

January 10, 2009

To: Dean Stipek

From: Michele Kerr, STEP Teacher Candidate

RE: Academic Grievance

Dean Stipek,

Attached is a grievance regarding my grade, supervisory assessment, and inconsistencies involving my treatment for the Fall practicum course

While a B might not seem particularly detrimental to any one student, Dr. Lotan has separately informed me that she has concerns that I am “unsuited for the practice of teaching” and has begun to initiate the Guidelines for Review of that. She did not mention my practicum grade as part of these concerns, but she has made it clear that she intends to continue pursuing her concerns. If my B grade is substantially lower than most or all of my classmates, then Dr. Lotan can at some point use this grade as further evidence as to my unsuitability for the practice of teaching. Indeed, one might reasonably wonder if that knowledge factored into her assessment.

[Supervisor] will be my supervisor for the rest of my time at STEP, despite evincing strong distaste for me personally and having expressed doubts about my honesty. He gave me a low rating with no warning and a complete lack of consistency with other supervisors at STEP. No one at STEP has expressed any concern at this lack of warning. I have every reason to think this can happen again.

Both Dr. Lotan and [Supervisor] exert enormous power over my ability to become a teacher. Thus, I can go into tremendous debt to pay Stanford’s fees, give up the income of working for a year, succeed academically and at my student teaching assignment--and yet still be denied a teaching credential based solely on their say-so. Their failure to communicate any dissatisfaction until the moment that they give me low assessments is, consequently, deeply troubling, as is their apparent disdain for any consistent standard. For this reason, I hope this grievance will be reviewed not solely for its impact on the fall academic quarter, but for its ramifications to my future during the next two quarters at STEP.

I have filed a non-academic grievance against Dr. Lotan and Dean Callan for harassment and am including a copy for your information.

Sincerely,

Michele Kerr

Academic Grievance

Class

Education 246B, Secondary Teaching Practicum, Fall Quarter

Causes of Grievance

1. I received a B in the Practicum course.
2. I received very low ratings--“no evidence”--on one category of my supervisory assessment.
3. My supervisor, the program director, and the director of Clinical Work are holding me to very different standards than other STEP candidates, standards that they don't communicate until assessment, when my assessment is much lower than their prior behavior would have lead me to expect.

Remedy Sought

1. Change grade to an A
2. A rating more aligned with my actual performance and knowledge
3. I wish to be held to the same standards and expectations as all other STEP candidates, and to know that my assessments will not be lowered because of expectations that were never communicated and differ significantly from other candidate obligations. I am deeply concerned that Dr. Lotan, [DCP], and [Supervisor] intend to withhold their recommendation for my teaching credential based on these inconsistent standards.

Informal Attempts to Resolve

I have met with the ombudsman, David Rasch, to ask for assistance and advice on several occasions. During our last meeting, he acknowledged that the problem had gone beyond his ability to assist—or at least that was my understanding. (this is not a complaint.)

Dr. Lotan, [DCP], and [Supervisor], my supervisor, have acted in such a way that I no longer believe they wish me to succeed in this program, although they both assure me that this is not the case. Moreover, Dr. Lotan has on at least one occasion misrepresented events when she was trying to build a legal case to rescind my admission. Finally, I once agreed to meet with Dr. Lotan on the understanding that she would no longer oppose my attendance at Stanford, and in the meeting she reneged on that agreement, telling me she would continue to pursue legal means to rescind my offer—a comment that shocked Dr. Rasch, who had arranged the meeting on the understanding that my attendance was a settled fact.

For all these reasons, I feel uncomfortable with any further informal attempts to resolve any issues with any STEP staff.

Timing

I have been unhappy about my assessment since December 3rd, but was unsure what to do about it. I realize that filing an academic grievance puts me at considerable risk of retaliation from people who have already damaged my standing at my placement school. I decided to wait to see if [Supervisor] would review the information I summarized for him and change my grade, and also wait to see what grade Dr. Lotan gave me in practicum. I checked my grades on December 26, and also saw that [Supervisor] had not significantly altered my assessment. On December 29th, I also received a followup letter¹ from Dean Callan and Dr. Lotan on our meeting, which further reinforced my belief that my status at Stanford is in jeopardy and my future practicum grades were at risk of similar manipulation.

Individuals Referenced

Rachel Lotan: Director of STEP and professor of record for the practicum course.
[DCP]: Director of Clinical Work
[Supervisor]: Supervisor
[Cooperating Teacher]: Cooperating Teacher (sometimes referred to as CT)
Eamonn Callan: Associate Dean
[Name Omitted]: STEP Teacher Candidate, supervisory partner

Document List:

1. Practicum Course Description
2. Dr. Lotan's email dated 12/6, explaining professionalism weight.
3. [Supervisor]'s quarterly assessment
4. [Cooperating Teacher]'s quarterly assessment
5. [Supervisor]'s two formal observation debriefs
6. JMK's Lesson Plans for observations
7. JMK's reflection #1
8. JMK's reflection #2
9. JMK's reflection #3
10. JMK Practicum Assignment #1—New Beginnings
11. JMK Practicum Assignment #2—Abuse Reporting Requirements
12. JMK Practicum Assignment #3—Reciprocal Observation
13. JMK self-assessment
14. Integration Plans for Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarter
15. Clinical Work Agreement describing Integration Plan's role
16. Redacted emails from STEP students on observations and reflections
17. JMK Observation Log
18. [supervisory partner]' email confirming that [Supervisor] mentioned only

¹ It was dated December 16th, but unlike Dr. Lotan's other correspondence, she didn't send a second copy via email. I did not review my postal mail until well after the holiday.

- observations and confirming other impressions as well
19. [DCP]'s email with undocumented observation requirements
 20. [STEP Staffer]'s email with different standard for other students
 21. Observation Cycle document
 22. JMK's email asking for help on reflection #1
 23. JMK's original reflection #2
 24. [Supervisor]'s rejection of reflection #2
 25. JMK's email asking for help (and expressing frustration) on reflection #2

Grievance #1: B Grade in Practicum

Instructors in STEP courses often, but not always, contact students if they are “at risk” of getting a B. I am concerned that (1) the B grade is substantially lower than that given to other students in the class and (2) this relative assessment is unwarranted based on my performance and course criteria. In any event, Dr. Lotan apparently did not calculate the grade according to the published course criteria.

While I have not been told this officially, I am expected to understand that my lower grade is due to my supervisor [Supervisor]’s extraordinarily low ranking of my professionalism in his quarterly assessment.

Practicum Course Grading Criteria

On December 3, Dr. Lotan told the practicum class that she would weight the professionalism strand the most heavily of all six criteria used on our student teaching assessments. When [Cooperating Teacher], my cooperating teacher, asked about this, she wrote him: “As I have done for the past nine years, at the end of every quarter, I remind the candidates of the importance of documented growth on standards 1-5. Every year and every quarter, I emphasize the importance of standard 6 and my careful read of the assessment provided by the supervisors and cooperating teachers.”² Dr. Lotan, therefore, has for nine years used very different criteria from the published course description³, which does not indicate that standard 6, professionalism, is given extra weight.

What the course description does describe is as follows: 100 points are given for student teaching and supervisory. The student teaching/supervisory documents used for the grade are:

- Supervisor assessment, consisting of six standards and various sub-categories⁴
- Cooperating teacher assessment⁵
- All documents associated with each observation cycle --lesson plans, reflections, and, presumably, formal observations made by the supervisor.⁶

[Supervisor] rated me as “no evidence”, the lowest rating, in all but two categories of the Professionalism assessment.

[Cooperating Teacher], my cooperating teacher, gave me an assessment that was higher than that of my supervisor’s.

I turned in all reflections and provided several lesson plans. My supervisor rejected two

² Document 2.

³ Document 1

⁴ Document 3

⁵ Document 4

⁶ Documents 5-9

of three reflections without any specific feedback, even though I asked for more help. I nonetheless redid them and they were accepted. I provided several lesson plans; my supervisor said at least one of them was “quite good”. None of my lesson plans or reflections were returned with comments. My supervisor wrote up three observations, two of them formal, one of them a brief email.

The course criteria states that an additional 100 points are given for elements of the practicum course, held Wednesday from 3:15-5:05:

- Class attendance and participation: 20 points
- Three assignments (a fourth was cancelled) worth 20 points each.⁷

Thus, the course itself was worth either 80 or 100 points, depending on how Dr. Lotan dealt with the cancelled assignment, something she never specified.

I turned in all assignments in a timely manner; attended all but one practicum section (which I notified Dr. Lotan about ahead of time), and was a regular classroom participant. Two of my assignments were returned; the third (reciprocal observation) was not. None were graded.

Grade Calculation

My supervisor’s professionalism rating was one sixth of his overall assessment, one twelfth of both assessments. Thus, when the “documents associated with the observation cycle“ are included, the one low ranking was no more than 5-8% of the overall student teaching point total. If Dr. Lotan weighted the total professionalism score as a full 25 points of the 100 allowed, my supervisor’s single low professionalism ranking would only weigh 12.5% of the student teaching points—and weighting the professionalism component that heavily in the light of all the documents mentioned as part of the assessment is a clear distortion of the course assessment criteria.

Moving to the class coursework assessment, none of the course assignments were graded. Thus I expect I received full credit for all three assignments—otherwise, per STEP procedures, I would have been given the opportunity to resubmit for a higher score. As I attended class and participated regularly, I have no reason to assume I didn’t get the full 20 (or close to it) points for classroom participation.

I do not believe that Dr. Lotan could have reasonably calculated my grade to result in a B, compared to other students in the course. The course criteria makes no mention of a curve or a point total required for an A, B, or NC. Consequently, I am asking for a comparison of my work and grades to other STEP candidates to determine if consistent criteria were used.

⁷ Documents 10-12

Grievance #2: Supervisor Assessment

My supervisor, [Supervisor], has given me no written reason for his low professionalism assessment. He originally gave me straight “no evidence” in all boxes, although he then upgraded two of the categories to “novice” standard. While I will focus on the professionalism component because it was substantially out of synch with reality, [Supervisor] also gave me “no evidence” or “little evidence” ratings in other standards when he had in fact seen substantial evidence.

Assessment Ratings

I realize that supervisor assessments are extremely inconsistent within STEP; however, I believe that my ratings have been used to give me a low grade in practicum. Consequently, I feel that evidence of my engagement with the assessment standards warrants comparison with other students to ensure a consistent rating criteria.⁸

Standard One: Supports and Engages Students in Learning

1.1 “builds on students’ prior knowledge, life experience, and interests to achieving learning goals”

Rating: “No evidence”

Evidence that [Supervisor] was aware of:

- In my algebra support class, I conceived of a plan to help our Algebra Support students see school activity as directly related to their long-term plans. [Cooperating Teacher] and I created a brief questionnaire asking the students what they wanted out of this class and what were their long term goals. I talked about this activity in supervisory.
- In supervisory, I have often talked about a student in my algebra support class, [name omitted] and his goals to become an auto mechanic and then take over his grandfather’s business. I have discussed how I focus on his goals to help him keep on track in all his school work, not just his Algebra class (which he is passing with a C, in addition to getting an A in our class).

In all other areas of Standard One, [Supervisor] rated me with “Novice” status. I have attached my own assessment, in which I list the type of activities I do engage students in learning. I have discussed all of these in supervisory meetings; my test procedure was the subject of an extended discussion in a larger group. I submit these warrant higher than a “Novice” rating, particularly in comparison with other STEP students.

⁸ See Document 13 for additional evidence (my self-assessment)

Standard Three: Understanding and Organization of Subject Matter

3.4: “Uses knowledge of student development, subject matter, instructional resources, and teaching strategies to make subject matter accessible for all students.”

Rating: No evidence

Evidence: [Supervisor] references in other areas an “excellent” exponential assessment I created, but apparently doesn’t see this as applicable to this category. I submit that my knowledge of exponent properties, the students’ abilities and common misconceptions, and an innovative teaching strategy to help students gain a better understanding of exponential properties.

Standard Five: Assessing Student Learning

5.1: “establishes and clearly communicates learning goals for all students.”

Rating: Novice

Evidence:

- [Supervisor] has both seen me engage my “missing homework” ritual and heard me discuss it in supervisory. I regularly print out students’ missing homework and remind them of the impact it has on their grade. This is a ritual of my own devising; [Supervisor] knows I have strong feelings about giving students lower grades because of missing homework. He also knows that the ritual has resulted in many students turning in more work than they would otherwise.
- [Supervisor] is aware that I routinely engage with all students and tell them where they are and what they need to do to improve their grades. He knows that none of the Algebra II/Trig students in two classes failed, which is rather extraordinary.
- My test gatekeeping procedure, in which I send students back if they haven’t shown work or skipped a problem or made an avoidable mistake, has been extremely successful. [Cooperating Teacher] now does it, too.

I submit that my innovations warrant a higher rating than “novice”.

Standard Six: Professionalism

I included the other ratings because I feel they show a consistent pattern of understating the evidence that [Supervisor] has of my abilities. However, I am primarily concerned with my professionalism rating, in which [Supervisor] originally gave me “No evidence” across the board. He later boosted two of them to “Novice”, which still considerably understates the existing evidence.

6.1: “reflects on teaching practice and actively engages in creating a professional development plan”

Rating: Original “No Evidence”, upgraded to “Novice”.

Evidence:

- I am passionate about discussing teaching issues and talking about my teaching challenges. Our supervisory was, until the troubles began, a non-stop discourse in teaching and reflection on teaching. I used to love supervisory precisely because we talked about the practice of teaching—mine, [supervisory partner]’s, and teaching in general. Apparently, [Supervisor] does not consider my form of discussion to be reflection. He did not tell me this. Nor did he tell me that he would only consider written reflections (more on this later) evidence of reflection.
- [Supervisor] knows very well that I selected my secondary class, Algebra Support, for reasons of professional development. I want to work with students who struggle with math and who have difficulty succeeding in school. I am known for this. He knows I originally wanted it to be my primary class, a request he concurred with, until we were told that the primary class must be a credit course (Algebra Support is an elective).
- [Supervisor] also knows that I have not only passed all three Math Single Subject CSETs, but also those in Social Science and that I intended to finish up the English Single Subject CSETs in January (I took the test on January 10th and expect to pass, as I majored in English and it’s my strongest subject).
- [Supervisor] knows, because I told him in early October, that my goal is to teach in all three subjects, focusing primarily on students struggling in math and composition, with my dream history class being AP US History.

I believe I am the only STEP candidate who has multiple single subject CSETs passed (although I know one math candidate tentatively planning on taking the Physics test). I did this all on my own, something else [Supervisor] knows. I do not understand why this would not be considered evidence that I am actively engaged in creating a professional development plan.

6.2: “establishes professional learning goals, pursues opportunities to develop professional knowledge and skill, and participates in the extended professional community”

Rating: No Evidence

Evidence:

- [Supervisor] knows, because I mentioned it in supervisory, that I took on the challenge of reviewing two math books for my C&I instructor, [name omitted], despite an extraordinarily heavy workload during the summer quarter. I was paid an honorarium, but I did it for the chance to get the experience of reviewing textbooks, and said so to [instructor] at the time.
- As a private instructor and tutor with five years experience, I have a wide network

in the community. I am a key resource at College Track, an East Palo Alto tutoring organization that I work with both as a Kaplan instructor and as a volunteer, and maintain a website of student test scores and their improvement to demonstrate the value of test prep for low income and minority students.

- If STEP allows me to finish the program, it will be my second Master's degree. I came back to school because as much as I love tutoring and private instruction, I wanted to develop professionally as a public school teacher. [Supervisor] may not like my method of doing so, but he is well aware of the fact that I'm a lifelong learner and that I am here because I wanted to become a teacher.

6.3: "Learns about and works with local communities to improve professional practice".

Rating: Originally "No Evidence", upgraded to "Novice"

Evidence:

- [Supervisor] upgraded me because of my College Track work (which he knew about already but didn't mention until I reminded him).
- I am an employee of two major private instruction companies (Kaplan and Elite Education), and have considerable ties to the larger teaching community. I occasionally talk about my work at Kaplan and how I use that work to make tests and college admissions more real for my students.

I submit that my work for College Track goes well beyond the "Novice" category. Many other students I've talked to received straight "Proficient" ratings in professionalism, and have no contacts in the larger teaching community.

6.5: "Contributes to school activities, promotes school goals, and improves professional practice by working collegially with all school staff."

Rating: No Evidence:

Evidence:

- [Supervisor] knows that I subbed without pay for [name omitted], math department head and a member of our Algebra II/Trig team. If I hadn't covered for her, her class would have been behind the rest and had a difficult time catching up.
- I not only attend my required Algebra II/Trig teacher meeting, but also attend the Algebra Support meeting, in order to get insight into an additional teaching community. Again, [Supervisor] knows this.
- When [name omitted], my supervisory partner, was worried about passing the Calculus/Math History CSET, I told her (in [Supervisor]'s presence) that I'd be happy to loan her a terrific calculus book that had all sorts of great vignettes on math historians. I did loan it to her, and as [Supervisor] also knows, I emailed her a few websites with useful information.

6.7: “Uses and accepts constructive criticism”

Rating: No Evidence

I believe that this rating is a key reason for [Supervisor]’s dissatisfaction with me. He told me in our 11/19 meeting (more on that later) that I reject all criticism and argue with him about everything. Had he made his feelings clear earlier, I would have modified my manner of discourse to make him feel more comfortable.

However, as I tried to tell him, I have a number of very clear teaching philosophies. I love debating approaches and priorities, and thought that’s what we were doing—as did [supervisory partner], my supervisory partner. Thus, when [Supervisor] told me to talk more slowly, I nodded and said “Yes, I always need to remember that, thanks”—which would seem to me to be accepting constructive criticism. But when [Supervisor] told me to never, EVER tell a student that he or she has given an incorrect answer, I replied that I completely disagree with that approach. I believe it’s perfectly appropriate to say casually, without emphasis, that the student has given the wrong answer. That doesn’t mean I do it all the time, and it doesn’t mean that I don’t welcome his advice. It just means that to me, the far more interesting discussion is the issue of why so many teachers always tell their students that mistakes are okay but never want to actually tell them that they’ve made a mistake. I’ve been teaching classes in test prep, composition, and US History for five years, and this is something I have thought about a lot.

[Supervisor] has told me that he sees such responses as “defensiveness”. Nothing could be further from the truth. However, had he told me this sooner, I would have understood that he was unhappy and changed my approach.

I am not arguing with this rating, since it accurately reflects [Supervisor]’s belief. However, his inability to address this with me for the first 10 weeks of practicum and then angrily speak loudly to me about it in the middle of November has been a source of distress and sadness for me.

Grievance #3: Inconsistent Standards

On 11/19/08, without any prior warning or hint of dissatisfaction, [Supervisor] summarily switched my secondary class to a different class, with the stated objective of forcing me to do more observations. He never consulted me on this, although he met secretly with my cooperating teacher to tell him of his intentions.

Undocumented Observation Requirement

Dean Callan⁹ told me in our 12/3 meeting that [Supervisor]'s primary reason for switching out my classes was to encourage me to spend more time teaching in a large classroom, rather than working with small groups. This may be something that was added after the fact, but it's absolutely untrue that [Supervisor] told me this. He clearly presented the move as corrective, although I was unclear as to what specific behavior was being corrected. My supervisory partner, [supervisory partner], confirmed my understanding in email¹⁰ that he never mentioned any objective other than to give me time for forced observations. Moreover, such a switch wasn't needed. I already worked three classes, including the Algebra II/Trig class that became my secondary. I might have mildly objected if [Supervisor] had just told me he wanted to formally switch my secondary classes to reflect his priority for my teaching large groups, but [Supervisor] quite clearly wanted me to stop working the Algebra Support class and go on mandated observations. He has also articulated this requirement to [Cooperating Teacher] in email. I ask that [Supervisor]'s emails to [Cooperating Teacher] be requested and included as part of this grievance.

[Supervisor] insists that I have refused to do observations of other teachers, when in fact I have done all the observations required on the Integration Plan. I believe my supervisory partner [supervisory partner] will confirm that I never once refused to do observations and that never once did my supervisor make observations an issue until 11/19. He would periodically ask if we'd done any observations. [supervisory partner] likes to observe and had done quite a few. I preferred to work three classes, rather than just two, and told him that if there was any minimum number of observations I needed to do, to please let me know. Otherwise, I would do the ones required for class. He told me consistently that there was no minimum.

I have since received an email¹¹ from [DCP] mandating a fixed number of observations in the Winter quarter that I must do at the direction of [Supervisor], yet she is not requiring this for any other student--even those who did far fewer observations than I did. Furthermore, the Integration Plan for Spring does not require any specific number of observations. A few days after [DCP] sent me that note, [STEP Staffer], a STEP staff

⁹ Meeting of 12/10.

¹⁰ Document 18

¹¹ Document 19

member, sent out a note¹² to the entire math cohort with “suggestions” for observations, and no required amount.

At no point did [Supervisor] or [DCP] inform me of any reason why they singled me out for mandating observations. They have provided me with any developmental reason why I should be forced to observe by their mandated schedule.

I have concluded that both of them are actually displeased because I made the mistake of saying that I would rather teach three classes than keep three hours permanently open for doing the occasional observation (and doing homework the rest of the time, as many STEP candidates do). In fact, I don't mind doing observations at all, and quite enjoy working with other students and teachers. I simply wanted to work three classes and thought I had the choice of how to spend my 20 hours at STEP, just as other students do. I was happy to do additional observations outside those three classes, and did so when I became aware of the requirements. I can find no documentation at STEP that requires students to verbally acknowledge the value of observations; nonetheless, I believe that is the unwritten rule that I violated.

When I began to become concerned that I was being held to a different standard, I sent out an email to all STEP teacher candidates, asking them how many observations of other classrooms they had done. I received twenty email responses and another eight verbal responses. The emails have been included in this grievance¹³, with names redacted. Many students have done no observations beyond those mandated by coursework. Others have done more than I have. I am about in the middle of the STEP pack, so far as observations go, and have been given no reason to justify my being forced to do additional observations.

What I find most surprising—and disturbing—is that neither [Supervisor] nor [DCP], who came into our 11/19 meeting, seem to be aware of the Integration Plan requirements, when the Integration Plan is a key requirement in our Clinical Work Agreement. Both of them told me repeatedly that there “was no minimum number of requirements”, and asserted time and again that the requirements I had done for coursework were not to be counted as observations. The Integration Plan expressly contradicts both of these statements.

Moreover, [DCP]'s email to me doesn't mention the Integration Plan for the Winter/Spring Quarters and contradicts some of the requirements. Teacher candidates are not required to do observations in the Spring, while I am supposedly required to complete several.

[DCP] is the head of the clinical work department, and surely should know of the documented requirements. Instead, she is holding me to a manufactured standard, all the while denying her knowledge of the plan that she makes all candidates sign.

¹² Document 20

¹³ Document 16

Reflection Timeframe

[Supervisor] never mentioned a hard and fast due date for our response to formal observations, known as “reflections”. While he would occasionally remind us to do our reflections (verbally or in email), he did so in the sense of “hey, it’s still on your to-do list”, not “you are three weeks overdue on a deadline”. He never mentioned a reflection due until at least two weeks after the actual observation.¹⁴ [Supervisor] observed my supervisory partner, [supervisory partner], several weeks before he observed me for the first time, and [supervisory partner] did not turn in her reflection for at least three weeks. [Supervisor] reminded [supervisory partner] during supervisory, and it was very much a joshing reminder, not an order. He would occasionally email me reminders, but at absolutely no point prior to 11/19 did he declare the requirement he later instituted, that reflections must be done within 48 hours of the observation--something that even the course doesn’t require.

Suddenly, during the 11/19 meeting, [Supervisor] told me that I have failed to complete reflections in a timely manner and that this would be duly reflected on my assessment. I was completely astonished, for several reasons. First, as just described, [Supervisor] had never expressed such a requirement. Second, I knew that [supervisory partner] had been extremely late on one of her reflections and may have been late on more. Finally, I had several times requested assistance with reflections. While [Supervisor] apparently perceives me as an arrogant person who “knows it all”, I had continually expressed my confusion about the required reflections, as is evidenced by the following events:

- I met with [supervisory partner] on October 6th for our supervisory, when [Supervisor] was absent. Most of the meeting involved my querying her about her reflection--what she’d done, what she’d focused on.
- A week or so later, I emailed [Supervisor] with a draft reflection, asking him for guidance.¹⁵ He didn’t email back, but in supervisory that week, he gave us verbal feedback on reflections. He said “ideally” they should be done 48 hours after the observation, made it clear that we were not supposed to wait for the debrief but at no point said that this was a course requirement. He said that we should just write about something that interested us in the observed class. I told him at the time that his response didn’t clarify anything for me, but that I would try again. Had [Supervisor] given me the Observation Cycle document at that time (more on this later), it would have been extremely helpful; however, I suspect that he is unaware of it, just as he’s unaware of the Integration Plan document.
- I wrote a second reflection¹⁶ about a debate (at least, I thought it was a debate) we’d had about correcting students. I really enjoyed writing that reflection, and thought for once I’d figured out what he’d wanted. Instead, he sent it back to me angrily, telling me I was “critiquing his observation”. I was stunned and confused, and again sent him an email asking for guidance on writing reflections.¹⁷ He

¹⁴ I didn’t print out a complete listing of my emails, but I can prove this assertion.

¹⁵ Document 22

¹⁶ Document 23

¹⁷ Document 24

didn't answer. At that time, I was working on three different critical papers and, under the illusion that the reflections were a lower priority, finished up the papers before I turned back to the reflection. In the meantime, [Supervisor] criticized me for "not bothering" to write reflections, something I found particularly unfair given how many times I had asked for help and been ignored.

After I began having trouble with [Supervisor], I began searching the website for guidance on the reflections issue. I came across a document, STEP Observation Cycle¹⁸, that described what was supposed to happen. While the course curriculum says that the reflection must be completed within a week of "the observation", the observation cycle document clearly defines a formal procedure.

[Supervisor] never followed this observation cycle. In [DCP]'s email of 1/6/09, she describes the process she wants me to follow—and it's not the observation cycle, either.

Here is what the Observation Cycle requires: First, the supervisor and teacher candidate were to have a pre-conference review. Second, the observation occurs. Third, within 24 hours, the supervisor and candidate were to have a debrief session. The supervisor is to give a document that goes through the class and his observations. Finally, within 48 hours of a debrief session, the candidate is to provide a written reflection.

[Supervisor] and I never had a pre-conference review for any observations. I did provide him with lesson plans.

[Supervisor] observed me four times.

- 9/17: Algebra II/Trig class, second period. We did not have a pre-conference. He provided a readable debrief on 9/25. We never met about it.
- 10/4: Algebra II/Trig class, fourth period. We did not have a pre-conference. We met briefly after this class with my CT. While he initially said he "owed me a debrief", several weeks later he told me that he had decided not to bother with a formal debrief when I asked him about it.
- 10/21: Algebra Support class. We did not have a pre-conference. We did not meet after class or at any time. He provided me with a debrief on 10/29.
- 10/31: Algebra II/Trig class, fourth period. We did not have a pre-conference, but I provided him with a lesson plan (he had never asked before). We met briefly after class with my CT. He provided me with a debrief on 11/03.
- 11/04: Algebra II/Trig class, fourth period. We had no pre-conference, but I provided a lesson plan. Bill videotaped me and left early. We did not debrief, although Bill provided some comments in an email. Then, on 11/17, he emailed me that his debrief was "essentially non-existent" when he videotaped.

My submitted reflections:

- For 9/17 observation: I submitted a draft on October 10/16, asking for guidance. After

¹⁸ Document 21.

his verbal rejection, I was still confused, but submitted a reflection on 10/30 that was accepted.

- For 10/4 observation: None submitted, as [Supervisor] did not provide a debrief and never requested a reflection, even though this was his first observation of my primary class.
- For 10/21 observation: I wrote an observation on 11/5, but didn't realize I hadn't sent it to him until 11/15, when I immediately emailed it. [Supervisor] not only rejected this reflection, but seemed very angry about it. He felt I was "telling him he was wrong", which I certainly had no intention of doing. I wrote him back saying again that I was deeply puzzled by the reflection requirement, that I absolutely meant no offense, and that I would try again. I resubmitted a reflection on 12/2, for reasons described earlier.
- For 11/4 videotaped observation: I was unaware I needed to write a reflection until 11/17, and two days later [Supervisor]'s angry behavior with me, coupled with two huge assignments due on 11/21 and 12/1, drove it from my mind. I submitted it in early December.

In short, [Supervisor] never followed the procedure that was supposedly required (and is mentioned in the practicum course description). He never gave [supervisory partner] or me formal procedures to follow. At times, he violated the procedures (for example, not writing debriefs after observations).

I would never object to any of this except suddenly, on November 19th, [Supervisor] pretended that he had been using a formal observation procedure all along, and that I hadn't been following it.

Again, what I am most troubled by is [Supervisor] and [DCP]'s apparent ignorance of STEP's own procedures and requirements. Had I been given the Observation Cycle document, I could have read its clear instructions on how to write a reflection and been able to complete the requirement in a timely manner.

I asked my STEP students (in the same email mentioned above) how many of them were turning in their reflections within 48 hours. Over half the respondents said they had not. Two said that their supervisors expressly told them that their school work was more important. Others hadn't even done formal reflections in a few cases.

Supervisor Dissatisfaction

[Supervisor] underwent a dramatic change in behavior towards me during the week of 11/19 and beyond, and I am at a loss to explain it. In that meeting, after he dismissed [supervisory partner], he told me that I was impossible to work with, that he was "at a loss" for ways to instruct me. He said that I made supervisory an unpleasant experience and that I was constantly arguing with him. I was devastated. I had liked and respected [Supervisor], valuing his good opinion.

In my assessment review of 12/3, [Supervisor] actually became angry when I told him

that I had done several observations in the two weeks between 11/19 and that evening. Far from accepting that I was willing to do required observations, he insisted again that I had refused to do observations. When I asked him to reconsider my evaluation in light of my observations and the knowledge that I had, in fact, been complying with the Integration Plan all along, he insinuated that my observation log¹⁹ was “just a piece of paper”, that I had obviously lied about my intent not to do observations and could have lied again. He repeated this charge in front of [DCP] and my cooperating teacher, and I have reported this charge to Dr. Lotan. Neither [DCP] nor Dr. Lotan, nor Dean Callan has ever evinced any concern about this charge, but my cooperating teacher, [Cooperating Teacher], was so shocked when [Supervisor] repeated the charge in a meeting on 12/4 that eventually my supervisor conceded that “perhaps calling it a lie” was inappropriate and grudgingly apologized.

I don't understand [Supervisor]'s characterization of our supervisory meetings. My supervisory partner, [supervisory partner], confirmed in email that the majority of our supervisory discussions were “enjoyable and interesting”. Without question, I often had different perspectives on teaching than [Supervisor] did, but I didn't think he was “wrong”. I simply disagreed, and enjoyed hearing his reasons for his views, just as I enjoy hearing from other people. If my engagement with [Supervisor] was inappropriate, he never indicated this prior to the meeting of 11/19. Both [supervisory partner] and my cooperating teacher have said they observed a distinct change in his manner and behavior towards me after this point.

I believe that STEP staff agrees with [Supervisor]'s assessment of my honesty, and are unconcerned by his basic hostility. In their view, if I understand various comments that Dr. Lotan and Dean Callan have made²⁰, I warrant his distrust and thus need to win back his confidence.

I find this perspective inexplicable; if I am dishonest, then surely the school should move forward on this in some disciplinary fashion. Otherwise, a man who bears a great deal of power in my future has expressed the belief that I lie, and only apologized for the term, not the charge. He has also made it clear that he has a great deal of distaste for me, something that he hid for a long time. Moreover, he has met with my cooperating teacher secretly, and communicated with him secretly about plans for me that he fully intended to blindside me with. Dr. Lotan, [DCP], and Dean Callan have all told me that his behavior is completely within the norm of supervisory behavior. I find this very difficult to believe.

¹⁹ Document 17

²⁰ Meeting of 12/10.

Standards for Review and Procedural Matters

Were the proper facts and criteria brought to bear on the decision?

Dr. Lotan did not use the facts defined in her own course description to calculate my grade. Despite my getting one of the lowest grades possible in the class, she never gave me any warning or sign that I was not meeting the course components.

[Supervisor] did not use the same facts and criteria that other supervisors used and that were defined in STEP documents to assess my professionalism. He expressly ignored other facts that should have raised my rating.

[Supervisor] and [DCP] both said they were completely unaware of the Integration Plan, a required element of the contract we sign with our placement schools. Certainly [Supervisor] did not use the fact that I had met all the elements of my Integration Plan in my assessment.

[Supervisor] was either unaware of or ignored the STEP Observation Cycle and the defined procedure for observations and certainly did not use them. Had he followed a defined procedure, I would have been less confused about the requirements.

Were improper or extraneous facts or criteria brought to bear that substantially affected the decision to the detriment of the grievant?

I believe Dr. Lotan, [DCP], and [Supervisor] have allowed their personal distaste for my teaching philosophy and my style of discourse to give me a lower grade than I deserved. Certainly, [Supervisor] used improper criteria to give me a lower assessment, based on STEP documents, and he did so inconsistently not only with other supervisors, but with his assessment of [supervisory partner], who did not receive a low assessment.

Were there any procedural irregularities that substantially affected the outcome of the matter to the detriment of the grievant?

At no time prior to the middle of November did [Supervisor] give me any warning that he was dissatisfied with my work. He has acknowledged this, but didn't think it necessary.

Given [Supervisor]'s very strong opinions of my low professionalism, as expressed both to me and in email to my cooperating teacher, his failure to notify me earlier was a major procedural irregularity that substantially affected the outcome of this matter, to my detriment.

Had [Supervisor] told me that he wanted me to do the observations in the Integration plan, I would have done them. Had [Supervisor] told me he wanted reflections in 48 hours after observation, I would have done them. Instead, he ran supervisory as if it was just an engaging chat session with paperwork that needed to be done eventually--until

11/19, when he suddenly held me to requirements that he wasn't even using for his other supervised student.

Moreover, [Supervisor] and [DCP] did not follow the defined STEP procedures and in many cases even seemed unaware of them.

Given the proper facts, criteria, and procedures, was the decision one which a person in the position of the decision maker might reasonably have made?

I do not believe that anyone who didn't have a strong bias against me could reasonably argue that I deserved either the professionalism ranking or the B in the course, when comparing me to other STEP candidates. A review of my submitted work in comparison to others should make that clear.

I also believe that [Supervisor]'s treatment of me for those two weeks in November was highly inappropriate and caused me considerable distress at a time when STEP assignment burdens were extraordinarily heavy.