



Teacher Rounds: A Collaborative, Classroom-based Learning Practice¹

Introduction and Basic Protocol

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The concept of “rounds” comes from the training model used in teaching hospitals, in which interns and a teaching doctor together visit patients, and review, discuss, and do research relevant to each case. We have adapted this concept as part of our overall effort to engage teachers and prospective teachers in reflective and productive dialogue on children’s learning and corresponding teaching practice. It helps fulfill our general goal of building a professional learning community which acknowledges and respects a teacher’s experience, and which views adult learning, no less than children’s, as a continuous process. It likewise enacts our idea of a professional learning culture focused on understanding and enhancing the teaching-learning process in its actual context—where knowledge of students, social context, subject matter content, and the process of learning come together.

Our version of rounds engages small groups of teachers and/or student teachers and/or teacher educators and liberal arts faculty in understanding the teaching-learning process at work within a particular learning group at a particular point in time. A Round is pre-arranged. The Round group receives an orientation regarding the planned classroom learning from the Round Teacher (the host of the round), observes and/or participates in it in some well-defined way, and reflects on and discusses it afterwards. A Round might focus on a previously agreed upon area or question of teaching practice, on a particular approach in implementing a particular curriculum, on understanding children’s learning process and knowledge-building in a particular context, or on all three of these domains of classroom activity at once. A Round might also serve simply as a way to share and reflect on one’s teaching practice with colleagues, an opportunity to develop meaningful conversation about teaching and learning, students’ academic development, and educational purposes through shared experience at a given moment in time.

What distinguishes a Round from other professional development activity is that it occurs in the actual context of teaching and learning, it draws on and encourages

¹ For an extensive treatment of Rounds, with examples, see Del Prete, T. (2013). *Teacher Rounds: A Guide to Collaborative Learning in and From Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

investigation and reflection on teachers' and learners' experience, it provides a shared experience as a basis for conversation, and it brings to bear interactively the different perspectives of different participants in the reflection process. Its meaningfulness lies in the collaborative way in which it involves teachers as professional and adult learners, and particularly in its direct relation to teachers' experience and practice, and, in turn, to the children and youth with whom teachers are working. It builds professional community through processes of inquiry and reflection.

In our partner school collaborative, Rounds have become more and more a customary and expected part of professional learning. Master of Arts in Teaching students and teachers all participate; the teacher preparation students conduct at least three teacher rounds and attend many more over the course of their yearlong teaching internship. They reflect a shift in the professional learning culture of these schools – a shift towards more collaborative relationships, towards habits of reflective dialogue, research, and study, and towards a process of open, active, and continuous expansion of professional knowledge. In such developing “learning-centered” schools, adults, no less than children, strive to learn how to learn together and how to make their learning continuous and fruitful for themselves and their learning community.

Summary of Teacher Round Purposes and Features

Rounds features:

- Small, collegial groups (4-8)
- Multiple and complementary perspectives joined together (e.g., different levels of classroom teaching experience, including graduate interns; university faculty)
- Teacher-developed and directed: The teacher frames the teaching and learning focus, as well as the questions that s/he feels will help most in understanding the actual teaching-learning experience
- Pre-arranged, shared experience
- Focus on actual teaching-learning experiences in actual context.

Rounds purposes:

- To foster dialogue on content learning and classroom best practice
- To foster habits of reflection and inquiry focused on student learning and teaching practice
- To support efforts to assess student learning and understanding;

- To build a professional learning community based on sharing practice, collaborative efforts to understand student learning, and a common commitment to fostering powerful teaching and learning.

The Teacher Round Protocol

Rounds Preparation.

- The *Round focus* is determined by the Round Teacher (or collectively by the Rounds group if the Round is a co-planned learning activity)
- The Round Teacher prepares a *Round Sheet* (about 1 page) for Round participants that includes the following sections (see also the accompanying more elaborate discussion of the Round Sheet):

Background: Provides information relevant to the day's learning and the classroom context (what, who, why). Considers:

- The subject matter and how it relates to students' prior learning
- The curriculum and how it is unfolding (refer to any relevant standards)
- The teacher's theory of learning for this lesson--why the teacher believes that the learning activities will be effective in achieving learning goals (include any relevant research or "best practice" evidence)
- The classroom community and its development
- The development of particular aspects of the teacher's practice (for example, questions or group work)

Round Learning Focus: The Round learning focus is a summary of those aspects of the teaching-learning experience on which the Round will focus. What is the focus of learning today? What will you and students do to fulfill the learning goal(s)?

Round Questions (3-5): These are a set of questions to guide observation and reflection by round participants. These questions are the ones the Round Teacher believes will help most in the process of understanding students' learning experience and the impact of teaching practice. At least one or two should be learning-centered—framed so that the Round team will know what to look for or listen to as indications of students' engagement in learning. In other words, they should lend themselves to gathering concrete evidence of the learning process—of students' thinking, uncertainties, puzzlements, moments' of understanding, etc. Other questions can be practice-centered—focused on aspects of teaching and classroom practice to which the teacher would like to draw particular attention. Questions that yield a rich harvest of observation

and evidence provide a strong basis for reflective and probing post-round discussion.

1. What would you look or listen for in order to know whether students were engaged, figuring out, and learning in line with your focus?
2. What evidence can observers gather to help you understand the effectiveness of the task(s) students are engaged in?
3. What can observers look, listen, or ask for in order to understand the effectiveness of what you do or say as a teacher?

Pre-Round Orientation (5-20 minutes): The Round Teacher discusses the Round Sheet (and any other relevant material) and what interactive role participants may play, if any, with students during the course of the round. Round participants ask questions as appropriate. All should be confident that they know something to look for in order to understand the content of student learning and the teaching-learning process.

Teacher Round (class period)

- Participants distribute themselves around the classroom perimeter for focused observation and/or circulate and interact with students, as determined in the Pre-Round orientation.
- Participants record notes relevant to the Round questions on the Round Sheet (They give their Round Sheet, with notes, to the Round Teacher at the end of Post-Round discussion)

Post-Round Discussion/Reflection (15-30 minutes)

- Typically facilitated by the University Mentor (if the Round is hosted by a teaching intern)
- Begins with observation and reflection by Round teacher
- Round group members share observations (descriptive) based on Round questions
- Reflection based on observations
 - Based on observations, what might be changed and why?
- Reflection based on Rounds Questions is initiated by the Rounds Teacher.
- Rounds participants give the Round Teachers their Round Sheets with recorded observations

Note: it might be useful for the Rounds Teacher to audiotape this post-round discussion.

Post-Round Teacher Reflection

Following the Post-Round discussion, the Round Teacher reviews any video or

audiotapes, reads the classroom notes made by rounds participants on their Rounds Sheets and prepares a Post-Round Reflection. The reflection provides an opportunity for the Round Teacher to say what s/he learned from the rounds process, to respond to questions described on the round sheet, and to respond to specific comments made by participants either during the post-round discussion or in written notes made during the rounds process.