

Preservice Teachers Join GV Professor in New Learning with TNTP

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Dr. Lindsay Grow, Associate Professor and Education Department Chair, is enthusiastically incorporating new learning from her membership on the Statewide Literacy Leadership Team into her work with preservice students at Grand View University (GV). In the fall of 2019, Lindsay began preparing for the professional learning opportunity with The New Teacher Project (TNTP) to take place the next semester. Dr. Grow included a TNTP publication in the syllabus and asked if students could attend the session. Lindsay shares a description, including student reactions to the presentation led by Mya Baker and Jessica Dirks with TNTP. Dr. Grow also serves on the Executive Board for the Iowa Association for the Colleges of Teacher Education (IACTE). The IACTE Executive Board helps to steer the direction of the IACTE, an organization with membership from 32 institutions in Iowa with Teacher Preparation Programs. Lindsay consistently demonstrates her commitment to improving instructional practices as a change agent in the field.

Grand View University's preservice teachers had the privilege of attending a [presentation](#) with The New Teacher Project (TNTP). The ten students were a part of the Literacy in Grades K-2 Methods course. They enjoyed learning alongside leaders in Iowa about [The Opportunity Myth](#), which they over-viewed as a component of attending the event.

When the preservice students attended, we were reviewing assignments from classrooms the day TNTP shadowed students. Three samples were provided: 1) Raymond, a fifth-grade student, 2) Luz, an AP Language student, and 3) Hajima, a twelfth-grade student in a composition class. Group members noted and discussed whether an assignment was grade-appropriate, using an [ELA Assignment Review Protocol](#) provided by TNTP. The tool helps teachers, leaders, and others understand if an assignment is allowing students to engage in grade-level content meaningfully.

Before leaving the session, preservice students submitted reflections. They identified that Hajima's assignment was below grade-level; the lesson plan was not well-developed and did not include standards. One student shared, "They are also not taking the different cultures into account and giving students the opportunity to express themselves." Other reflections include language from the ELA Assignment Review tool, such as "it gave no opportunity for students to build grade-appropriate knowledge and does not connect to real-world issues." Several students emphasized connections to *The Opportunity Myth* and identified that students need grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations. Two student reflections are a reminder of the importance of creating equitable learning opportunities, including access to grade-level texts, standards, and challenges in the classroom nationally:



"Overall, I learned that education is still lacking in noticing biases. Students in a more brown/black demographic situation lead to fewer opportunities and lower-level assignments; whereas, white classrooms have more opportunities and grade-level assignments...As a future educator, I need to be aware of the lessons I am creating and whether they follow grade-level appropriate standards."

"Minority students are not receiving adequate career preparation. In the example of Hajima, she was enticed to switch to what appears to be a career prep track at the high school, but the academic rigor is very low. She is not being prepared or challenged...I never knew that this was such a major problem in the minority dominated districts and schools. I hope we can work toward spreading awareness and change this cycle."

Later in the course, the preservice students circled back to their learning during the session by evaluating student work with an extra eye on the standards, as was modeled during the session.

A collection of more than 200 publications and resources with practical strategies to improve school experiences are accessible at tntp.org. Please email questions to Jessica Dirks, Midwest Director at TNTP: jessica.dirks@tntp.org.