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# Dean's Corner: Teacher Agency and Today's Teachers

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# Teacher Agency and Today's Teachers

**W**ith all that is happening in the education profession today, it is important to remember that teachers have power to change the system. This power for change can be called “Agency” which is defined as the capacity of teachers to shape critically their responses to educational processes and practices (Biesta and Teddlar, 2006).

With all the external push from various sectors, ultimately teachers are the ones that can cut through all of the cross-purposed mandates and transform their own process and practices to ensure the best educational experiences for their students. Here at the College of Education, our goal is to train liberally educated teachers that can think critically about the latest pedagogical strategies and the latest fads to hit education. This goal creates graduates who are able to assess student strengths, weaknesses, and needs to inform their practice.

At times, there is a tension between the capacity of teachers to use professional discretion and the legislative standards and policies set by the state. In this case it is important for teachers to move beyond their focus on their students and be active in engaging policy-makers. Attending public hearings, writing letters, and mobilizing social networks are ways to affect change to legislation. Through these steps,

## References:

Biesta, G., & Teddlar, M. (2006). *How is agency possible? Towards an ecological understanding of agency-as-achievement*. Teaching & Learning Research Programme Retrieved from: [http://www.tlrp.org/projectsites/LearningLives/papers/working\\_papers/Working\\_paper\\_5\\_Exeter\\_Feb\\_06.pdf](http://www.tlrp.org/projectsites/LearningLives/papers/working_papers/Working_paper_5_Exeter_Feb_06.pdf)



Photography by Clayton Pelon

teachers can use their experience and knowledge to shape policy. For reasons historical and cultural, the acknowledgement of teaching as a profession has not been widely adopted. If teachers become more active agents within and without the system, I believe respect and understanding could flourish.

As a College of Education we have charted a course that embraces critical thinking and adaptation to change, adapts to the changes, but remains true to our roots as a university devoted to the foundation of liberal education. We have been in the process of looking at how we prepare teachers and are moving to adopt Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, and International Baccalaureate standards. Fortunately our emphasis on critical thinking and project-based learning has positioned the COE well and we believe our students are set to thrive with the new requirements.

I hope this issue inspires and motivates you to be an agent of change and best practices within the field. The following articles will help you think critically about the myriad of the challenges the profession now faces.

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