contextualize, individualize, and apply them to our work with students and to their work with the people and the communities they serve. Students are not expected to be proficient in every one of the practice behaviors, but they are expected to achieve to some extent each of the 10 competencies by the time they graduate from the social work program. The 10 competencies guide our work as field instructors. The authors encourage readers to review Appendix A and become familiar with the EPAS as background for each of the chapters in this book.

Chapter 1, Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn: Rethinking the Field Instructor’s Role

This chapter describes the history of social work education, the integration of class and field work, and the mission and goals of social work education as the framework for field instruction. The emphasis is on framing field education from a human rights conceptual framework that challenges oppression and dominance, power and privilege; embraces a historical and structural analysis; and represents a discourse that moves between global and local, personal and political. The chapter focuses on the field instruction relationship and the field instructor as educator, sharing power from a human rights perspective, shifting from an individual lens to one that includes community, moving to mutual teaching and learning, and training for collaborative work, teamwork, and networking. CSWE’s EPAS 2008 has framed field work as the signature pedagogy of social work education. This chapter examines what is meant by EP 3.0, “Implicit curriculum: The learning environment.” In other words, students learn in many different ways and from a variety of sources. This chapter emphasizes the importance of field instructors helping students develop a professional
identity (EP 2.1.1) and critical thinking skills (EP 2.1.3). The focus is on becoming an effective teacher and sharing power in the learning experience. The appendices include useful tips for new field instructors and a sample supervisory session.

Chapter 2, Beginning Processes in Field Instruction: Learning While Serving

This chapter is concerned with the professional socialization of students into the field agency. Identifying as a social work professional (EP 2.1.1) is a major goal of all social work education. The more we identify with the mission and goals of the profession, the better we are at “Responding to contexts that shape practice” (EP 2.1.9), which should begin discussions of social work programs and agency context. This is part of the implicit curriculum: how we prepare the agency for students, what should be included in orienting students to field instruction and agency practice, and how best to orient students to professional practice and professional roles. A major focus of this orientation is introducing students to professional values and ethics. We discuss how to orient students not only to their responsibilities as learners but also to their responsibilities in serving real people and real communities. The chapter elaborates on the roles of field instructor and faculty field liaison. Cultural competence is a daily part of field instruction. Students need help to critically evaluate the cultural competence of the agency environment, and we encourage field instructors to use the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Indicators for the Achievement of the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice (2007) to demonstrate what constitutes a culturally competent organization and a diverse workplace. EP 2.1.5 asks us all to teach about human rights and social and economic justice, and from the very beginning of field instruction, we need to teach a structural analysis of how injustice and inequality are maintained in a society. This involves discussions of power and privilege throughout the placement, across professional relationships and in the contexts of agency practice. This chapter will help us have these challenging dialogues with students. The Appendices include a checklist for preparing the agency and the student for the field placement and for orienting students to a first assignment and a sample process recording.
Chapter 3, The Range of Student Assignments: Applying the Competencies

This chapter discusses many of the factors involved in choosing and developing assignments that meet the student’s learning needs and the agency’s service delivery goals. A student-centered approach to assignments is favored. It includes discussion of a range of micro, macro, and mezzo assignments including the broad spectrum of clinical work with individuals, families, and groups and crafting community, policy, and research assignments. Overall this chapter will guide field instructors in using the 10 competencies as the background for crafting assignments. EP 2.1.3 assignments must help students develop critical and conscious thinking about their role as social workers. The chapter discusses different kinds of assignments that are possible in agencies today. Field instructors are challenged to consider assignments beyond conventional conceptions of student tasks. For example, although there can be much to learn from creating or updating a resource file or from organizing a toy or food drive, learning emerges from the purposeful consideration of the skills involved; questions are posed to help field instructors consider what other program planning or research assignments can be crafted to augment student development of their organizational and collaborative skills. In this way, assignments become an opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery of the competencies. In other words, we are moving to make assignments more intentional. This intentional choice of assignments is what gives students the opportunity to master identified competencies. Field instructors need to keep these different layers in mind as they craft assignments that are purposeful in achieving the 10 competencies. Policy assignments reflect EP 2.1.8, “Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services” (CSWE, 2008, p. 6). Research assignments give students the opportunity to “Engage in Research-Informed Practice and Practice-Informed Research” (CSWE, 2008, p. 5). Sample assignments for every level of student and method are presented.

Chapter 4, Adult Learning: Looking Back and Moving Forward

Learning is a process. It is as important who we teach as how we teach. This chapter describes the ways in which field instructors create conducive learning
environments for diverse adult learners that accommodate different learning styles and stages of learning, it addresses critical pedagogy and critical thinking, and we strengthen content on how to teach and promote critical thinking skills. Field instructors need to respond effectively to the diversity of students. This chapter responds primarily to EP 2.1.3, “Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.” Learning and teaching is a challenging and complex experience that does not occur necessarily in a step-by-step progressive process. The material on learning styles and learning stages is central to these processes. We introduce recent developments in transformational learning and critical thinking to aid field instructors’ efforts in provoking student learning and maintaining their investment in their professional development. Teaching for social justice, teaching for a critical reflective perspective, and teaching an antiracism perspective are not easy tasks, and this chapter is designed to help field instructors begin these challenging dialogues. Our aim is to emphasize the importance of the field instructor and student relationship and to introduce the implicit curriculum as a pivotal resource to bolster our teaching and learning. The appendices include an outline of learning styles and learning stages along with teaching approaches and a chart on learning stage models.

Chapter 5, Teaching to Competency-Based Practice

In this chapter, we elaborate on the challenges of teaching competency-based social work education and engaging adult learners in the process of instructor-guided learning and self-assessment. We offer a range of methods that promote an understanding and adaptation of the 10 competencies in social work education. Learning conversations begin with helping students understand what competency-based education and practice are and how to achieve these core skills. This chapter will use transformative learning theories that challenge the field instructor and student to identify assumptions that may be operating to block progress. Sustaining students’ willingness to appreciate differing world views and perspectives is an essential component in this task. EP 2.1.9 asks us to deal with the context that shape practice. We are part of this context. We discuss specific teaching approaches, selecting assignments, and dealing with
diverse learning and teaching styles. Teaching to diversity and difference in practice (EP 2.1.4) and teaching to advance human rights and social and economic justice (EP 2.1.5) are essential to connected teaching, co-learning, shared power, and liberated facilitative teaching approaches. We outline the benefits, skills, and methods of observation, modeling, role playing, analogies and metaphors, and peer group supervision. There is extensive discussion of the pros and cons of didactic teaching versus a questioning stance for reflective practitioners. The appendices offer a self-evaluation teaching tool for field instructors and examples of teaching from recordings.

Chapter 6, Recordings in Field Instruction: Advancing the Professional Voice

This chapter presents a range of recording methods to improve student learning experiences. It discusses various ways to construct recordings, how to use these recordings in teaching, and how to prioritize the learning focus from the material presented in recordings. Special attention is paid to the use of process recordings in competency-based education. Recordings present us with an opportunity to address all 10 competencies at various stages of the learning process. Confidentiality is an essential component of recordings in any format. The book gives special attention to the evolving uses of technology in teaching and learning. However, the overall teaching challenge is helping students to write effectively and efficiently as they reflect on their developing practice knowledge and skills. Recordings include traditional process recordings, logs and journals, electronic records, social media, distance education, capstone portfolios, and online courses. The Appendices include a generic outline for process recordings, samples of field instructors teaching from recording, outlines for the use of policy recordings, outlines for group process recordings, and outline for journal and log recordings.

Chapter 7, Educational Assessment and Evaluation: Planning for Mastery of Competencies

This chapter looks at the continuum of collaborative planning, mutual assessment and goal setting, and evaluation in field education. Educational assessments are a dynamic, shared process. We discuss the purpose and structure of
educational assessments and how to teach self-assessment and self-critique. Together students and field instructors arrive at what students know and need to know and how to develop collaborative learning plans to address learning needs. The chapter uses the core competencies to demonstrate how to introduce them to students and to integrate them into the continuum of self-evaluation. The principal core competency here is EP 2.1.10(d), “Evaluation: Social workers critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions.” We discuss the faculty field liaison’s and field instructor’s evaluative role and gatekeeping function and the use of learning contracts when problems emerge. The chapter also addresses the importance of ongoing feedback to students about their performance through mid-semester oral evaluations and how this feedback differs from the end-of-semester written or computerized evaluation formats. The Appendices include an outline for an education assessment and learning plan, a self-assessment tool for students and field instructors, and sample assessments, learning plans, and learning contracts.

Chapter 8, Professional Ethics and Values: Social Work Identity

The content in this chapter is critical for teaching and learning the social work profession. It helps field instructors support students as they navigate through value conflicts and conflicts of interest, the parameters of confidentiality, and the challenges of dual relationships. Two core competencies are specifically addressed: EP 2.1.1, “Identify as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly,” and EP 2.1.2, “Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.” Students need help in appreciating their personal and professional values and where and when they may conflict. Field instructors are in the best position to introduce ethics and values as an integral part of social work practice and field education experiences from the very beginning of the field instruction relationship. This chapter also looks at the ethical responsibility of being a supervisor. The chapter uses the NASW Code of Ethics and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as key documents that guide social work practice daily. At the end of the chapter, we present a series of ethical dilemmas to help field instructors and students begin these important discussions.
Chapter 9, Human Rights, Cultural Competence, and Diversity

According to the *NASW Code of Ethics* (1999), social workers have an ethical responsibility to be culturally competent practitioners (NASW, 2000). This chapter looks at how we have challenging dialogues with students about race, ethnicity, diversity, and power and powerlessness. The chapter frames what is meant by a human rights–based practice that treats clients as partners, collaborators, and political allies rather than objects of rescue. We focus on two core competencies: EP 2.1.4, “Engage diversity and difference in practice,” and EP 2.1.5, “Advance human rights and social and economic justice.” We emphasize discussions of the *Indicators for the Achievement of the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* (NASW, 2007), using the indicators to achieve greater understanding of our strengths and limitations as culturally competent practitioners. A range of diversity dimensions and their impact on teaching and learning in field education are discussed. Again, field instruction is the best place to conduct these discussions. The Appendices include tips for having challenging dialogues, a cultural self-awareness checklist, a cultural self-identity interview, information on providing a safe place to discuss sexual orientation with students, and a series of diversity scenarios, and ways to have culturally competent discussions about race, religion, sexual orientation, different abilities, and ethnicity.

Chapter 10, Teaching Challenges and Opportunities: Shifting the Discourse

Many special challenges are encountered in field instruction, many of which are associated with our role as evaluator and the inherent role tensions this produces. We take a closer look at explicit and implicit power differentials and how we can reframe teaching challenges to learning opportunities. The chapter helps us examine the different skills needed to teach a variety of students and the sometimes challenging situations that arise. It offers a perspective on understanding and dealing with resistance to learning, marginal or failing students, our gatekeeping role and responsibilities, expectations of students and field instructors, how to accommodate the special needs of students with disabilities, and sexual harassment situations and boundary violations that may arise in
agency life or in field instruction relationships. Competency-based field education is an added challenge today, and the changing context of agency practice make achieving EP 1.2.9, “Respond to contexts that shape practice,” particularly difficult. Other challenges emerge from mismatches between field instructors and students or when the field instructor is the problem. We include a discussion of legal liability issues associated with field education. The Appendices include four core behaviors of passing students, a sample field instruction session with a student resistant to learning, tips for overcoming resistance to learning, and a sexual harassment scenario.

Chapter 11, Terminations, Transitions, and Concluding Thoughts
This chapter looks at cross-cultural differences in the process of endings and the transformative learning and teaching perspective that can emerge during the end phase of field instruction. This is time for students to end working relationships with clients, field instructors, and field placement agencies, and students need help to deal with endings from a professional perspective. This chapter explores this unique phase of learning and how to end relationships well; the value of review, evaluation, and assessment in the end phase; and planning for future careers. The chapter ends with some ideas about the future directions of field education. It is followed by an appendix that includes guidelines for how to use this text in Seminars in Field Instruction (SIFIs). SIFIs are educational forums where new field instructors, supervising their first students, are brought together by social work programs for training and support.

Many intrinsic rewards evolve from the complex world of field instruction, including “teaching and sharpening practice skills; learning new ideas; contributing to the profession; and relieving the boredom of the job” (Rosenfeld, 1989, p. 187). This book is designed as a gift for field instructors (Fishbein & Glassman, 1991) who seek to become skillful field teachers. It also provides students with a clear exposition of what they might expect from field instruction. New field instructors will find in this book the needed support for the assumption of the roles and responsibilities of field education. Experienced field instructors will find substantive guidelines and encouragement over the course of their field education careers. In addition to being a gift to field
instructors, this book is intended to reinforce the centrality of field education in social work education. “Only in the transition of knowledge into practice, acquired in the field, does social work education achieve professional justification” (Kadushin, 1991, p. 11).

The authors are encouraged by reports that the first edition of *Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn* was well received and well used by field instructors and SIFI teachers. Specific comments by field instructors and SIFI teachers speak to the book’s significance in educating field instructors and students. We hope that this continues to be true for the second edition.

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