



Rounds Model of Professional Development

What Is the Rounds Model?

The Clark University Teacher Education program and the University Park Campus School use the “rounds model” of professional development as the centerpiece of their teacher training and development programs. This powerful form of embedded professional development is based on medical school rounds and adapted for use in education by Clark. In typical rounds at a teaching hospital, interns and a teaching doctor together visit patients, and review, discuss, and do research relevant to each case. At UPCS and Clark, this same process has been adapted for education where a teacher hosts a group of visitors in his or her classroom and engages with them in a dialogue on students’ learning and corresponding teaching practice.

How Does the Rounds Model Work?

A round begins with the host teacher offering a pre-round or discussion of her class. The host teacher prepares a “pre-rounds sheet,” explaining the learning objective and lesson plans for the class and cites specific items on which he or she would like feedback. The pre-round discussion focuses on student learning goals rather than teaching goals. This allows the process to focus on the most important question a teacher can ask “Are the students learning?” Then the group observes the class, which is often videotaped as well, and finally reconvenes to discuss and reflect on the practice and learning that took place. Again, the focus is on the learning that took place in the room and how the teaching practice supported it. This ensures that the discussion supports the teacher to improve his or her own practice and does not feel like an evaluation.

What Are the Benefits of the Rounds Model?

This model helps to create a professional learning community of highly reflective teachers. It acknowledges and respects a teacher’s experience, and views adult learning, no less than that of students, as a continuous process. What distinguishes a “round” from other professional development activity is that it occurs in the actual context of teaching and learning and is collaborative and reflective in nature; it represents a teacher’s willingness to open his classroom to other teachers for input and inspiration. It also creates embedded opportunities for teachers to talk to each other about student work and teaching practice.

See the outline that follows for more details on implementing the rounds model at your school or in your program.

A. Purposes and Features

Rounds have several features and purposes. Features include the following:

- Small, collegial groups (4-8); and
- Multiple perspectives: different levels of classroom teaching experience; school-based perspective; university (education and liberal arts faculty).

Teacher-developed and directed

- Pre-arranged, shared experience; and
- Focused on actual teaching-learning experiences in actual context.

Their purposes include the following:

- To foster dialogue linking theory and practice;
- To support efforts to assess student learning and understanding;
- To promote reflective and productive dialogue on teaching practice;
- To build a professional learning community based on shared practice; and
- To build a professional learning community focused on understanding and enhancing the teaching-learning process.

B. The Rounds Process

Rounds preparation:

- Rounds focus is determined by the Rounds group and/or the Rounds Leader (host of the round)
- The Rounds Leader, the host teacher, prepares a *Rounds Sheet* (about 1 page) for Rounds participants, which includes the following sections:
- **Background:** gives perspective on the place of the learning activity in the evolution of the curriculum and students' learning; refers to *relevant* research or theory, as well as curriculum frameworks.
- **Focus:** summarizes those aspects of the teaching-learning experience on which the Round will focus.
- **Rounds Questions (3-5):** lists questions, focused on student learning in relation to teaching practice, to guide observation and reflection on the part of rounds participants. These questions should relate to the learning plan.
- All Rounds are videotaped. Rounds Leader arranges for videotaping of the Round session.
- Rounds Leader arranges class coverage for both the pre-and post Round.

Pre-round orientation (5-20 minutes)

- Rounds Leader presents the Rounds Sheet and Learning Activity Plan and discusses what interactive role with students, if any, participants may play. Participants ask questions as appropriate.

Round (20-60 minutes)

- Participants sit around classroom perimeter for focused observation and/or circulate and interact with students, as determined in the pre-round orientation.

Post-round group discussion/reflection (15-30 minutes)

- Reflection based on Rounds Questions is initiated by Rounds Leader.
- Feedback emphasizes observations that focus on and illustrate student learning; what is seen and heard as an indication of the development of student understanding.
- Consideration of alternative approaches (what might be done differently and why) might be suggested or submitted.

Note: It might be useful for the Post-Round Presenter to audiotape this post-round discussion.

C. Post-Round Presenter Reflection (Optional)

Following the post-round discussion, the Round Leader reviews any video or audiotapes, reads the classroom notes made by rounds participants and prepares a Post Round Reflection. The reflection provides an opportunity for the Presenter to say what he or she learned from the rounds process, to respond himself or herself to questions described on the rounds sheet; and to respond to specific comments made by participants either during the post-round discussion or in written notes made by rounds process. That is, the Post-Round Reflection encourages the Rounds Presenter to think hard about the questions outlined on the Rounds Sheet and discussed during the Rounds discussion.

Questions to guide group discussion and reflection

The rounds program is a collegial way to share, understand, and reflect on teaching practice and students' learning. Rounds provide an opportunity for teachers to focus together on specific practices or episodes of learning before, during, and after they occur. Rounds can also become an occasion for reflecting on teaching and learning in relation to broad questions linked to concepts in the Common Core of Learning, the Standards for Educational Licensure, Curriculum Frameworks, and the "Ways of Knowing" philosophy. Some of these questions are listed below; please add more of your own, in keeping with the work of each round.

- **A Community of Learners/A Culture of Active Learning**

1. What did we learn about how different students are working together? In what sense did they cooperate or collaborate? Did all students have an equal chance to participate?
2. Did students support one another in learning? Did they encourage each other's involvement and take some responsibility for it? Did they try to understand one another (e.g., *"I'm not sure I understand what you mean. Can you say more about it?"*) and build common understanding? Did they support one another in taking risks in thinking?
3. In what sense were students actively involved in learning?

- **Habits of Mind**

1. What questions did students ask that might indicate their commitment to inquire and reflect?
2. Did students demonstrate openness to alternative thinking or ways of communicating?
3. Did students show any inclination to examine the source and validity of ideas? Did they ask, for example, "How do we know?"
4. Did students reflect on the significance of what they were learning or trying to do? Did they ask, for example, "Why is this important?" or "So what?!" or "What does this mean for us?"
5. Did students reflect on how they were thinking? (e.g., *"Okay, my thinking so far has been ..."*) Did they talk about what they were trying to do or learn and how?
6. Did they discuss at all the value of how they were going about things and whether there might be other possibilities? (e.g., *"We seem to be bogged down by the idea that the relationship has to be hierarchical. What if we thought of it as reciprocal?"*)

- **Language**

1. What are the patterns of student talk? Are students elaborating their own ideas, using their own language? What does their language suggest about what they understand?
2. In what sense does student language reflect an understanding of how knowledge is developed in this particular domain?

- **Content Understanding**

1. To what extent were students developing their own understanding of content?
2. Did students develop depth and breadth of understanding? How do you know?
3. Did students gain understanding considered significant in this knowledge domain?

- **Modes of Learning**

1. What different modes of learning (e.g., kinesthetic, interpersonal, visual) were represented in student activity? How did different students respond?

- **Teaching Practice**

1. What was the role of the teacher in promoting student learning?