Teaching for Learning Content (TLC) integration into
Valley City State University Conceptual Framework

Timeline

1. Fall 2010 - VCSU representatives attended conference on Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) in Roseville, MN and listened to the plans for TPA implementation in the state of Minnesota. (VCSU switched the title for its capstone student teaching unit to TLC by number 32)
2. Fall 2010 - Spring 2011 - Research time was needed to study TPA outlines, samples from California and Minnesota, as well as Teacher Work Sample concepts that had been reviewed in the past. The resources contributed to the development of VCSU’s initial draft of a capstone unit and to ensure the VCSU version of a capstone unit connected with the VCSU Conceptual Framework.
3. Spring 2011 – Initial draft of an outline for a capstone unit was developed to replace the 2011 expectations through which student teachers demonstrate their VCSU Conceptual Framework efforts in their senior portfolio
4. Spring 2011 – Initial drafts were circulated among unit faculty at VCSU (included School of Education faculty and all secondary methods teachers) for input and discussion
5. Spring 2011 – A special meeting was scheduled to explain the concept of the TPA and to discuss a plan for involving K-12 educators to gain additional input on a capstone unit for VCSU student teachers
6. Spring 2011 - Two VCSU faculty members helped two inservice elementary classroom teachers (recent graduates teaching in the area) implement sample units and embed the units into a senior portfolio. The idea was to learn from their reflections on the process and to create examples of learning targets for future student teachers.
7. Summer 2011 – A workgroup at VCSU made adjustments to the TPA draft. The revised draft was cross-referenced with the spring 2010 VCSU curriculum changes, and the draft was again cross-referenced with InTASC standards. The process and discussions led to the establishment of a template and checklist.
8. Summer 2011 – Workgroups involving K-12 educators, the two inservice teachers who implemented a unit, and unit faculty members were assembled in each academic area. The workgroups met on June 17, 2011 at VCSU to discuss VCSU plans for a capstone student teaching unit like the TPA model and to seek input from K-12 partners on the draft.
9. Summer 2011 – Feedback from K-12 educators and unit faculty was utilized to modify the TPA and create a new checklist, template, and handbook for student teachers
10. Summer 2011 – Portfolio rubrics were developed for the assessment of the TPA moved from a draft outline to a form ready to pilot in the spring of 2012 (Finalization came in mid-September as a new 5-point rubric emerged based on research from TPA pilot studies and feedback from TPA assessors)
11. Summer 2011 – The changes were suggested in the sample units (completed by two elementary classroom teachers and two VCSU faculty members). The sample units were modified to only include content that fit the template established after the June 17, 2011 K-12/VCSU workshop and feedback.
12. Fall 2011 – The annual unit assessment meeting (held August 18, 2011) included TPA information as a resource, as well as provided a review of timelines for a new capstone student teaching unit and opened channels for discussion. Plans were set for future student teacher support and meeting times.
13. Fall 2011 – Focus groups began meeting
   a. Small groups of faculty members in each content area (language arts, math, business, fine arts, HPER, etc.) met to determine what assignments in their courses could be adjusted to better
prepare students to be successful with a capstone student teaching unit. Faculty agreed to experiment with adjusting courses during the remainder of the semester.

b. A small group of faculty who worked with field experiences (Intro, Practicum, Student Teaching) met to determine how field experience expectations could be adjusted to “ease” teacher candidates into the process. Possible roadblocks to the process were outlined, with future meetings planned to discuss each of the roadblocks and how they might be minimized or eliminated.

14. Fall 2011 – A VCSU representative attended a conference on the TPA in St. Paul, MN and listened to the plans for TPA implementation in the state of Minnesota. (Additional handbook and material changes came out in mid-September from the state of Minnesota)

15. Fall 2011 – September 7, 2011 was the date of a second K-12/VCSU faculty session. The work session was organized for faculty who were not able to attend the June 17, 2011 meeting.

16. Fall 2011 – Discussions were held about the role of methods/portfolio instructors’ involvement in organizing the TPA-type model into the senior portfolio for each academic area. The goal was to have the roles clearly defined regarding who will assist students in the process of integrating the capstone unit components into the senior portfolio. Meetings were held in November of 2011.

17. Fall 2011 – The EDUC 491 Elementary Education portfolio class was taught using the current Education Abilities (PIE) model expectations for candidates graduating in the fall of 2011 or the spring of 2012. Elementary Education candidates who planned to graduate in the fall of 2012 were taught how to meet the expectations of the new TPA-type model.

18. Fall 2011 - Intro to Education candidates were introduced to the capstone unit template, rubrics, and the new portfolio design. Changes from past portfolio expectations were emphasized.

19. Fall 2011 – Faculty shared template samples of capstone unit models developed in various methods courses with the goal of adding to the current examples and to create a new booklet of samples for future use. The School of Education had two piloted samples prepared that were used most frequently by some methods teachers.

20. Fall 2011 – Meetings were held with methods teachers and eventually all unit faculty to answer questions, share ideas, and ensure that teacher candidates would be prepared to conduct the units successfully while student teaching.

21. Fall 2011 & Spring 2012 Conferences – VCSU continued to research TPA models and share ideas with fellow Bush Grant institutions. A fall 2011 National Convening of Field Experience conference in Washington D.C. featured a presenter from Stanford who shared updates about what was happening nationally with the TPA; and a Spring 2012 AACTE conference in Chicago featured similar sessions regarding more TPA details and how national efforts were leading to the spread of rigorous capstone requirements like that of the TPA to benefit and strengthen teacher preparation.

22. Spring 2012 – Teacher Education faculty identified specific activities and assignments on syllabi that are designed to prepare teacher candidates to successfully develop a capstone unit.

23. Spring 2012 – Focus groups continued to meet to discuss how courses/assignments could be further adjusted to prepare students for the TPA-type capstone unit.

24. Spring 2012 – The capstone unit model was piloted with two, teacher candidate volunteers occur during student teaching. (One elementary major and one secondary major) Students learned about the model during their methods courses and received one-on-one training with VCSU faculty.

25. Spring 2012 – A K-12/VCSU unit faculty workgroup meeting was scheduled (along with state representation) to develop a plan for sharing effective unit plans.
26. Spring 2012 – Teacher candidates who student taught in the fall of 2012 attended special lab sessions held on February 27th in Valley City (VCSU) and February 28th in Fargo (NDSU) to learn more about implementing their capstone unit.

27. Spring 2012 – The Web Development Office at VCSU established an “organization” site through the VCSU portal. Two VCSU unit faculty members built a site where candidates could see unit samples, portfolios, and have access to resources for building their units.

28. Spring 2012 - Teacher candidates from VCSU and NDSU who student taught in the fall of 2012 had scheduled work-times available to provide opportunities information, questions and answers about implementing their capstone unit on May 2nd at VCSU and May 3rd at NDSU. Faculty members were welcome to join the students in learning more about the new capstone units.

29. Spring 2012 – Meetings were held with unit faculty to review portfolio and capstone unit assessment practices (changes in the traditional VCSU Portfolio Assessment Day(s) will require revision) Proposals were suggested to faculty at School of Education and Graduate Studies (SEGS) meetings and followed up electronically with feedback to establish a new portfolio review process for the fall of 2012.

30. Spring 2012 – Meetings were held to work with online and distance resources – a decision was made to focus on the VCSU on-campus education majors and NDSU elementary education majors for the 2012-2013 school. (Fulfilling the requirement that all student teachers complete a capstone unit while student teaching and present it during their portfolio (capstone) assessment time with faculty at the end of the term.) The decision was to require the students from Trinity Bible College (TBC), online education majors, and Wyoming education majors to complete the capstone unit beginning in the fall of 2013, with the 2013-14 academic year. A spring 2012 meeting was held with the lead TBC representative to prepare her and her future students for the capstone unit model. The idea was received positively.

31. Spring 2012 – In addition to modifying VCSU’s own version of a capstone handbook, a template, checklist, and website (organization) were developed. Extra audio/video equipment was ordered (a grant was written and accepted for additional video cameras).

32. Summer 2012 – The Bush Foundation institutions received an email that the 14 NExT institutions should NOT post its TPA work on websites open to the public, but rather through sites that involve passwords for students and faculty. VCSU did not support the time and costs for outside evaluators that the TPA would require. The state of North Dakota was not requiring the TPA (now edTPA). VCSU did not choose to venture into any external assessments with Minnesota institutions of higher education. VCSU had made plans to use 10 rubrics instead of the 12 used by the TPA at that time. The format and some of the wording in the rubrics were modified. Parts VCSU’s capstone unit process were modified based on feedback from K-12 and unit faculty educators at work sessions. VCSU believed the external assessment process would not be sustainable for the institutions and would likely bring additional costs to students in the long term. VCSU decided to name for its student teaching capstone unit that addressed K-12 student learning the Teaching for Learning Capstone (TLC).

33. SEGS faculty members received the Teaching for Learning Capstone (TLC) name in a positive manner. The name states the intent of the process. It was decided to credit Stanford and the state of Minnesota, but changes were made to fit VCSU and its conceptual framework.

34. Summer 2012 – TLC resources continue to be developed for students, university supervisors, and also cooperating teachers.

35. Summer 2012 - A visual timeline for student completion of the unit was developed to remind cooperating teacher and university supervisors to NOT plan for student teachers to lead their TLC unit during a phase when the student teacher is NOT in charge of the entire day’s preparation and instruction.
36. Summer 2012 - Help Documents were created for out-of-area supervisors and a training session for area adjunct supervisors was organized for the fall of 2012 in Fargo.

37. Fall 2012 – Time was committed for VCSU SEGS faculty and student teacher supervisors to receive information about TLC resources and to invite TLC questions and discussion.

38. Fall 2012 – The VCSU version of the Teaching for Learning Capstone (TLC) was taught in all methods courses. Each course in the Professional Education Sequence has a project or learning opportunity connected with supporting the TLC, and the projects are noted in the syllabi.

39. Fall 2012 - The portfolio courses engage in TLC efforts. Resources were developed to assist portfolio instructors and student teachers. The Elementary Education portfolio instructor who worked closely with the TLC process offered to visit other portfolio courses or for the instructors to have the student teachers in various majors seek a meeting to talk about incorporating the TLC into the senior portfolios.

40. Fall 2012 – Workshops were held to assist fall 2012 student teachers in developing their TLC “learning segments”/units”. The workshops were scheduled for early September.

41. Fall 2012 – The spring 2013 student teachers had their first meeting with the Director of Field Experiences in mid-to-late-September of 2012. TLC representatives were present and a list of names will be generated to invite all the spring 2013 candidates to meetings about the TLC in October, early December, and in January for those who had four-week courses before beginning their student teaching in February. The purpose of the meetings was to help the spring 2013 student teachers get ready for the TLC.

42. Fall 2012 – The Blackboard Organization was developed for student teachers, methods teachers and university supervisors. The online site provided access to TLC resources, Help Documents, and pilot samples.

43. Fall 2012 – Two School of Education unit faculty members, who worked to develop resources for a Blackboard “TLC Organization” for students and faculty, offered to meet with secondary methods classes at a faculty member’s request. Several methods teachers accepted the invitation. The offer to visit methods courses is made each fall, but the unit also wants each methods teacher to feel comfortable in teaching their candidates about the TLC.

44. Fall 2012 – The initial year for large group implementation of the TLC model during student teaching for VCSU on-campus and NDSU on-campus students. Online students, as well as those at TBC, and Wyoming students were in a pilot phase during the spring of 2013. A meeting was held with TBC coordinator to explain the TLC process with plans of implementation at TBC in the fall of 2013.

45. Fall 2012 – TLC support for the fall student teachers was continuous throughout the fall semester of 2012. The student teachers completed their TLC unit during their field experience and reflected on what they learned as part of the portfolio process at the end of the term.

46. Fall 2012 – Faculty identified TLC projects in their syllabi and courses. Each project plays a role in helping student teachers learn how to develop a TLC unit that incorporates strategies for effective teaching and learning for all students.

47. Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 – TLC units were integrated into Education Ability section of senior portfolios. The TLC units align with the unit’s Conceptual Framework model. Faculty members evaluated the portfolios using the university’s traditional 1, 2, 3 scoring system with the intention of hosting a summer workshop to assess the TLC units at greater depth.

48. Spring 2013 – TLC lab opportunities were available prior to the start of and during the experience for current spring semester student teachers in Valley City and Fargo. Separate labs were held in Valley City and Fargo for the fall of 2013 student teachers.
49. Fall 2013 - A meeting was held with new TBC education coordinator to explain the TLC process with plans of implementation with student teachers at TBC. Teaching about the TLC unit is a continuous process for student teachers and also for faculty as personnel changes will continue to occur at various times.

50. Summer 2013 - A May 20th workshop meeting occurred with the intent of utilizing the TLC rubrics for assessment and improvement. SEGS unit faculty members attending the workshop practiced with the rubrics and generated ideas for successful implementation of the TLC rubric scoring in the fall of 2013.
   - The rubrics were initially given a VCSU outline using resources from the edTPA and state of Minnesota workshop materials. The original edTPA 12 rubrics were merged into 10. (Academic language characteristics were integrated into the Conceptual Framework - Plan, Implement, Evaluate, and Reflect sections.) Integration decisions were made based on feedback from VCSU meetings with K-12 educators and VCSU unit faculty members from each academic area who shared a clear voice for a more concise process. Three VCSU faculty members reviewed the feedback and made decisions to reduce the rubrics to 10. The faculty members then molded the language of the rubrics to fit VCSU’s Conceptual Framework language and vocabulary in a way that was universal to all academic disciplines and grade levels.

51. Summer 2013 - TLC samples from the spring of 2013 were added to the organization from each academic area possible. The idea was to provide “best of” samples to help student teachers with a clear vision of the expectations and direction toward the learning target.

52. Summer 2013 – TLC resources were added so the TLC Organization in Blackboard was helpful for student and faculty support. Whether the student teachers had a home base for their instruction that was on campus or online, all student teaching takes place off campus and resources are needed for support as if every student teacher was a distance learner.

53. Summer 2013 – The TLC was explained in Wyoming to collaborative candidates from Wyoming who student taught in fall 2013. Online resources were available to every student, but now the Wyoming students were learning about the TLC in their methods courses.

54. Fall 2013 – All teacher candidates who student taught completed a TLC unit and incorporated it into the senior portfolio. The unit evaluated the TLC unit with the traditional portfolio model of assessment. Each program area used the TLC rubrics to evaluate random samples. Faculty members reported the length of time to assess one TLC unit with the 10 rubrics ranged from one hour to one-and-a-half-hours. A decision was made to use a quicker method of evaluation on senior portfolio day and to have a summer workday for more intense examination of the TLC units for the sake of program improvement.

55. Spring 2014 – All teacher candidates completed their TLC units in their senior portfolios using myeFolio. Programs with a small number of candidates presenting portfolios used the 10 TLC rubrics for assessment. Elementary Education had 55 students present senior portfolios in the spring of 2014. The portfolios were evaluated concisely in May for the sake of the candidates and faculty, but Elementary Education faculty members scheduled a workday for additional assessment.

56. Summer 2014 – A TLC assessment workday was held on August 14, 2014. The goals were to assess as many TLC units as accurately as possible and use the data to discover trends, strengths, and weaknesses for improvement of our teacher preparation and the TLC process. The focus was on quality, but the unit wanted to assess as many portfolios as possible. Adding volume in terms of the number of units assessed was necessary to add meaning to the data. VCSU wants the data to be reliable and valid work. It will take the unit time to settle in on the exact process. The unit intent was to have two faculty members working together and focusing on one rubric area to help our learn more about the reliability of the assessment
rubrics. The data will be used to gain insight for improvement of the TLC assessment rubrics, TLC preparation, TLC supervision, and TLC resources.

57. Summer 2014 - Through the faculty assessment TLC work session on August 14th, the faculty members present suggested multiple ways that teacher candidates could make improvements in their content and writing. The suggestions were put into a report that was to be shared with all unit faculty members in the fall with the intent of helping unit faculty or methods teachers where student teachers are doing well now and where future student teachers could do better. Some of the comments opened the door for discussion about the rubrics and the portfolio assessment process as well.

58. Fall 2014 – The TLC data and faculty feedback in a summary report with secondary methods faculty on September 18th and with the SEGS faculty (which includes elementary methods faculty) on September 19th. The goal was for methods faculty and faculty members who teach in the professional education sequence to learn from the TLC assessments and consider ideas for program improvement.

Suggestions from the August 14th session that were shared with unit faculty on September 18th and 19th:

- Candidates can do more to connect their Bloom’s Taxonomy questions to the lesson plans.
- Candidates can do more to connect their lesson plans with the standards.
- Candidates should provide more “evidence of student learning” in the assessment section.
- Faculty member teams need a clear scope of “what to assess” and time to study the rubrics.
- Slight wording changes were suggested for Rubric 3 (PLAN) in levels 1 and 5, as well as Rubric 4 levels 4 and 5.
- Candidates did not consistently align assessments with the standards and objectives they intended to meet.
- Discussions occurred among methods teachers from several different programs. The faculty members discussed having their own Professional Learning Community to share ideas among methods teachers to help candidates with some of the most challenging areas of the TLC units and diverse student needs in K-12 classrooms.
- Candidates need to utilize a variety of formative assessments. The example provided by the faculty member was the use of “thumbs up” as a formative assessment was too common.
- Discussion occurred about combining two rubrics or shortening any of the current expectations.
- Discussion about the TLC unit and portfolio presentation day occurred with respect to more than one program. The Elementary Education program will have a meeting devoted to the topic in the fall of 2014. Two School of Education and Graduate Studies (SEGS) representatives will communicate with the new methods teachers.
- Two SEGS representatives continue to offer TLC unit support and portfolio assistance to methods teachers and their students in the secondary education majors. Both have visited methods classes and hosted TLC labs for teacher candidates in the past.
- A comment was made about “tense”. That candidates can improve their writing about what they “will do” in the PLAN section and what they “did”. The idea was followed up with a reference to the future benefit of teacher candidates writing research proposals in future tense and writing research in the past tense.
- Another comment focused on the importance of writing well in order to communicate everything the candidate thought about in the process of assessment or differentiated instruction. The comment was made about how much teacher candidates must consider and write for an external assessor to understand all the work the candidate has done.

59. Fall 2014 – The unit continually updates the TLC Organization with quality TLC samples, offers lab times for student teachers to ask questions, trains new faculty members about the TLC and offers to speak to candidates in methods or portfolio courses.
The unit continues to reflect on and assess its TLC process and assessments. The unit uses data and also seeks feedback during the assessment process. The bottom line is to improve teacher preparation in order to enable teacher candidates to effectively help all K-12 students in their classrooms to learn.

The Teaching for Learning Capstone (TLC) requires candidates to apply the unit’s Conceptual Framework and draw on everything they have learned in their teacher preparation experience to help every student in their classroom learn.