

OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The theme of our conceptual framework *Linked Hands, Heads, and Hearts: Building Powerful Learning Communities* has not changed since the last NCATE visit. The Unit conceptual framework, first drafted in January 1999, was approved by the Unit faculty and Steering Committee in September 1999. University and Education faculty, and PreK-12 faculty reviewed the document in July 2000, which resulted in minor revisions and changes in wording of indicators under the Unit outcomes of the conceptual framework. After final revisions, the conceptual framework was approved by the Steering Committee and Unit faculty in October 2000.

The Unit has a single conceptual framework for initial and advanced programs. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) principles and the Institutional Performance Criteria of the *Maryland Redesign of Teacher Education* were considered and incorporated.

Mission and Vision

Consistent with and guided by the University and Unit mission statements, as well as the newly created *Institutional Learning Goals*, the Unit outcomes associated with the Conceptual Framework clearly and consistently communicates its committed to preparing professionals dedicated to success, capable of providing leadership in the classroom, committed to continually assess and reflect on their own practices, motivated to collaborate with their professional communities, and driven to advocate for their profession; and who can positively impact the education profession and improve the learning of PreK-12 students.

Philosophy and Goals

Professional programs are designed to reflect the current knowledge base that supports each program content and effective practices, based on national standards and research that meet the needs of the state and the region. The program development process fosters the building and enhancement of collaborations with the professional community, including the faculty in liberal arts and sciences. Program implementation requires the necessary administrative support to enable candidates, college, and Unit faculty to accomplish outcomes and to enhance learning/scholarly opportunities for candidates, graduate assistants, faculty, and staff. Program delivery promotes the implementation of technology plans that lead to technological fluency for students in all programs. A general assumption is that the Education graduates are skilled practitioners who are prepared with essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions in their fields of specialization and commit themselves to serve the cause of social justice.

Knowledge Base and Candidate Proficiencies

The Professional Education Unit believes that students deserve teachers who are totally committed to the profession and who display advocacy for children and their communities. We believe that these totally dedicated teachers link the resources of home, school, and community to build powerful classroom

learning environments. The conceptual framework is much like a metaphor that expresses the major attributes—knowledge, skills, and dispositions—that our graduates should exhibit. These *attributes* represent the six *outcomes* described in the Conceptual Framework, and that the Unit expects its graduates to demonstrate in their professional fields. They are:

- I. Dedicated Professional
- II. Instructional Leader
- III. Continuous Assessor
- IV. Educational Advocate
- V. Collaborative Bridge Builder
- VI. Reflective Decision-Maker.

I. Dedicated Professional

Indicators:

- I.1 exhibits a solid base of content and professional knowledge and continues to build upon that base as a life-long learner
- I.2 possesses a sound knowledge of curriculum as influenced by local, state, and national standards
- I.3 exhibits professional dispositions (e.g. caring, ethical, passionate, and responsible)
- I.4 communicates effectively in spoken, written, visual, and technology-assisted forms of expression
- I.5 adheres to professional codes of ethics and strives toward professional leadership

The dedicated professional candidate is knowledgeable, ethical, committed, passionate, responsible, caring, and a life-long learner. This person possesses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to practice at a high quality level; acts on a set of principles that result in positive interactions with others; makes long-term promises and keeps them; can be counted on to make a worthwhile contribution to his or her learning community; accepts and uses new data, and continually seeks new knowledge and develops new skills and dispositions.

II. Instructional Leader

Indicators:

- II.1 promotes active learning
- II.2 communicates high expectations for all students
- II.3 creates effective learning environments
- II.4 manages student behavior appropriately
- II.5 accommodates for a range of differences in culture, developmental levels, and learning styles
- II.6 models innovation and creativity in teaching
- II.7 uses a variety of instructional/educational strategies
- II.8 develops activities which promote problem-solving and critical thinking
- II.9 uses technology appropriately to promote learning

- II.10 exhibits skills in long-range and short-range planning
- II.11 uses a variety of questioning strategies

An instructional leader maintains an energetic process of getting others to understand, contribute to, and commit fully to meet agreed-upon outcomes. Instructional leaders can be students, teachers, parents, and other members within and outside of the educational environment. All members of the school community become leaders in some way.

III. Continuous Assessor

Indicators:

- III.1 demonstrates understanding of the concepts, purposes, strategies, and best practices of assessment
- III.2 uses curriculum standards as indicators of student learning to create or select appropriate assessments
- III.3 uses various assessment strategies to accommodate all learners
- III.4 creates and/or uses multiple assessment measures that are authentic to real world situations
- III.5 uses technology to facilitate the collection and interpretation of data
- III.6 collects, analyzes, and uses assessment data to improve instruction/learning
- III.7 demonstrates understanding of how classroom assessment contributes to the process and purpose of educational research
- III.8 monitors and reports student/school progress effectively and professionally

As continuous assessors, candidates are expected to effectively use formal and informal methods within the classroom and school to measure student learning. These assessment strategies may take the form of very objective instruments or more authentic, real life tasks. Candidates also are expected to aggregate, analyze, and use results of performance data to inform their instruction.

IV. Educational Advocate

Indicators:

- IV.1 embraces the belief that all students have the right and the ability to learn
- IV.2 exhibits enthusiasm for the subject matter he/she teaches
- IV.3 participates in organizations that promote the professions of education
- IV.4 is committed to equal access to quality public education for all students
- IV.5 encourages programs that work to ensure safe school, home, and community environments
- IV.6 supports initiatives to make schools technologically rich environments for learning
- IV.7 values the increasingly diverse nature of current and emerging school populations

Graduates of all Professional Education Unit programs are expected to be actively engaged in activities that improve and enhance the lives of all those in the educational community. Throughout the undergraduate and graduate programs, candidates are encouraged to become actively involved in change that will increase everyone's right to learn, lead to enhanced subject matter development, add to the development of all educational professions, strengthen public education, enrich their communities, assure the benefits of education to all, and seek ways in which technology can enhance learning through constructivist teaching.

V. Collaborative Bridge Builder

Indicators:

- V.1 promotes cooperative learning opportunities
- V.2 links subject matter within and across disciplines and grade/school levels
- V.3 builds effective school/home/community partnerships
- V.4 creates powerful learning communities within and beyond the classroom and the school
- V.5 treats all students and members of the educational community equitably and respectfully

To be successful, teachers must work collaboratively with others within the school and throughout the larger community. For the education of the child to be effective, a team of school teachers, support staff, and administrators along with parents and members of the community need to be involved.

VI. Reflective Decision-Maker

Indicators:

- VI.1 views classroom instruction as a continuous set of decision-making opportunities
- VI.2 exhibits ability to identify and analyze classroom/school problems
- VI.3 monitors effectiveness of one's own practices/decisions
- VI.4 strives for continuous self-improvement as measured by learner success data
- VI.5 encourages students to engage in thoughtful, productive self-criticism
- VI.6 analyzes results of research-based best practices for planning curriculum, instruction, and assessment

All educators are involved in making decisions as part of the educational community in which they operate. In order to ensure that these decisions are not thoughtless and reactive, educators need to spend quality time reflecting on those decisions and their effect on the learner and other members of the community. Educators who are reflective decision-makers will see their world and their work through multiple lenses; they will value self-reflection and strive to support reflection among their colleagues.