

# Excellence in Online Teaching

Marcia Peck, College of Education

March 1, 2020

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February 28, 2020

Excellence in Online Teaching Awards Committee Members  
Georgia College & State University

Dear Committee Members,

It is a pleasure to recommend Dr. Marcia Peck for the Excellence in Online Teaching Award. There are several characteristics of her online teaching that are noteworthy including the individual attention she provides to candidates, the practicality of assignments, and strategies to involve candidates in achieving high levels of engagement.

**Individual Attention**

In addition to traditional approaches to maintain strong contact with candidates such as online office hours, timely return of email, detailed feedback on assignments, and use of Skype, Dr. Peck creates professional learning communities that meet online through Facetime and Google hangouts where candidates can explore topics and assignments together. She also uses Facebook to build community with her class. When needed, Dr. Peck also individually provides mentoring to candidates as needed to keep them on track to graduate. Another excellent strategy that Dr. Peck employs is to have the graduating cohort of candidates write a personal letter to welcome the incoming cohort and welcome them to the program. This work has led to her presentations at conferences on strategies to build community.

**Practicality of Assignments**

The Teacher Leader program is designed to provide classroom teachers with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and leadership strengths to help other teachers improve their own classroom teaching. The program prepares candidates to be mentors, coaches, and to lead professional learning communities in their schools. In order to prepare teachers for these roles, Dr. Peck presents information online and then follows it up with actual classroom-based assignments to apply what candidates are learning and build their practical skills for later use; not what they know, but can they actually apply what they know in real situations. The use of professional learning communities ensures ongoing weekly active participation where candidates evaluate each other's work and learn from one another. Discussion boards are also infused in the curriculum. These are either instructor initiated or candidate initiated when there is a topic that needs more depth of discussion.

**Strategies to Involve Candidates in Achieving High Levels of Engagement**

I find examples of Dr. Peck's novel approaches to learning great ways to engage all candidates. She uses approaches such as using artwork to reflect on assignments such as what candidates are learning about diversity. Because the assignments are school-based, they are actually leading to school improvements in the candidates' schools.

One example is the summer laundromat example to continue to build language skills with English Speakers of Other Languages students. The school-based assignments are making a difference and principals are noting that they have impacted their schools.

In closing, Dr. Marcia Peck's excellent online teaching record is well documented. Because of her outstanding teaching, I believe she is well deserving of the Excellence in Online Teaching Award.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph M. Peters, PhD  
Dean of Education

February 24, 2020

To: The Excellence in Online Teaching Award Committee:

I'm writing to nominate Dr. Marcia Peck for the Georgia College Excellence for Online Teaching Award. Nominees for this award must demonstrate strong commitment to online teaching and learning, use of effective and innovative online teaching practices, and commitment to fostering academic success of online students. Dr. Peck consistently shows evidence of these three criteria in her work as lead faculty and Program Coordinator of the Teacher Leadership Ed.S. in the College of Education. Dr. Peck not only provides clear direction and leadership for this fully online graduate program, with new certification from the Professional Standards Commission of Georgia, she is also the lead author of the original program proposal and facilitates continuous improvement efforts. Dr. Peck regularly provides support for colleagues in teaching fully online, and she has consistently engaged in opportunities to improve her own effectiveness as an online instructor.

The Teacher Leadership Ed.S. is an innovative program requiring significant commitment from students and faculty within collaborative learning communities. Dr. Peck structures learning experiences in ways that effectively facilitate adult learning in online communities. She designs courses and learning experiences to scaffold student success across the full year of the program. Candidates in Teacher Leadership work independently, in small groups, and out in the field as they provide leadership and support for other teachers. This specialist degree is highly innovative and presents a unique opportunity for truly transforming public schooling in the most positive and productive ways possible. However, innovative efforts and standards at the state level simply cannot translate into exemplary program implementation without the excellence in teaching that Marcia Peck provides. She has carefully constructed connections across learning objectives, course activities, and program assessments.

Dr. Peck's commitment to student success is grounded in her noteworthy ability of building community within online courses. Evidence includes key comments on student evaluations that describe Dr. Peck's teaching as thought-provoking, challenging, and informative. In addition, the numeric ratings for excellent teacher and excellent course are consistently high for Dr. Peck's online courses. She skillfully mentors students and faculty, building relationships in online contexts. She is mindful of the particular needs her working students bring to the online program. In addition, she skillfully supports students as they prepare for the state content exam in teacher leadership that is composed of six complex "tasks" with analyses that are completed across the program and demonstrate mastery of certification standards. Her students score slightly higher than all candidates across the state on this new performance based assessment. Dr. Peck skillfully provides feedback and information that prepares students for completing and submitting the six tasks without faculty support.

Dr. Peck is a valued member of the faculty in the College of Education and Georgia College. She continues to make significant contributions as an excellent online educator. I highly recommend Dr. Marcia Peck for the Excellence for Online Teaching Award at Georgia College and State University.

Sincerely,

Linda Golson Bradley, Ph.D.  
Interim Chair  
Professional Learning and Innovation  
John H. Lounsbury College of Education  
Georgia College and State University

**Marcia Peck, Ph.D.**  
**Associate Professor of Education Foundations**

**Education**

- 2009    Ph.D. University of Utah, Department of Education, Culture and Society.  
 Area of specialization: qualitative research methodologies, teacher research and  
 Sociological/Cultural foundations of education.
- 1997:    M. Ed. University of Utah, Educational Studies
- 1980:    B.A. University of Utah, English Education

**Teaching Experience**

August 2008- present: Georgia College & State University, College of Education,  
 Professional Learning and Innovation Department, graduate and undergraduate.  
 Taught face-to-face, Hybrid, and completely Online courses.

Representative Courses taught:

Graduate (MAT): *Culture and Schooling; Classroom Research; Student Teaching  
 Seminar/Supervision; Learning and the Learner; Curriculum and Methods.* Graduate  
 (MEd): *Introduction to School Improvement; Models of Inquiry; Research for School  
 Improvement; Capstone. Assessment Practices; Student-Centered Pedagogy.*  
 Graduate (Education Specialist program): *Collaborative Cultures; Educators as  
 Change Agents; Architects of Authentic Learning: Capstone*

August 1986-June 2008: Public School Secondary Teacher. Salt Lake City, Utah.  
 English, 7-9, Journalism, English as a Second Language, Reading

**Mentoring/Service**

June 2017- present: mentoring 44 educational specialist students with their teacher leadership  
 practicum including action research, coaching, and professional development.

2010- 2016: led 5 MEd and 15 EDS students through action research projects every year.

August 2008-2010: MAT Mentor Leader; led 20 action research projects.

Program Coordinator, Foundations Program, 2010-present.

Developed two new graduate degrees for practicing teachers:  
 writing prospectus, writing degree proposals, developing 10 new  
 graduate courses with syllabi, course activities and readings. Both  
 degrees were approved and began summer 2017. Enrollment in the  
 MEd doubled from previous years, and enrollment in the EDS  
 almost tripled from average enrollment of 16 to 44.

**Publications**

Peck, Marcia (2016). Diane Ravitch. Invited book chapter, *Popular Educational  
 Classics*. J. Devitis, editor. Peter Lang.

Peck, Marcia (2010). "I'm a person; I'm not dirt!" Invited book chapter in *Adolescent Education: A Reader*. J. Devitis, editor. Peter Lang.

Gitlin, A. and Peck, M. (2008). "Educational Poetics: An Aesthetic Approach to Action Research." Journal article published in *Educational Action Research*, 16(3), p 309-319.

Gitlin, A. and Peck, M. (2005). *Educational Poetics: Inquiry, Freedom and Innovative Necessity*. Book. Peter Lang.

Gitlin, A., Peck, M., Aposhian, N., Hadley, S. & Porter, A. (2002). "Looking Again at Insider Knowledge: A Relational Approach to Knowledge Production and Assessment," *Journal of Teacher Education*, Sept./Oct.

### Conference Presentations

Peck, M., Roquemore, B., Ford, Bobbi, (November 2019) *Teachers Helping Teachers: The Benefits of Teacher Leaders in Schools*, panel presentation, *Critical Questions in Education Symposium*, conference, Chicago..

Peck, M. and Vice, B. (2019, January). "Education in the South: Power and Control in the Education of Black Children". Paper presented at Hawaii International Conference on Education (HICE) annual conference, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Peck, M. and Vice, B. (2017, November). "Let's NOT Go To The Zoo!" An interactive presentation of diversity strategies for teachers. Presented at the National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME) annual conference, Salt Lake City, UT.

Peck, M., Mehranian, Y., Bosch, R. (2016, November). "Sincere Ignorance and Conscientious Stupidity: Educating Teachers About Difference". Symposium presented at the National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME) annual conference, Cleveland, OH.

Peck, M. (2016, April). "Why Isn't This Working? Interrogating College Diversity Courses". Paper presented at the Berea Conference on Diversity. Berea College, KY.

Peck, M. and Gregg, D. (2016, February). "A Bridge Too Far? Online Learning Communities." Paper presented at the Eastern Educational Research Association (EERA) annual conference, Hilton Head, SC.

Peck, M., Mehranian, Y., Bosch, R. (2016, February). "Do we have to talk about race, again? The myth of the "good" diversity course." Symposium at the Eastern Educational Research Association (EERA) annual conference, Hilton Head, SC.

Peck, M. and Gregg, D. (2015, June) "Connecting at a Distance: Building Online Learning Communities". Paper presented at the International Conference on Technology in Higher Education, annual conference. Marrakech, Morocco.

Peck, M. and Borrelli, B. (2015, February). "Controlling Black Bodies: Education in the South". Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association (EERA) in Florida.

Peck, M. (2014, February). "We've Got to Stop Doing That: Why Diversity Courses Don't Work". Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association (EERA) in Jacksonville, FL.

Peck, M. (2012, April) "Stimulating Simulations". Interactive presentation at the University System of Georgia Teaching and Learning Conference, Helen, GA.

Peck, M. (2012, February). "The Construction of the Teacher." Paper presented for the annual meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association (EERA) in Hilton Head, NC.

Peck, M. (2011, January). "Polyphonic Possibilities in Post-Structuralist Qualitative Research." Paper presented at the Narrative, Arts-Based, Posts, and Alternative Research conference (NAPAR) in Tempe, AZ.

Peck, M. (2010, April). "Dissecting Tradition, Illustrating Reality: Incorporating Post-Structuralism into Textual Representations in Qualitative Research." Paper presented for the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in Denver, CO.

Peck, M. (2010, April). "I'd Rather be Feared, Than Respected: Attending to Marginalized Students' Power Relationships Both Inside and Outside the Classroom." Paper presented at annual Diversity Conference, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA.

Peck, M. (2009, November). "I'm a Person; I'm not Dirt! : The Impact of Power Relationships on Perceptions of Caring in a Secondary Classroom. Paper presented for the annual meeting of the American Educational Studies Association (AESA) in Pittsburgh, PA.

Peck, M. (2008, October). "They Just Don't Care." Paper presented for the annual meeting of the American Educational Studies Association (AESA) in Savannah, Georgia.

Peck, M. (2003, July). "Infusing Imagination Into Practice." Paper presented for annual meeting of the Conference on Imagination in Education in Vancouver, Canada.

Peck, M. and Gitlin, A. (2003, April). "Teacher Research: What More is Possible." Paper presented for the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in Chicago, Illinois. SIG: Teacher as Researcher.

Gitlin, A., Peck, M., Aposhian, N., Hadley, S. & Porter, A. (2002, April). "Knowledge and Power in the Educational Community." Paper presented for the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Peck, M. (2001, April). "Becoming a Student in Your Own Classroom." Paper presented for the International Conference on Teacher Research (ICTR) in Vancouver.

## **Reflective Statement**

When I got into teaching initially as a junior high English teacher, I did so because I enjoyed interacting with adolescents, building relationships and watching them grow and interact with their peers. I also enjoyed using a variety of student-based teaching strategies that involved them in hands-on and real life learning experiences. When I moved on to teaching teachers in the College of Education, I brought the same perspectives with me. Therefore, after five years of teaching college students face-to-face, I didn't exactly jump for joy at the prospect of online teaching. In fact, I resisted it for as long as possible because I believe I would miss out on the relational and growth aspects of teaching, as well as using real-life connections to teach. I thought the students would not receive a quality education online. All my previous experiences in online learning involved reading or viewing materials, answering questions on that material, and perhaps posting something pithy on a discussion board, but only because I was required to do so. There was no impactful connection to anything or anyone.

So, when I was "forced" into online teaching, I vowed to find a way to create the same experiences that I and my students valued in the face-to-face classroom. I started by taking the course *Quality Matters* which helped me create pedagogically effective online modules with all the standards and outcomes listed and conveyed correctly, which is important. But such training did little to help me bridge the relational aspects between the instructor and the students as well as the student to students, nor was I enamored with the absence of student-centered real-life application aspects of some online learning. As I was doing so research on online teaching and building relationships, I came upon work that discussed the idea of "social presence". "Social presence can be defined as being connected and interacting with other human beings as "real people" through the medium of communication being used. Therefore, a "good" social presence environment is the one where learners express their emotions and feelings and interact with one another in a way that promotes their learning. On the other hand, the perception of a negative social presence context inhibits learners for expressing themselves as real people; thus diminishing the learning experience." (<https://elearningindustry.com/social-presence-in-online-learning-7-things-instructional-designers-can-improve>, accessed 2/22/2020)

The more I studied this notion of social presence, the more I came to understand that this was a concept I needed to inculcate in my online courses so my students and I would feel connected, secure, and known. I believe all participants in any learning environment need to feel like they are seen, if they are to achieve at high levels. When we educate we should aim to impact the mind and the heart.

I found this topic so compelling that I continued studying and presented on that topic at the *International Conference on Technology in Higher Education* in Marrakech, Morocco in June 2015, and again at the *Eastern Educational Research Association* conference in 2016. In my conference presentations, I detailed my own experience moving from a face-to-face environment to that of an online space and discussed the importance of social presence in online learning. I shared a number of strategies that I used to build and encourage social presence in my own online classroom as well. My goal was to in help other professors make the transition to online learning less stressful. The world is changing and while traditional classroom instruction will always have a place, I believe more and more students are going to look for online learning opportunities. We can be successful in providing those experiences if we take the time to understand that we are not educating entities that only exist in cyberspace, but people who want to be acknowledged, respected, and connected. It is quite doable with some proper inspiration and planning.

### **2-3 innovative teaching artifacts or practices**

I engage in a number of practices with my online students to help them feel connected to me as their instructor and mentor. I provide them with a weekly Memo that I create after I have assessed their work for the week. By doing so, I can address common misconceptions, questions or mistakes that are apparent in many students' work. By doing so, these items can be addressed quickly so they can get back onto the path. Additionally, I preview upcoming assignments or events so they can plan their time well. For example, yesterday I sent a memo letting them know that, unlike the previous month, the work load for the next month was going to be particularly heavy and that they needed to allot their time differently. I've included a portion of one of these memos in the artifacts. Students appreciate this strategy as it lets them know I am on their side, as evidenced in a student letter.

I also hold virtual office hours each week, either through Skype or through email where students may ask questions and get immediate answers. Students may also email or call as needed, and I generally respond within 24 hours. I also respond to their work with long, detailed written responses and aim to do so in a timely manner. They know I genuinely care about them as individuals, and I appreciate when they share their frustrations and troubles me with because "we are all in this together". One of my student letters addresses this aspect of my classroom. All of these strategies are good practices in any classroom, but are essential for online learning environments because they build social presence.

To help students build social presence with each other, they are placed in small professional learning communities (PLC) as they begin the program. Once in a PLC, they meet together weekly through an online platform such as FaceTime. I use PLC's as a type of Flipped Classroom strategy as students arrive to their PLC meeting having already studied the materials and completed the assignments which results in a rich discussion. All discussions are student led, though I provide the topic, with everyone taking a turn as the leader. During PLC's, another student takes notes and adds any questions. These notes are then distributed to all participants and to me once the meeting concludes. This process is extremely useful for me as I can ascertain student learning and participation. It also allows me to send a group response to the questions instead of having to answer individual queries. With close to 50 students each semester, these PLC notes easily provided me and the students with opportunities for meaningful feedback. After the first semester, 99% of the students express how much they value their PLC group. I also use Discussion Boards as needed and find that students are willing to say things on the board that they wouldn't say in a classroom which leads to enlightening and rich discussions.

Finally, instead of busy-work with little application, I use project-based learning in all of my courses because it encourages engagement. Each semester students must take their learning and apply it to a project with a real-world application. In one of these project-based activities last year, students were assigned to find two colleagues and together plan and complete an advocacy project. One student worked with her colleagues to design a project to meet the needs of their ESOL elementary students who lost much of their English language acquisition over the summer. Working with neighborhood partners, they planned a 7-week summer literacy program at the local laundramat where these children engaged in games, songs and activities to keep their English skills sharpened. I believe such application of learning is essential in online environments because it allows students to synthesize their learning and connect it to the real world that exists outside of the cyberworld of the online classroom.

February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with great pleasure that I am recommending Dr. Marcia Peck for the Excellence in Online Teaching Award for Georgia College and State University. I am a current graduate student under Dr. Peck and have been impressed with her innovative teaching strategies through our online courses.

It is evident to everyone in Dr. Peck's cohorts that she is passionate about helping teachers become professional leaders in their field. Not only is she passionate, but she is innovative in her teaching strategies by reaching all of her online students in personal ways. For example, Dr. Peck creates Professional Learning Communities among cohort members as a way to practice our new skills in realistic ways, while intentionally creating a close-knit community among colleagues across the state of Georgia. Our weekly Professional Learning Communities have made this online program feel connected, personalized, and engaging.

In addition to PLCs, Dr. Peck is consistently responsive to our needs while continuing to hold each of us to her high level of expectations. Dr. Peck acknowledges and respects that we are all full-time professional educators and she works diligently to meet each of our own diverse needs to become successful teacher leaders.

Furthermore, Dr. Peck has utilized her talents to create a unique online program where the delivery of information feels as if we are all sitting together in an intimate college classroom, instead of being miles apart across the state of Georgia learning through a computer. She effectively creates this community of learners through intentional discussion boards, creatively written presentations, thoughtfully crafted weekly memos, and detailed responses to our individual assignments. Overall, it is indisputable that Dr. Peck is not only an expert in Teacher Leadership, but she is also an expert and leader in the field of online teaching.

Sincerely,  
Katie Blum

February 18, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter in support of Dr. Marcia Peck to represent the Georgia College and State University's College of Education. I have had the opportunity to study under Dr. Peck from Summer Semester 2018 until Summer Semester 2019 in the Teacher Leadership program. I have also kept in touch with Dr. Peck with school and GACE related emails even after I graduated. I feel very fortunate that Dr. Peck was over the Teacher Leadership program at GCSU.

Though this program was completely online, Dr. Peck did connect and have a great rapport with all students in the program. We were able to call her or email her at any time with program issues or with life in general issues. Dr. Peck was quick to respond to any and all questions we had about the program and courses, especially if they were sent via email. Phone calls were returned quickly, usually within 24 hours. She kept us informed of schedule changes during the semester, course assignment changes, and also, allowed us input into how some of the course assignments were scheduled.

I, in general, am a very introverted and high-anxiety person. Dr. Peck was very positive, encouraging, and supportive in giving me constructive feedback on certain assignments that were needed for the GACE. Without Dr. Peck's concern and support, I would have quit the program several times when the pressures of life and college became too much. I have emailed in a panic over assignments, the GACE test, and issues at home. I never felt belittled or stupid when she responded to my questions and concerns. Dr. Peck has always listened and responded with good advice and suggestions, such as "maybe some chocolate is needed?" For example, I emailed her because my anxiety was causing me to think I was not good enough to complete this program. Here was her response:

Now Sheila, take a deep breath. You will be fine. I've seen your work and you are doing well. And, you are almost done; you can't stop now. You can do this; you've done hard things before. And if you didn't pass the first time what's the worst that would happen to you? You would take it again and would know where you were scored low so you could fix those parts. Yeah, it would cost a bit more money- but, heh, in the scheme of things that's not so bad. This is a difficult degree, so I understand being nervous. But when you are done, you will know you really accomplished something.

In summary, Dr. Marcia Peck is an instructor who truly cares for and supports her students. My confidence in myself and in being able to lead other teachers, the courage to stand up for my students and parents, and to be able to get the community involved would not have happened without her support and encouragement. I have grown so much in this program.

Sheila Burkett

## Artifacts

**Weekly memo example.** I'm including this artifact to demonstrate how I work to connect to my students every week so they feel informed, secure, and respected. I want them to know I know what is going on, and they are not on a ship without a captain; it is easy to feel this way in an online course.

**September 8, 2019**

Welcome to another week of fun and games!

In order to have quick access to me, for the next few weeks, I will be online every Wednesday from 6-7:30 pm. and can answer you in real time. You may also call me during those times if you think your question is too complicated for email, and I will answer instead of letting it go to voice mail. Down the road, I'll change to Skype so we can have face-to-face discussions. Until further notice, though, email or call during those times.

*"I would like this course if it weren't for those ridiculous Task Projects!"*



### **A couple of items I've picked up while reading your practicum reports:**

-You will select a different topic/idea for each of your Tasks. You do not select a big overarching topic, such as literacy, and then have all of your Tasks connect to it.

-Each one of your Tasks asks you to demonstrate you have a certain skill set that a quality Teacher Leader must possess. Georgia is not going to give you a new certification and a pay increase, unless you can demonstrate that you have the skills a teacher leader needs to possess. We try to teach you those skills in the first part of every course and then turn you loose to try your skills out on unsuspecting colleagues in the form of a Task.

Think back to your initial certification. If every time your cooperating teacher and university supervisor were in the room, the students were running around hitting each other and throwing scissors in the ceiling, I doubt they would recommend you to be certified. Because you are already practicing teachers, Georgia has chosen to have you document your skill set through a GACE assessment (of teacher leader skills). Don't think of your GACE as a knowledge test like the ACT. They don't really care what you know, they want to know what you can do with that knowledge. It's all about application.

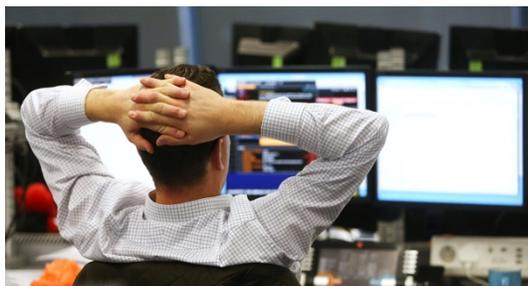
**Task 1** asks you to demonstrate the skills of building a collaborative community and using adult learning strategies to help adults learn. Therefore, you have to demonstrate that you did that in your GACE submission.

**Task 2** asks you to demonstrate the teacher leader skills of helping your colleagues to: design and implement an action research/inquiry project, find resources to provide knowledge and direction, use data, and then developing an answer to your inquiry and what to do next. (Teachers do this all the time in big and small ways. Your principal assigns you team to find a new behavior management strategy for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade- so you all get together, decide on your criteria for what you want and then start researching and finding resources to help you decide. You choose a strategy and then test it out on one class to see if it works. You recommend it or start searching for another one.)

**Do note though**, Task 2 requires you to get some outside help. This outside help could be emailing your RESA, a college professor, a book author and asking some questions. Don't make this requirement a big deal. It's kind of a covering your backside type of thing. And to be honest, a quality teacher leader knows how to ask for help or direction from someone outside the school.

**Task 3** is asking you to demonstrate that you can plan and deliver a quality professional development session. (You may have other colleagues help you with this if it would be advantageous.) The Tasks asks you to complete a Needs Assessment and use adult learning strategies because too often when planning a professional development, no one bothers to ask the teachers what they need/want to know. And, a quality professional development is not "telling"; therefore, you need to show you can use your skills to help adults learn in a PD setting.

I think if you look at each of the Tasks as an opportunity you show you can effectively apply your knowledge and that you know what you are doing, it may help you focus more and worry less. It's not really a mystery. Did you demonstrate the required skills? Did you document those skills well in your textboxes using specific details? If you answer yes to both, you are good to go.



I was hanging out on our favorite website:  
[https://gace.ets.org/teacher\\_leadership/about/tasks\\_requirements/](https://gace.ets.org/teacher_leadership/about/tasks_requirements/)

Yes, this is what I do for fun-sometimes ☺. And, I found a quite useful section that answers so many of the questions you often ask me.

For example, here is the answer many of you have asked about Task 1 from this site.

### 1. What is meant by "Documentation from the plan/project" in the second part of Task 1?

In response to the guiding prompts, you need to develop a plan for a project to work with colleagues and to apply adult learning strategies. There are two artifacts that are required. One artifact focuses on the use of the adult learning strategies. The other is from the task or project selected by the group or your plan that you will develop in order to facilitate your colleagues' professional learning needed

**Example of notes from a PLC meeting.** I included this artifact to demonstrate how our PLC groups work together each week. These groups help to mitigate for the lack of class discussions found in face-to-face classrooms while also connecting each student to some peers.

### **TEAM MEETING AGENDA (Google hangout)**

**Professional Learning Community Members: Katie, Chandra, Joshua, Kimberly**

1. Purpose of Meetings and Objectives
2. Assign Mediator and Note-taker for this week
  - a. Mediator: Josh
  - b. Note-taker: Chandra
  - c. Mediator NEXT week: Katie
  - d. Note-taker NEXT week: Kim
3. Norms:
  - a. Start on time and end on time
  - b. Have all work completed ahead of time
  - c. Respectful, responsible, and ready to learn
4. Agenda Items
  - a. Explain the opportunity gap. Why is it important for students and teachers to cross it?
    - i. All of our discussion questions were sent out before we met so that each person would be able to have their own definition of opportunity gap and their own thought process behind our discussion.
    - ii. Kim began the discussion on opportunity gap. She said that opportunity gap is ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family situations, or other factors contribute to lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students. Kim thinks it is important for parents and teachers to connect with each other in order to bridge the gap. Bridging the gap allows for greater success in education and life. Kim loved when the presenter stated that it is the teacher relationship with students and their parents that “offer up opportunity.”
    - iii. Chandra shared that the speaker in the video pointed out that the opportunity gap is another name for the achievement gap. Chandra shared the definition for opportunity gap from the video was when the students who live in low socioeconomic areas are less likely to succeed because their parents do not have the type of income, education, or needed time to devote to their students’ learning. Chandra also shared that the students that have parents with the education and resources, all attend the same type of school. Chandra agreed with the speaker on how we can work on closing the opportunity gap. The speaker shared how teachers and parents need to build a relationship to close the learning gap. The speaker is also sharing how the parents and the students may be fearful to reach out to the teacher or the family is shy, and they don’t have relationships with others at school. Chandra shared that they could feel like they will not be able to relate to the teacher because the parent is not as educated as the teacher. Chandra feels that as teachers, we must find a method that will assist us in including the parents in their student’s educational needs without intimidating them or making them feel as though their efforts are pointless. We must remember that they want the best for their students as much as we do. In doing so, Chandra feels that we can cross the bridge when we build the bridge with each relationship that is bonded between the parents and the students.
    - iv. Katie completely agreed with Chandra and Kim about how important it is to bridge the gap between teacher and parent to give the child the best opportunity to succeed. Katie said this was very similar to what we learned last week in our reading except that the speaker in the TedTalk did not mention how the parents have their own set of tools and qualities that will help their child academically. The speaker focused more

on how the parents love and support their children and that the teachers have the professional expertise. We discussed how we all agree that there has to be a balance. Many parents have more than just love for their children and many of their own “tools” will help their children succeed. However, without creating that line of open communication, educators will never know how influential their parents can be in closing the opportunity gap.

- v. Joshua described the opportunity gap as the barriers that keep lower SES communities from experiencing the same experiences or connections as those from higher SES or better backgrounds. Josh then stated that without an effort to bridge it, there will always exist a divide between certain groups of students and parents with the teachers and a constant struggle to make lasting connections.
- b. How can parent connection assist with closing the opportunity gap? The speaker shared some responsibilities of the parents... What are they and why are they important?
  - i. Josh began this discussion by sharing his thoughts on closing the opportunity gap. He said that making meaningful connection with parents and students alike, no matter the SES or background, the opportunity gap has the chance to be bridged from both directions. By including parents in the process and having them participate as meaningful members of the learning community, the chance for meaningful closure can truly take place.
  - ii. Kim continued the discussion by stating that when children/students see that their teachers and parents are communicating and connecting, they feel that everyone involved “wants the same success for me.” When students see this and feel this it encourages them to do their best to be successful, thus closing the opportunity gap. She loved how the speaker worded this in the video.

5. Adjournment  
**TIME: 5:14 pm**

**I asked Josh, the leader of this discussion, about why he values his PLC group so much. He stated the following:**

I feel that I have the perfect PLC group due to our ability to work together and interact through the learning process. We have been able to work through difficult assignments together and correct misunderstandings between us without having to venture outside of our group. We have created a sort of environment that is very supportive of one another and allows for true and honest communication that enriches the learning situation for us all. I feel that if I were completing some of these assignments alone then I would have to venture out and "bother" instructors more instead of using my group as the sounding board. One of the best parts of this degree program is being able to work in a PLC. It's an online program, and without PLC's I wouldn't feel connected to my peers. I have a built in support system now to help me be successful.

**Example of discussion board comments in online courses:** I include these discussions in order to demonstrate how I work to construct a trusting community of learners who are able to share their honest feelings and learn from the experiences of other students. Without this environment, meaning-making cannot occur and students aren't changed at the end of the learning experience because they cannot learn from each other. They also demonstrate the importance of "presence" for both the instructor and student.

### **Discussion MOD 3 Children in Poverty**

**-Marcia Peck** Jan 17, 2015 9:51 AM

Prompt: Children living in poverty arrive at school with certain deficits due to monetary issues. This does not necessarily mean they have bad parents nor does it mean that these children are less intelligent or lacking in motivation. As Charles Payne pointed out, though, often educators focus on what these children (families) lack and just give up. What strengths could children in poverty have that educators could build on? If you were/are teaching poor children, what could you do to help yourself see past what is lacking?

**-JQ** Jan 24, 2015 10:57 AM

in reply to [earlier message](#)

My thoughts are that children in poverty awaken teachers to see the realization that not every student has the privilege to experience cultural norms and values. I have not had experience working with children in poverty but I do know that they could bring many strengths to educators that they could build on. However, I strongly believe that it is important for educators to develop awareness and pedagogies that are sensitive to kids who live in poverty. I do understand that children who live in poverty are more likely to be labeled as the ones who are less capable. Once they are labeled, it puts them at a risk for feeling less worthy. I believe that children in poverty can obtain the same skills and qualities that those who do not live in poverty, if they are not labeled and are treated the same as privileged students. Children in poverty have the ability to lead the educator to understanding the importance of meeting the needs of "the whole" child, such as the social, emotional, and physical needs. I strongly feel that underprivileged children could bring a strong work ethic and an appreciation for learning to the classroom. If I were teaching poor children, I would overlook what is lacking and focus on the values and strengths that they can bring into their learning environment.

**-JR** Jan 25, 2015 5:54 PM

In Response to JQ

You are right when you say that teachers take for granted what kids have experienced. I remember on a sports trip a couple years ago our baseball team had to spend the night in a hotel room. We had a kid who had never done that before. Also as a teacher when talking about examples and places where I have been, it amazes me how many students have never been to the beach or Atlanta or even out of our little small town on a trip.

**-Marcia Peck** Jan 26, 2015 8:42 PM

in reply to [earlier message](#)

JQ- I love that you mention groups and hands on activities. Too often, poor children are given worksheets and boring work to do because they are judged to be lacking in basic skills so they need remedial work- that is awful.

**-NW.** Feb 11, 2015 11:30 PM

in reply to [earlier message](#)

Having previously worked at a school that definitely had it's share of impoverished students, I felt it to be necessary to reach out to the community and partnership with companies and organizations who did not mind donating and allocating funds for these families. Seemingly, some of these kids were smart and school was a place of comfort from whatever or where ever home was. I thought, getting these kids involved in sports with their fees being taken care of or getting them involved in extracurricular activities would keep them focused. My team of teacher worked in close association with the counselor to ensure these students had everything they needed to be successful and not ridiculed or bullied due to lack of money.

**Project-based learning.** Notes from Advocacy project, *Learning at the Laundry*. I'm including this artifact to illustrate how students synthesize their learning into a project thereby increasing their engagement in the course and allowing them to apply their learning to solve a real-world problem.

Student project plan:

During a leadership meeting, I led a team of teachers in a discussion of our data from the past school year and some challenges that we faced going into next school year. Together, we discussed some ideas about what might help our students over the summer and help to prepare them for the next school year. We wanted to work together to have a plan before we left for the summer about what we could do, along with the community, to help advocate for continued support for our students over the summer to prevent students from having the typical summer slide that many of them show. I asked each of the teachers to complete a needs assessment survey to help determine our best options to help students over the summer. The results of the survey determined that teachers felt that students would most benefit from organized, fun, non-academic activities that would help students build their social skills and also give them opportunities to practice their English-speaking and listening skills during the summer months since many of them come from non-English speaking homes.

My team and I implemented seven summer sessions at the laundry mat to help students have opportunities to practice their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills during the summer. These sessions were geared toward improving student learning and educational improvement by giving students exposure to English that they would not normally have during the summer months. During the first month's sessions, students enjoyed stories by a local fire and police officers, music from a local musician, and a craft activity where they made a character from a local movie using recycled resources. During the second month, students participated in board game day, water balloon and sidewalk chalk day, and also heard stories from volunteers. These activities gave students opportunities to socialize with peers and adults and use their English skills.

Comments from colleagues who participated in the project with the student:

Colleague #1 feedback:

I wanted to say that I am very honored to have been a part of this advocacy project. I believe that I was able to grow professionally because of my involvement in it. Through this project, I was able to work with a team and a leader who were all passionate about our students and the community. Their passion is contagious and I couldn't help but be excited about the opportunity to work with this group and our students this summer. Through this project, I was able to connect with my students and get to know them more. I was able to get to interact with them and get to know their families on a more personal level. I believe that these interactions will help me be a better teacher since I have gotten to know their likes and dislikes and I have gotten to meet and connect with their families. I was able to catch a glimpse into their home lives and see how hard their parents work to provide for them. I plan to help more in the future with projects like these because I feel that it is important to help our students be successful.

### Colleague #2 Feedback:

This advocacy project helped me grow professionally through the connections that I was able to make with the people in our community. During this project, I was one of the team members that reached out to many of our community members and invited them to come and work with our students. I was able to build relationships with these community members and have made plans for them to be involved in my classroom this year. They were excited to share their talents and information with our students and these students were able to learn from them. I believe that these connections will help make my classroom more diverse and interactive in the future. I was glad to be a part of this project and hope to work with this team on these types of projects in the future.

### Comments from involved Stakeholder who volunteered with this project:

I thank you all for giving me the opportunity to work with the students of [REDACTED] Elementary School. It was a pleasure to get to know them and the teachers. I believe that what you all are doing with these students will have a lasting impact on them in the future. They were learning and having fun while doing it. The teachers that attended these events are passionate individuals who have a heart for their students and their students' futures. I was impressed at how organized these activities were and how the students enjoyed their time together. I would love to continue to work with these students and teachers in the upcoming school year. Thanks for all your do for these children and our community.

**Samples of responses to student work.** I'm including examples of my feedback to online student work that demonstrate my "presence" in the classroom and the work of building relationships. Specific and heartfelt feedback is essential in all learning environments if you want to create trusting relationships leading to meaningful learning.

*EDCI 7741 MOD 5 Summer 15, AB.* Question: Now that you have read information on Ruby Payne and studied deficit theory, what is your opinion on this topic?

My response: "Wow! I so enjoyed reading your thoughts. You write in such a way that I can "hear" you thinking. Schools do harm to poor children and children of color- there is plenty of research to document it. Society also has a role in the damage. By the time these children reach their teens they are angry, frustrated and discouraged. They know somehow they've been cheated. They can't read on grade level and can't therefore do the work. Their immaturity bubbles up in violence. That's not saying that their home life and environment aren't also having a negative effect- they could be- but if children/teens felt cared about and supported at school, you would notice major differences. Read *Si Se Puede: Learning From A School That Beat the Odds*. Amazing story of a high school with really tough kids. I agree with you that you should tell students about college and scholarships- they don't know it is possible."

*EDCI 6200 MOD 2 summer 15, TT.* Question: Describe a "red light" teaching strategy/activity that you have used in the past in your classroom; then explain how you will change it so it is a "green light" strategy/activity using information from chapter 2.

My response: Some excellent green light strategies! You have explained them in detail. Another idea for teaching location on a map is to construct a large map of the area in the gym or outside. You could use painters tape. Then student move around the area according to the teacher directions- movement is always a good way to get something to stick in their heads. I love the idea of a museum tour. You could also have a regular tour of the city where they move from the market, to the church, to purchasing something with the local money, etc.

*EDCI 6200 MOD 5 summer 15, KF.* Question: Describe a group activity you have used in the past, then explain how you will modify it so it has PIES. Be specific.

My response: As far as simultaneous interaction- what you are really aiming for is everyone in the group and in the classroom is involved pretty much at the same time. Calling on a student to answer a question allows the rest of the class to stop paying attention. Having one or even four students complete a problem on the board, allows the rest of the class to check out. You want to avoid this as much as possible. So you put students in groups and each group is walking around reading different posters for information. If a group is working on a project- say a PowerPoint, each group member has to have a task to complete all at the same time- or you are left with one person on the computer and the rest walking around causing trouble because they have nothing to do. How could you modify your learning activity to provide for simultaneous interaction?

**Select Student Evaluations and Comments from online courses.** I'm including these items to demonstrate student opinions of my online teaching are consistently high.

**Peck, Marcia, Spring 2014**

21663\_201402I1287364

Intro to Sch Improvement EDIT, fully online, graduate

-This was the most thought-provoking class I have taken at GCSU and I am very glad that I took it under the tutelage of Dr. Peck. I would highly recommend this class as an elective to anyone for whom it is not required. .

-Dr.. Peck was well-organized and at all times the class knew what to expect. The modules challenged us to think and helped us to evaluate critical information.

-Peck is an exceptional instructor who made quite a unique course that was both easy to follow yet challenging to the mind. So glad I was able to take this course with her as she allowed us all to gain a greater sense of appreciation for educational reform.

**Peck, Marcia, Spring 2015**

20478\_201502I1287364

Intro to School Improve, fully online, graduate

-This course helped me understand the difficulty schools have with social reforms and why some schools are not excelling. I loved this course and instructor.

-The course was really interesting and I enjoyed it. Dr Peck provides good feedback and is very encouraging. I would definitely recommend this online class!

-I really enjoyed working with Dr. Peck and her chosen readings! I look forward to working with her in future courses

**Peck, Marcia, Fall 2017**

81234\_201708I1287364

Leaders Auth Lrn Communities, online

-Thank you Dr.Peck for pushing me out of my comfort zone and I am so thankful you were my professor!

-Love Dr.Peck.

-Very flexible and understanding

**Peck, Marcia, spring 2019**

21599\_201902I1287364

Schools and Inequalities, online

-This was a very interesting course; I have learned a lot as it relates to African Americans and their setbacks. The

assignments were created and assigned in a very tasteful way—being such a touchy subject. Thanks, Dr. Peck for your hard work and thoughtfulness.

-I did enjoy taking this course because I was unaware of some of the issues people of color face. Great learning experience.

Peck, Marcia, Fall 2017 online  
21593\_201902I1287364  
Collaboration and Advocacy 94% reporting  
Excellent Teacher 4.7  
Excellent Course 4.7

Peck, Marcia, spring 2019  
21599\_201902I1287364  
Schools and Inequalities 94% reporting  
Excellent Teacher 4.6  
Excellent Course 4.1

Peck, Marcia, spring 2019 online  
81938\_201708I1287364  
Inquiry into Prof Practices. 91% reporting  
Excellent Teacher: 4.8  
Excellent Course: 4.7

Peck, Marcia, Spring 2017 online  
21587\_201702I1287364  
Educators as Change Agents. 79% reporting  
Excellent Teacher: 5.0  
Excellent Course: 4.8

# Excellence in Online Teaching

Marcia Peck, College of Education

March 1, 2020

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