

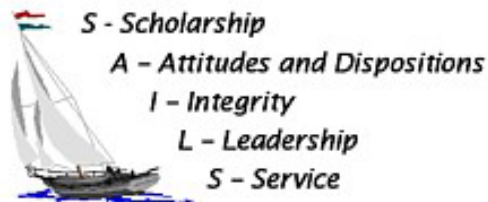


The Standard of Excellence
in Teacher Preparation

Conceptual Framework 2004

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The Standard of Excellence
in Teacher Preparation

School of Education

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Beginning with the transformation of the United States from a rural, agricultural country to an urban, industrialized nation, American society has always viewed education as the vehicle to success, and believed that education will lead to a better job, higher wages, and the achievement of the American dream. The American workplace of today is rapidly changing; it is no longer a factory-based manufacturing economy that employs workers with minimal skills in an assembly line organizational model; rather, it is a high tech service economy that employs workers with advanced skills in a workgroup model.

A second characteristic of America in the 21st century is the widening technological and economic gap between the wealthier and poorer students of our society, what Jesse Jackson refers to as the "digital divide." The attempts made by schools in our wealthier districts to begin to teach their students the skills and knowledge needed to meet the high tech demands of American business, meager as they may be in some districts, far outweigh what is happening in the schools in our poorer communities. If this trend is allowed to continue, the future of our society is bleak indeed, for we will quickly become not one nation but two, one rich and one poor, one have and one have not.

The challenge facing the American education system is two-fold: First, to change its curriculum, instruction, and organization so that it will produce graduates who have the knowledge and skills the American workplace of the 21st century demands; Second, to ensure that all children, regardless of where they live, how rich or poor they are, what language they speak at home, or what the color of their skin may be, will have, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "equal privileges in the race of life with all its desirable human aspirations."

Development of the Conceptual Framework

In the summer of 2000, the School of Education Quality Council was constituted to serve as the steering committee for the self-study leading to NCATE accreditation. Membership consisted of faculty from the five departments in the School of Education - Counseling and School Psychology; Educational Leadership; Elementary Education and Foundations; Exercise Science

and School Health; Special Education and Reading. The Dean of the School of Education is a member of the Quality Council as well as the Associate Dean of the School of Education who serves as chair. Members of the Quality Council attended NCATE orientation sessions in August 2000 and January 2001. Concurrent with the establishment of the Quality Council, the Articulation Committee, consisting of secondary education faculty from the School of Arts and Sciences and School of Education faculty was reconstituted and has had a significant role in the of our conceptual framework.

The Quality Council adopted the acronym SAILS (Scholarship; Attitudes and Dispositions; Integrity; Leadership; Service) as the set of guiding principles that informs our practice. Since the initial draft of our conceptual framework, it has undergone review and multiple "tweakings" both within the university by the Articulation Committee, School of Education department chairs and faculty, and School of Arts and Sciences Department chairs and faculty, as well as P-12 administrators and teachers in our partnership schools. In addition, NCATE Board of Examiners members have been kind enough to offer suggestions for improvement. In summary, we believe that our conceptual framework consists a set of beliefs that truly represents the Southern Connecticut State University teacher education community.

Mission Statements

The School of Education Conceptual Framework is aligned with the mission statements of Southern Connecticut State University and the School of Education.

Southern Connecticut State University Mission Statement

The University's mission is to enhance its position as the preeminent, comprehensive, metropolitan, public university of the State of Connecticut. As a learning community grounded in the values of liberal education, the University is committed to students distinguished by their intellectual competencies, their skills for flexible adaptation to global change, and by their habits of cultural enrichment for life-long inquiry. As the lead institution of advanced study in the CSU system, SCSU is committed to the professional preparation of graduate learners for success in their careers and in service to their communities. As an academic environment, the University is committed to innovative teaching strategies, and to scholarship and creative activity that produces knowledge, refreshes faculty expertise, and amplifies teaching effectiveness.

To fulfill this mission:

- The University will build on the strengths and values of current programs and services. The university will continue to respond to the evolution of society by enhancing current programs and developing additional ones to meet the changing needs of the state, the nation, and the world.
- The University embraces its responsibility to design a culture of competencies in which undergraduate learners demonstrate ability to investigate, question, appreciate, communicate, collaborate, evaluate, and adapt to change. The university encourages learners to value responsible citizenship, sensitivity to others, historical and cultural diversity, and awareness of the global environment. Undergraduates master both a well-defined general education curriculum on the liberal arts and sciences, and a coherent major field of study.
- The University presents programs of advanced study that offer advanced learners state-of-the-art professional preparation and quality learning experiences. The University regards career preparation and placement of graduates as one of its greatest strengths and highest priorities. Learners meet the most rigorous expectations of their chosen professions so that they may better serve Connecticut's schools, businesses, and health and human services.
- The University will continue its service to Connecticut's diverse communities. The University will improve collaboration with the social, economic, educational. Cultural, and community institutions that comprise its region. The University will expand its range of accessible cultural and social programs responsive to community interests.

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- The University will continue vigorously to foster teaching excellence and the most progressive teaching strategies. The University seeks to match attention to the latest learning and information technologies with traditional methods of classroom and non-classroom learning. Southern Connecticut State University generates knowledge and advances its transmission to the academic community through the scholarship and creativity of the faculty. The University encourages all those who work and study at Southern Connecticut State University to pursue engagement in their disciplines, and to keep current with the information and skills required by all academic fields, occupations, and professions.
 - The University commits itself to strive for continuous improvement in all its efforts. The University continually will verify the effectiveness of the mission and its accompanying agenda through systematic self-evaluation and assessment of outcomes.

School of Education Mission Statement

The School of Education is a professional school whose mission is to advance the science and art of teaching and learning. The school is responsible for preparing teachers to work with individuals from birth to adulthood. The school strives to maintain a high standard of excellence in its programs, and seeks to develop graduates committed to lifelong learning, intellectual honesty, personal integrity, and respect for the rights and freedoms of others.

The school is committed to fulfilling the following major functions: (1) maintaining quality, state-of-the-art undergraduate and graduate professional preparation opportunities for teachers, administrators, counselors, school service personnel, and others in education related positions; (2) providing programs and services that enable inservice professionals to acquire additional preparation necessary for continuous professional growth and/or changing career objectives; (3) collaborating with school personnel, educational agencies, professional groups and others interested in the improvement of educational opportunities; and (4) promoting and conducting research directed toward improving the theory and practice of teaching.

The guiding principles of practice of the School of Education at Southern Connecticut State University are based upon a fundamental concept that individuals can influence both their future and the future of society through a lifelong commitment to learning. The freedom to survive and to make choices about one's position in life are dependent on the ability to adapt to changing conditions without losing the essence of self. This includes a belief that no matter what position in life one currently occupies, it is possible to improve or find greater self-fulfillment if one desires to do so.

Foundational Principles

The Unit is dedicated to the development of teachers and other professionals who are personally involved in both lifelong learning and in the continuous improvement of the educational systems in which they work. We believe that this endeavor is both noble and necessary for our survival as a society. It is worth the passionate commitment of life's work. To achieve this goal, the faculty and staff of the Unit are committed to the principles of scholarship, integrity, leadership, and a devotion to service that will help make lifelong learning a reality for us and for those we serve.

The acronym SAILS (Scholarship; Attitudes and Dispositions; Integrity; Leadership; Service) has been adopted to reflect our vision and our responsibilities: It informs the conceptual framework that underpins our vision of teachers and other school personnel; it conveys what we believe to be true in teacher education; it reflects our vision, is easily communicated to others, and lends itself to evaluation. For us at Southern, SAILS represents the core through which our values, beliefs, and dispositions are revealed. It is the thread that ties coursework, field experiences, and faculty-student-teacher interactions together. It is what informs our practice.

We believe that scholarship is an essential ingredient in becoming a lifelong learner. Scholarship requires familiarity with, and a contribution to, that body of knowledge that encompasses ways of knowing and learning; it is a respect for the methodologies of research and for the evaluation of data and ideas necessary to support instructional and leadership initiatives; it is a commitment to persistence and diligence of inquiry that takes one beyond simply a casual exposure to information, ideas, and approaches to problem solving. Above all else, scholarship is an ongoing and proactive effort to try to make things better as we face not only the complexity of the learning process but also the diversity of each individual whom we serve.

As a faculty and staff, the Unit values self-motivation and self-evaluation as the critical elements that help us make a difference in the experience of both our students and educational communities that we serve. We value and respect individual differences as a positive contribution to our society; we value and encourage the participation of all members of a community in the education of their children; we value our own self-development and learning just as we foster learning in others.

The Unit believes that integrity guides our actions through research and practical experience. Integrity means adherence to a professional code of ethics and high standards of conduct. We believe that we must exhibit the courage to do the right things from both a moral and a professional perspective; that failure to do so might very well mean that all our students are not given the opportunity to maximize their potential, to be the very best that they can be.

Leadership is critical in all aspects of learning and education. We believe that all educators should be leaders - teachers, counselors, and coaches as well as superintendents and principals. Self-leadership requires a sense of discipline, clarity of goals, professionalism, and an awareness of our strengths and weaknesses. Leading others requires that we are aware of their individual needs, and that we are willing to help them achieve their goals. Leading a school or other

learning community requires shaping of a vision and moving toward that vision in an explicit fashion. Finally, leading a community requires active engagement in issues of critical importance to that community. This engagement is not reactive but proactive; its goal is to help the community clarify its needs and expectations of its educational system. To exercise a successful leadership role in today's educational community, leadership approaches should be drawn from and developed according to contemporary research. It is no longer sufficient to try to influence, using only traditional methods. School leadership requires an appreciation and exercise of visionary, moral, situational, and transformational leadership approaches. We also believe that a demonstration of these approaches, by example, is the most powerful influence that any leader can exercise.

Understanding the value of service begins with a sense of giving rather than taking. Service requires that we extend beyond the bare requirements of our respective roles or positions in an educational community. Service views the creation and support of a better community as an essential and critical part of student development. To make this a reality, educators need a connection to their school communities that helps them to better understand the lives of their students and their students' families.

The learning outcomes for the Unit are firmly grounded in a knowledge base that encompasses all five principles of the Unit. These learning outcomes clearly recognize that the organization and development of the Unit is guided by the literature on teacher education and recognizes that this literature influences the preparation of teachers and teacher educators (Reynolds, 1989; Wittrock, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 2000). The learning outcomes further recognize that we, as teacher educators, operate within the changing context of public school education, and that education has undergone pervasive reforms since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (Skrtic, 1991; Lambert, 1995). This is no less apparent in the current *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, which will have sweeping implications for colleges of education. Such reforms have essentially questioned the traditional hegemonies of research methodologies within schools and have placed a renewed emphasis on contextual understandings as well as the construction of knowledge as critical ingredients to student success. (Vygotsky, 1962; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Skrtic, 1991; Lambert, 1995).

Levine and Trachtman (1997) articulated a set of critically important assumptions that guided the fundamental evolution of our Unit:

1. There is a knowledge base about teaching that resides among practitioners.
2. Knowledge about teaching is created in school settings.
3. Teaching and learning must be contextualized if teachers are to be oriented to continuous learning in practice.
4. Teachers' learning must be collegial in order to generate more knowledge and to produce comfort with public practice and habits of delivering instruction.
5. Teachers' learning must be problem-based in order to develop a problem-solving orientation toward practice.

The theme of creating lifelong teachers and learners as well as the learning outcomes of our Unit are grounded in theory, reflected in school practice, and constructed within the context of the changing nature of public education today.

Although the Unit encompasses programs in school counseling, administration, and exercise science as well as classroom teaching, the term "teacher" is used to refer to all educators, regardless of specific position within a school system, for all educators are truly teachers. The Unit's knowledge base is linked to its learning outcomes via SAILS. The key to this knowledge base is its linkage by all programs in the Unit to these five organizing principles.

SAILS

Principle 1: Scholarship

Command of scientific methods and systematized subject matter liberates individuals; it enables them to see new problems, devise new procedures, and in general, makes for diversification rather than for set uniformity.

- John Dewey, 1929

Theme: Linking Scholarship to Practice

At the initial level, scholarship involves both acquiring a theoretical knowledge base and developing the technical and communication skills necessary to link scholarship and practice. Scholarship at the advanced level involves extending that knowledge base through higher levels of research, practice and professional expertise. In both cases, the Unit seeks to create professional educators who are able to impart the knowledge and expertise their students will need to gain employment in a technologically changing and culturally rich society. Educator-scholars who are lifelong learners will create the conditions that will improve our educational systems.

Learning Outcomes

The candidate:

- Demonstrates the content knowledge needed to teach an academic discipline.
- Demonstrates the pedagogical knowledge needed to teach an academic discipline.
- Plans for effective instruction.
- Assesses student performance and incorporates that assessment into planning and teaching.
- Is able to use technology

Knowledge Base

Scholarship enables the acquisition and extension of knowledge; it connotes the capacity to find, analyze, and evaluate information, and to make pragmatic and conceptual connections among concepts, experiences, and practices. It presents a methodical, reflective, and evaluative template for solving a wide variety of problems (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). Cronon (1999) describes a scholarly, liberally educated person as an individual who is able to respect rigor, not so much for its own sake, but as a way of seeking. Scholarship provides a roadmap to excellent teaching in that a teacher is a reflective-analytic thinker and decision-maker who systematically uses pedagogical and content area knowledge to root their instructional decisions (Barr, Sadow, & Blanchowicz, 1990). Excellent teachers have honed their problem-solving abilities and their abilities to think critically and creatively. As a way of seeking, scholarship provides the foundation for lifelong teaching and learning (Duckworth, 1987). Darling-Hammond (2000) has found that successful teacher education programs create learning opportunities for their teacher

candidates to learn from teaching. Learning to teach is a developmental process that one never finishes. It is the responsibility of a teacher education program to develop the capacity of their teacher candidates “to inquire sensitively and systematically into the nature of learning and the effects of teaching” (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 170). It is the job of teacher education programs to create the conditions that foster motivation and curiosity in their students, to demonstrate ways to be flexible and open-minded in their teaching, and to question and investigate differences in philosophical beliefs through their teaching. In short, excellent teachers are scholars who develop in their students a passion for knowing via teaching and learning as a way of seeking—as a way of being. (Bloom, 1985; Brubacher, Case, & Reagan, 1994; Dewey, 1916; Duckworth, 1987; Feldman, 1999; Lambert, 1995; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996; Reynolds, 1989; Sternberg & Spear, 1997; Vygotsky, 1962;).

Though their scholarly activities and teaching, candidates demonstrate both their knowledge of content and their knowledge of pedagogy (Maher & Tetreault, 1999; Shulman, 1987).

Principle 2: Attitudes and Dispositions

Developing the ability to see beyond one’s own perspective, to put oneself in the shoes of the learner and to understand the meaning of that experience in terms of learning, is perhaps the most important role of universities in the preparation of teachers.

- Linda Darling-Hammond, 2000

Theme: Developing a collaborative and inclusive attitude

What candidates do is consistently influenced by what they believe. The Unit values attitudes and dispositions that fundamentally encompass collaboration with others in school, community and home. Attitude and dispositions include: (1) enthusiasm about teaching; (2) motivation to teach others; (3) acceptance of responsibility; (4) compassion toward others; (5) trustworthiness; (6) sensitivity; (7) good citizenship; and (8) a belief that all children can learn. These are all examples of attitudes and disposition of excellent educational professionals. Candidates approach educational environments with a realistic understanding of the difficulties they will face in our educational system and are prepared to overcome these difficulties. Candidates must possess the attitudes and dispositions of good teaching if they are to work toward continuous improvement within their schools.

We seek to prepare educators who value the intrinsic nature of the profession. Teaching (used as a broad term to encompass all roles within an education community) must be viewed as a calling, not as an extrinsic means to an end. We seek to imbue this sense of commitment in our students, that being an educator is truly a noble undertaking. To do this, we prepare educators who : (1) cast professional decisions within an ethical framework that values individuals and not just philosophies; (2) value knowledge and not just myth; (3) value integrity and not just words; (4) value diversity and not just rhetoric; (5) value leadership and not just policy; and (6) value honesty and not just tradition.

Learning Outcomes

The candidate:

- Values diversity.

- Reflects on job performance.
- Engages in self-assessment.

Knowledge Base

An excellent teacher nurtures collaboration and creates supportive interactions within the classroom, school, and community (Senge, 1990; Dewey, 1916). The value of relationships between and among students, teachers, parents and the community is held in the highest regard. Echoing the words of E. M. Forester in the novel Howard's End, excellent teachers see connections that help make sense of the world and are able to teach within it in creative ways. Teachers must develop this awareness of interconnectedness within the world, as well as an awareness of their own moral, cultural and cognitive perspectives, in order to see how their perspectives influence how they teach. They must be able to talk with anyone, practice respect and humility, and model tolerance and self-criticism (Cronon, 1999). These are essential components in developing a collaborative mindset and in providing caring, supportive interactions with others (Slavin, 1996; Sapon-Shevin, 1988; Conoley, 1988; Joyce & Weil, 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Ladsen-Billings, 1999; Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1997; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999). These components provide the foundation for lifelong learning .

Attitudes and dispositions transcend the classroom and enter into the very core of what it means to be a member of a global community. An excellent teacher considers perspectives as articulated in A Curriculum for Global Citizenship (Oxfam UK, 1997):

- Is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen;
- Respects and values diversity;
- Has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally;
- Is outraged by social injustice;
- Participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from local to the global;
- Is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place;
- Takes responsibility for their actions.

This notion of a global citizen strikes at the very core of the collaborative spirit, the sense of place in the community, and the roles and responsibilities of students, teachers, parents, community members, and themselves.

Principle 3: Integrity

The strong professional has...learned to persuade others of an ethical vision through example, by living that set of beliefs.

- Barone 1996

Theme: Developing personal and professional honesty

Personal and professional integrity includes: (1) self-valuing; (2) an appreciation of diversity; (3) recognizing the worth of special learners; (4) honesty in the dealing with others; (4) morality; (5) an ethical framework within which to cast personal and professional decisions; (6) respect for others and for the opinion of others: and (7) self-discipline in all facets of life. Candidates must develop and reflect upon their personal and professional integrity to fully understand the role of

educators in today's schools and to more clearly model their role in becoming lifelong teachers of others.

While American society is rich in its diversity, the fact is that all children do not have an equal opportunity to learn and succeed in school. We must ensure that all children, regardless of where they live, what color their skin is, what language they speak at home, or how they learn will be valued as individuals and will be given the opportunity to maximize their learning potential. To accomplish this, we seek to prepare educators who understand how learning occurs, and are able to apply that wisdom to a range of students who possess different learning styles, different cultural values and dispositions, and different abilities and exceptionalities.

Integrity also means being able to maintain one's own sense of values in the face of an educational bureaucracy that may seek to compromise them. We seek to prepare educators who are aware of the organizational issues within their respective schools and are able to function effectively within them, and who are also able to maintain their own personal sense of values that will allow them to become agents of change within these same communities.

Learning Outcomes

The candidate:

- Acts in a professional, ethical and moral manner.
- Demonstrates honesty and empathy both professionally and personally.

Knowledge Base

Integrity denotes the provision of an ethical framework within which candidates are able to critically reflect on, test out and clarify their own sense of values and principles that will guide their professional practice. It illustrates a set a basic assumptions and shared normative values that are present within each area of study (VanTassell-Baska, 1987). Integrity connotes a self-directed professional who employs critical reflection and seeks personal meaning and clarity among competing value frameworks to arrive at action. A teacher candidate who possesses integrity illustrates an individual who thinks and acts inclusively, who values—albeit, celebrates—diversity, disability and difference, who helps students discover and understand the ethical dimensions in any area of study, and who regards others as valuable and contributory members of their community (Cronon, 1999; Covey, 1989).

Principle 4: Leadership

Learning how to get things done in the world in an effort to leave it a better place is surely one of the most practical and important lessons we can take from any education.

- William Cronon, 1999

Theme: Developing skilled agents of change

Leadership involves adopting a role within a multi-faceted educational system that helps move that system in the direction of meeting the diverse needs of its students. Candidates must be skilled agents of change who use these skills to effect the changes necessary to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. They must also be able to balance the diverse demands of the

needs of students and the wishes of the community served. Candidates must be open to change, must be aware of how change occurs, and must be prepared to act to bring about these changes. Candidates need to become leaders within our educational system, and it is through this leadership that will bring about the continuous improvement of the educational systems within which they work.

The American education system must change its curriculum, its instruction, and its organization if it is to meet the needs of our society in the 21st century. In every state, mass retirements of public educators are expected in the next few years. This has the potential to lead to a true renaissance in education, a golden opportunity to truly bring about meaningful change in how we educate our children.

All educators, regardless of specific position, have the potential to become agents of change. Research has clearly shown that change is most effective when everyone in the organization has a sense of ownership and feels that they have truly been a part of the process. Therefore, it must be a goal of all our programs, undergraduate and graduate, initial and advanced, to teach our candidates how to become change agents. This means exposing them to the latest research in their respective specializations and, most importantly, teaching them how to translate that research into effective practice.

Learning Outcomes

The candidate:

- Appreciates the interconnectedness of the relationships of students, teachers, and parents.
- Engages in critical thinking.

Knowledge Base

Leadership denotes the behavior of professionals who will initiate new structures of knowledge and skills in interaction with a social system of organizations, classrooms, schools, and communities (Glickman, 1995). Leadership begins with a mastery of self (Attitude and Integrity) and the courage to lead others to places and situations they themselves would not go alone (Covey, 1991). A leader is someone who understands that they belong to a community—a community of learners—and acts in ways to nurture and protect that community and help that community flourish (Cronon, 1999). Being an educational leader denotes being a change agent within schools, creating positive learning climates that promote responsible student behavior, and providing students with multiple, often creative, paths to new learning (Glickman, 1995; Senge, 1990; Goodlad, 1994; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2000). Teachers can demonstrate leadership through subject area expertise and pedagogical knowledge, by designing settings, classrooms and environments that permit natural demonstrations of what student know, and by using appropriate technologies to enhance the learning environment (Feiman-Nemser, 2000; Garcia & Pearson, 1994; Fullan, 1999; Baldrige, 1998; National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1998).

Principle 5: Service

It represents a willingness to give of oneself and a commitment to personal standards and values that foster the development of a sense of caring for others.

- *National and Community Service Act of 1990*

Theme: Demonstrating community connections and commitment

Meeting the diverse needs of students involves not only meeting their academic needs but also understanding the social and cultural context in which these students live. Service involves active participation within the community. Being aware of the needs of the community within which the school is located helps create a more informed curriculum within that school. In addition, the events that occur within the community can not only enrich a child's life but can also be critical ingredients to school success. Initial and advanced teacher candidates must know the communities in which they work and must contribute to those communities in ways that lead to the continuous improvement of the educational systems in which they work. Initial candidates must be prepared

There is an old truism in education that says that the effective educator is able to meet the child where s/he is and takes the child as far as s/he can go. In order to do this, educators must understand the whole child in context, not just what is seen in school but how the child is affected by his/her culture, his/her home, and his/her neighborhood.

Service in the community involves recognizing that there are important contextual variables, and this understanding comes from involvement in community service. In all our programs, we seek to prepare educators who not only know how to become involved community service, but more importantly, who choose to do it. This includes involving our students in fieldwork experiences, internships, mentoring programs, and other service opportunities that will enable them to become a part of the communities in which they teach and to truly understand the whole child. The result will be schools that truly meet the needs of their students.

Learning Outcome

The candidate:

- Seeks opportunities to contribute time and/or expertise to the community in which s/he works, lives or learns

Knowledge Base

Service demonstrates the integration of scholarship, attitude/dispositions, integrity and the leadership skills developed through the Unit. The Unit expects all candidates to engage in service to their communities during the course of their program. The purpose of this expectation is to cultivate the desire in our candidates to serve others by involvement in non-curriculum-based community activities (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). We believe that service represents the articulation of an ethical framework that values individuals and community. It denotes involvement in communities that may or may not reflect the candidate's attitudes and dispositions, but that allows the candidate to demonstrate his/her own values and dispositions toward others. It explicitly recognizes that teaching goes beyond the walls of the classroom to provide meaningful contexts for learning in the community. Giles, Honnet, & Magliore (1991) describe such service activities "as a philosophy of education... (that) reflects the belief that education must be linked to social responsibility and that the most effective learning is active and connected to experience in some meaningful way" (p. 7). Long ago, John Dewey (1916) advocated the belief that students learn more effectively and become better citizens if they engage in service to their community. Whether it is in a school, recreational center, house of worship, civic group, or a soup kitchen, a focus on service offers the teacher candidate the opportunity to connect to a community, to be in that community, and to be part of that community.

Assessment

Recognizing that on-going assessment of candidate learning is an essential element in the preparation of teachers, the Unit has developed an assessment plan that consists of four distinct benchmarks or gates: (1) entry to the program; (2) midway through required courses in the program; (3) completion of required courses in the program; and, (4) completion of clinical practice (refer to completion portfolio and completion portfolio rubric). It should be noted that the Unit decided to add a midway through course completion benchmark (gate 2) because its faculty believes a midpoint assessment is essential in order to accurately assess candidate learning and competencies as s/he progresses through a teacher education program. It should also be noted that while this assessment plan is intended primarily for initial programs, is it also utilized by advanced programs with modifications on a program by program basis. (Please refer to Standard 2 of the Institutional Report and the Unit Transition Plan for the specific requirements for portfolio submission at each gate and the accompanying scoring rubrics).

Epilogue

The Unit's aim is to create outstanding educators who are scholars, who possess the attitudes and dispositions that reflect an appreciation of others, who have the personal and professional integrity to value themselves and others, who have the leadership capacity to affect change in students, and who have a sense of commitment and responsibility to the communities they serve.

The Unit's aim to equip its candidates with a high level of scholarship is founded on the belief, first, that a sound theoretical knowledge base is essential for effective practice, and second, that candidates possessing high levels of scholarship are better equipped to develop those same levels in the students they serve. Scholarship also includes the ability to utilize a repertoire of strategies to promote student learning.

The Unit's aim to cultivate attitudes and dispositions that will lead to lifelong learning is driven by the belief, first, that continuous learning is essential to function effectively in a rapidly changing world, and, second, the belief that teaching for understanding requires ongoing engagement with evolving knowledge. This will provide an ethical framework within which candidates are able to critically reflect on, test out, and clarify their own sense of values, and principles that will guide their professional practice.

In the area of leadership, the Unit is committed to the belief that leadership includes mastery of self as well as the courage to lead others to work toward change in the improvement of the environment in which they work.

Finally, through its program design, the Unit's aim is to give candidates the opportunity to better understand the problems and opportunities in the educational communities in which they work. This means cultivating the desire to serve others through involvement in field experiences, internships, mentoring programs, and community service.

In conclusion, the overarching vision of the Unit at Southern Connecticut State University is to prepare preeminent initial and advanced professionals who are committed to both lifelong teaching and learning and to the continuous improvement of the educational systems in which they work.

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