

**History of the Development of
the GSTEP *Principles and Framework for Accomplished Teaching*
NOW the GEORGIA FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING**

Presented at the Teacher Quality Enhancement (TQE) Meeting
Washington, DC
Nov. 29 – Dec. 2, 2005

Dr. Sally Hudson Ross (10/05)
Professor Emeritus, Department of Language and Literacy Education
University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602
saross@uga.edu

In GSTEP, work is done collaboratively across all partners, and participants seek input from a wide range of stakeholders. As a result, hundreds of people in Georgia helped to develop the GSTEP *Principles and Framework for Accomplished Teaching*. This single document—and the many projects built upon its foundation—is likely to be the major legacy of GSTEP in Georgia. In this article, we look back over the history of the *Framework* just as the Georgia Professional Standards Commissions and Georgia Department of Education have both adopted it as a common set of integrated standards to support teachers across a career continuum.¹

Beginnings and Explorations: Finding our Path

In 2001, each partner university within GSTEP—the University of Georgia, Valdosta State University, and Albany State University—formed a P-12/university team focused on induction their leaders collaborated regularly at statewide meetings. GSTEP defined induction broadly, so as to merge preservice preparation with inservice support as a coherent experience stretching from the day someone decided to become a teacher through to at least the second year of teaching. The three induction teams were charged with exploring ways to promote such integration and to create a coherent teacher preparation program that supported teachers in their passage from the university environment to the classroom and school settings.

Focus Groups: Round 1.

During the spring of 2001, the three induction teams examined the literature in induction including state models from Connecticut, Washington, California, and others. In an intensive two-day workshop, team members also studied existing projects such as the Charlotte Danielson's (1996) *Pathwise* program developed by the Educational Testing Service, as well as other models. We then met with focus groups totaling over 300 educators to explore how our local constituents would define good teaching.

¹ In September 2005, the title was changed to the Georgia Framework for Teaching when the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission both adopted it as a statewide definition of teaching.

To examine the extensive data from this round of focus groups, twenty P-12 and university GSTEP induction leaders met for a day. In small groups, they shared and analyzed their collected data, seeking patterns and themes across all three settings. Several principles for the development of an induction program emerged. As a result, leaders determined that *Pathwise* was too expensive for sustained implementation. However, they believed that “a framework that (1) articulated the work of teaching and (2) could be agreed upon by all stakeholders could provide a focal point for developing a coherent induction support program from [decision to teach]... through the teaching career” (GSTEP Report, 2002).

Development of the Principles and Framework.

With a challenge grant from the Georgia University System State Board of Regents, a team of 14 writers met for three days in May 2001 to devise a plan based on the literature, focus group insights, and their own experience and expertise. This group first constructed *principles* to guide the development of a framework, based on the results from the earlier meeting. To this day, these GSTEP *Principles* continue to drive the work of GSTEP (see www.coe.uga.edu/gstep/documents/index.html).

Secondly, the team identified eight elements or domains of quality teaching based on the components of the many materials we had reviewed. Two elements—technology and diversity—were later subsumed into the other six so that they would permeate the work rather than appear as add-ons. Likewise, we tried to infuse student learning throughout the elements and the indicators and descriptors that followed. All three (technology, diversity, and student learning), we believed, were absent from Danielson’s (1996) work but are essential in any evidence-based claims for quality teaching. The document that emerged included six elements: (1) Content and Curriculum, (2) Knowledge of Students and their Learning, (3) Learning Environments, (4) Planning and Instruction, (5) Assessment, and (6) Professionalism.

A cross-institution leadership team reviewed drafts of an initial framework, and a single writer refined categories and presented a second draft to the teams. The GSTEP leadership team and local induction teams reviewed the draft for editing, redundancy, additions or deletions, and logic. After another revision, an initial GSTEP *Resource Framework*, the GSTEP *Induction Principles*, and a cover letter were made available for input from across the state.

Focus Groups: Round 2.

In the fall of 2001, we arranged and facilitated a second round of focus groups to critique the *Principles* and *Framework*. The focus groups had two stated purposes. First, they provided authentic reactions to our work from a wide field of stakeholders--from students just beginning their pre-professional training through induction-level and experienced teachers to school administrators and teacher educators. Second, the process allowed team members to raise awareness of the work and gain buy-in from groups we hoped would be immersed in the induction work itself. All three institutions conducted focus groups between late September 2001 and early April 2002, using materials

created by Dr. Linda Gilbert, the GSTEP Project Evaluator, including an opening script, cover letter, and a videotaped explanation of focus group procedures. All focus group participants signed human subjects' waivers, and demographic information was collected. Moderators were members of the induction teams, assisted by note-takers. Many audiotaped the focus group talk. Participants were provided with copies of the documents in advance, in the hope that they would digest all of the documents before the focus group meeting.

The groups themselves were, in most cases, relatively homogenous (e.g., all beginning teachers or all administrators). On-going GSTEP curriculum teams, however, provided a cross-section of participants with equal numbers of P-12 teachers, arts and sciences faculty, and college of education faculty—all with expertise in a particular curriculum area. Overall, over 400 individuals participated in nearly 60 focus groups. The note takers summarized the feedback provided by each focus group, usually in collaboration with the moderators. Tape recordings of sessions, rough notes, and one to two page summaries in both electronic and hard copy formats were then forwarded, along with the release forms, to the project evaluator. All summaries were subsequently made accessible for analysis through qualitative research software.

Induction team partners and a paid, external professional analyzed these data in a daylong meeting. All were asked to look for commonalities, areas of confusion, areas of agreement, issues that could be addressed through revisions, serious reservations, and other important findings. Across all groups, they anecdotally reported experiencing a high degree of excitement about and support for the idea of a framework to guide induction, along with a good deal of concern: first that such a framework could become a mode of summative evaluation rather than remaining a teacher-directed professional development tool (as per the ownership principle), and secondly, that the framework was so highly detailed as to seem overwhelming, even to highly accomplished teachers. Based particularly on the latter finding, and relying on a range of specific comments about strengths and weaknesses in the framework, on April 3-4, 2002, a revision team reduced the 12- page document to two pages and six elements. We realized that much of the original 12-page text included descriptors or examples that belonged in the on-line resource bank we were conceptualizing (later the BRIDGE), but not in the framework itself. Major changes included moving pedagogical-content knowledge to the Content and Curriculum element, placing Assessment prior to Planning, expanding technology to include various media, and deepening the concept of professionalism. The document called the *GSTEP Framework for Accomplished Teaching* was then ready to be used.

Uses of the Framework in University and School Settings

In an August 2001 GSTEP report, three purposes for the framework were established, which, in retrospect, are telling. The purposes were “to capture the heart of recent work identifying the knowledge, skills, dispositions, understandings, and other attributes of exemplary teaching”; to serve as a “guide to increased proficiency in each identified element”; and to become “a compilation of resources one can mobilize to achieve that increased proficiency.”

In a new article (submitted to Journal of Teacher Education), induction team members reflect on the use of the framework as both a product and a process. From 2002 to the present, faculty members in all three universities are using the *GSTEP Framework* for NCATE, to examine their own teaching, to guide preservice teachers, and to develop and pilot various instruments for observations and self-assessment.

In the 2001 report, we also dreamed. The *GSTEP Resource Framework* was envisioned as the basis for a “web-based resource bank developed for teachers at ASU, VSU, and UGA and in the state of Georgia, though it will be available to all interested educators.... [The online framework will] provide links into access to a myriad of resources ... that teachers and their mentors or supervisors can access in order to develop teacher-driven, next-step, self-improvement professional development plans across their careers.” In 2002, the *GSTEP BRIDGE* (www.teachersbridge.org) was developed as an outgrowth of the VSU Teacher Resource Bank and now organized by the *GSTEP Framework*.

State policy makers have always served on the *GSTEP* Advisory Board and attended yearly meetings with developers. As state agendas move toward supporting teacher quality, *GSTEP* had the products and processes available to meet identified needs. In May 2005, a subcommittee of the state’s Committee on Quality Teaching met to approach their shared strategy four: “to develop an integrated set of performance standards for teacher preparation, certification, and teacher renewal.” The goal of this standard is that “performance standards will be seamlessly aligned through the career continuum from teacher preparation through the first years in the classroom through ongoing career growth.” Unanimously, these representatives of the BOR, PSC, DOE, and professional organizations agree to forward the *GSTEP Framework* as this set of standards. In the fall of 2005, the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission both adopted and renamed the *Georgia Framework for Teaching*. The Board of Regents is expected to follow soon.

Further work based on the *Framework* will be done, including through a Barrow County/Georgia Department of Education grant for math /science and a Wachovia-sponsored partnership with Georgia State, NCTAF, and four metro-Atlanta school districts. The dream is becoming a reality. *GSTEP* partners and stakeholders may indeed have created their vision for Georgia: to create coherent support from the day someone decides to become a teacher through to at least the second year of teaching and beyond. It will take all of us to bring this potential to life.