Preparing Competent, Committed, Professional Teachers for a Diverse, Democratic Society

Ohio Wesleyan University

UNIT
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ohio Wesleyan University
Revised Summer 2010
# Conceptual Framework
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Conceptual Framework

The mission, philosophy, and goals of the Teacher Education Unit complement those of the university by developing in our candidates the intellectual, personal, and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to teach students at each licensure level. The Conceptual Framework serves as our guiding document. Linked to our curriculum, it is the basis for assessment, analysis, and improvement of our program.

The Conceptual Framework of the Teacher Education Unit at OWU is organized around three themes: I: Content Knowledge, II: Teaching and Learning, and III: Character and Professionalism. These themes are supported by current research, and address the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Standards, and various specialty professional organizations’ standards that govern the teacher preparation programs offered by the Unit. Additionally, content knowledge is aligned with the Ohio Academic Content Standards which, in turn, are aligned with the content required by the various specialty professional organizations. The process of how we developed a shared, coherent vision of our work is described in the next section. The three themes are then defined in terms of how our program is organized to help candidates attain the competencies we expect. Next, the theoretical, philosophical, and research bases underlying each theme are presented. Finally, we demonstrate how our Conceptual Framework is aligned with state and national standards.

The Conceptual Framework: Developing A Shared Vision

We, the teacher education faculty at Ohio Wesleyan University, have informally and implicitly always shared a common vision that has guided us in the preparation of our candidates. However, the process of applying for NCATE accreditation required us to make these tacit beliefs and philosophical orientations explicit, as well as measurable, so that our mission is clear and we can discern the effectiveness of our program.

Thus, we began formal conversations to articulate what we believe and to clarify how these beliefs guide us as we prepare our candidates to be competent, committed, professional teachers for a diverse, democratic society. From 2000-2003 we met regularly to discuss aspects of the conceptual framework, including our mission; how to organize our program components into themes; what philosophical and theoretical beliefs underlie everything we do; and the specific competencies we wanted our candidates to acquire that reflected our beliefs. We also worked to create an assessment system that would ensure our vision was successful in developing competent, committed, professional teachers for a diverse, democratic society; teachers who can successfully meet the challenges of educating students at specific licensure levels. We researched the works of theorists as diverse as Maxine Greene, Maria Montessori, and John Dewey, then discussed how their ideas guided our work. We critiqued various drafts of conceptual frameworks as we worked toward a document we all agreed reflected our common vision. Several topics dominated our conversations, including the following:
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- examining constructivist learning theory, particularly its implications for all levels of learners.
- exploring how our program could prepare candidates to use technology purposefully and effectively with their students.
- ensuring our curriculum adequately prepared candidates for educating all students: those with exceptionalities as well as those from diverse backgrounds.
- constructing an assessment system that was truly aligned with our philosophies, curriculum and learning goals.

From these discussion our three themes, and the concepts (i.e., constructivist learning, technology, teaching all students, assessment) we believe in formed the basis for our conceptual framework.

A defining experience for us was attendance at an NCATE Workshop in the summer of 2003, which was sponsored by our State Department of Education. Hearing about the specific requirements for a conceptual framework from NCATE, then talking to colleagues across the State of Ohio, helped crystallize our understanding of how our document should be constructed. We returned to our task with renewed determination and enthusiasm.

Once we had a working document that began to reflect our goals, philosophies, and desired candidate competencies, we invited our constituent groups to participate in the process, sharpening and sometimes redefining our thinking. Arts and Sciences faculty from across campus provided significant input into the document. Additionally, the Community Advisory Board (composed of teachers and principals who work closely with our program) was particularly helpful at this point. Because they know our program well, they could inform us if significant points needed to be added or clarified, or if we were inconsistent in our assertions. We revised the document several times to reflect their critiques. Our part-time faculty members were similarly helpful. We also invited our candidates to provide input into the document.

Currently, a summary of the Conceptual Framework is now provided to all candidates, cooperating teachers, administrators (both university and school-based) and other constituents who work with the Unit. Every syllabus includes this summary along with our ten candidate outcomes. The Program Handbooks for all incoming candidates and Student Teachers (which go to both Cooperating Teachers and candidates) also include a summary of the Conceptual Framework. We hold orientation meetings to ensure these constituent groups are knowledgeable of the content of the document and understand how it supports the Teacher Education Programs at OWU.

We firmly believe this process has resulted in a document that fully reflects the vision, mission, and goals of our teacher preparation program. Our Conceptual Framework is undergirded by sound theories, and research-based practices fundamental to the kind of expert teaching that
leads to learning for all candidates. As faculty who are well-prepared in the areas that we teach, have extensive teaching experience in actual P-12 classrooms, and are actively engaged in scholarship, we feel confident this framework guides an effective teacher preparation program. We understand that the Conceptual Framework is a living document, subject to revision and reconceptualization, in that regard, the full Conceptual Framework was reviewed and updated during Summer 2010.

Conceptual Framework: Themes and Purposes

I. Theme One: Content Knowledge

Faculty in the Teacher Education Unit agree with Grossman (1990) that strong subject matter understanding is a prerequisite for successful teaching. Before individuals can teach others, they must first pursue and value learning themselves. Educators can significantly influence student learning when they are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about what they teach (Darling-Hammond, 2000). They are able to make informed decisions about instructional strategies, materials, and particular aspects of content that will be taught. In this way teachers can create learning experiences that make subject matter meaningful to students, while demonstrating a passion for teaching it. We want our candidates to view subject matter as an evolving body of knowledge constructed by both scholars and students that is open to different perspectives and interpretations. So that all preservice educators develop the intellectual, personal, and professional competencies necessary for effectively teaching all students, P-12, they must take general liberal arts courses and acquire in-depth knowledge of one discipline by studying a major field, an area of concentration, or a minor, depending on their licensure area. The following are the aspects of content knowledge that we believe are essential for prospective educators:

A. General Liberal Arts Education

Course work in general education is firmly grounded in the liberal arts and is designed to impart knowledge of the various domains of inquiry so that prospective teachers come to understand themselves, their society and the world in which they live. This information serves as a tool throughout life to solve problems, to appreciate aesthetic works, to become sensitive to public and private value issues, and to comprehend past, present and future events. Strong content knowledge leads to conceptual disciplinary understanding, helping teachers develop student critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers must also perceive the interrelatedness between various fields of human inquiry (Goodlad, 1983).

A second major aspect of the general education component is designed to develop and enhance certain fundamental competencies of future teachers. As candidates progress through the curriculum, they are expected to acquire the foundational skills of reading, writing, speaking, and quantitative analysis. From these skills are built the capacity to think critically and logically, the ability to employ methods used in the various disciplines and the competence to understand the symbolic languages used to
communicate knowledge in today’s society. Additionally, candidates are expected to develop an appreciation of diverse cultures through the study of the historical and contemporary contexts of these cultures.

B. Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Candidates are also asked to consider the pedagogical use of the content they learn (Goodlad, 1994). Not only do teachers need to know their subject matter, they also need to know how to teach it (Brophy, 1991). They must restructure their content knowledge to make it comprehensible to all students. Teachers must consider how student preconceptions can influence their understanding of content, possibly leading to misperceptions or misunderstandings. They have to generate appropriate analogies, explanations, and examples to explain content. They need to know the major concepts, assumptions, and limitations of knowledge they teach. This pedagogical content knowledge of the subject areas they will teach (Shulman, 1987) helps candidates understand how knowledge is organized and analyzed so that it can be effectively learned by all students. Such understanding, in turn, helps prospective teacher candidates grasp that students approach learning in many ways and that content must be made comprehensible and cognitively engaging to meet the diverse cultural perspectives, learning styles, and developmental needs of their students (National Middle Schools Association, 2003; NAEYC, 2000; Daniels, Bizar, & Zemelman, 2001).

To accomplish these goals, candidates select courses from the areas of communications, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and the arts. Course work must be well distributed across disciplines, as well as selected to fulfill the suggested minimum distribution requirements for each licensure area as mandated by the State of Ohio. Taking this broad range of courses prepares students for specialization in one or more content areas, as well as the professional education sequence. Viewing content knowledge in this way implies that preparing competent, committed, professional educators for a diverse, democratic society is a responsibility shared by all faculty at Ohio Wesleyan University.

C. Major, Areas of Concentration, Minor

Prospective teachers at Ohio Wesleyan also pursue in-depth study of particular fields of knowledge, dependent on licensure area. Such study complements the knowledge acquired in the general studies component by providing preservice teachers with specialized understanding of at least one discipline. This will allow them to perceive how a particular body of knowledge is organized and conceptualized by practitioners and scholars in that field. Preservice teacher candidates need to possess core knowledge as they prepare to reach out to their students, introduce them to content, and promote learning of that content. It is expected that preservice teachers will develop an enthusiasm for that discipline which they, in turn, will instill in their students.
Thus, Adolescent to Young Adult and Multi-Age candidates complete a major in a selected content area and a minor in education. Middle Childhood candidates acquire knowledge in two broad and interdisciplinary fields of study. They develop and use the central concepts, tools of inquiry, standards, and structure of their respective fields. The two fields of study are selected from the following: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Early Childhood candidates select an area of concentration comprised of three or more courses from one discipline or closely related discipline. For all candidates, the guiding principle for acquiring competence in an academic specialty is to ascertain whether they have sufficient knowledge to instruct learners at their individual levels of readiness, while still remaining true to the nature and structure of the discipline.

D. Habits of Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

The concept of education as rote learning and the model of teacher as dispenser of information is no longer a viable perspective. Students must learn to think critically, so they can successfully contend with the challenges they will face in the diverse, democratic society of the 21st century. Thus, teachers must be models of critical thinking and problem-solving. They must continually analyze content, question the validity of concepts and constructs, and make connections between previously learned and new knowledge. Teachers also model critical thinking and problem-solving in their work as they actively analyze situations, make decisions and problem-solve throughout their day. Because they engage in these activities themselves, they can then support their students’ abilities to engage in active learning experiences that promote the development of high-level performance capabilities (Schon, 1983). They can encourage their students to question and transform old paradigms, make connections to their experiences, actively engage in questioning and create solutions to complex problems. The courses in the General Education Component (EDUC 110: Role of the School; EDUC 251: Psychological Foundations of Education) of the Teacher Education Unit are designed to nurture these qualities in our candidates.

II. Theme Two: Teaching and Learning

Knowing the content is crucial for exemplary teaching; however, knowledge is not enough. One cannot become a great teacher by merely being a scholar, or a trained technician, or simply loving young people. We believe teachers must also possess a thorough knowledge of learners and the learning process as McDiarmind, Ball and Anderson (1989, p. 17) assert. A developmental, theoretical frame of reference supports all pedagogical strategies that candidates study in the program. The emphasis is on fusing knowledge of students with appropriate methods for planning, sequencing, and managing instruction so as to create supportive learning environments that motivate all students to become self-regulated, enthusiastic learners. Thus, candidates need to both master pedagogical skills and understand human development so they can make complex ideas and concepts accessible to all learners (National Middle School Association 2003; NAEYC, 2000). They must understand how
human development is contextual, tempered by home, cultural and community factors. They need to develop a repertoire of research-based instructional methods and strategies, then use these judiciously to further student development and learning. They must also know how to evaluate what they do so they can adjust their teaching to meet the ongoing needs of all their P-12 students. Finally, they must learn to value the necessity of developing an instructional context that is supportive and nurturing yet filled with high expectations for student achievement (Katz and Chard, 1989). The purposeful use of technology undergirds this process, (Van Scoter, Ellis & Railsback, 2001) as do the standard guidelines established by district, state, and national organizations.

To accomplish these goals, the pedagogical component of the Ohio Wesleyan teacher preparation program includes courses in foundational studies, general pedagogical knowledge, and specialized pedagogical knowledge. Each aspect is complemented by opportunities to work directly with P-12 students in planned field and clinical experiences. As they move through each licensure program, candidates are expected to assume greater responsibility for planning and decision-making in increasingly complex contexts that reflect what they will experience as professional educators. In this way candidates can clearly see how sound research and theory guide practice. Although described separately, each curricular component is not perceived as a discrete part of a fixed sequence. Rather, the professional studies component is viewed as a collection of interactive curricular elements designed to ensure professional competence.

A. **Foundational Studies** (*Role of the School, Psychological Foundations of Education*)

**Foundational studies** build on the knowledge and habits of inquiry developed in the general education component (see Theme One). However, foundation courses in education are unique in that attention focuses on issues directly related to education, including the study of how social, historical, political, philosophical, and legal issues influence schools, as well as basic ideas in learning and human development. Prospective teachers are expected to critically examine these issues and draw conclusions as to their effects on teaching and learning. Field experiences in community settings related to education help candidates directly discern how theoretical issues guide teaching and learning.

B. **General Pedagogical Knowledge** (Methods courses)

**General teaching skills** are those pedagogical elements common to all teaching experiences, regardless of level. Courses focusing on these skills are viewed as essential prerequisites to the more specialized courses as they provide an intensive introduction to general concepts, skills, attitudes, and values in teaching, including the ability to thoughtfully observe classroom events, conceive, plan, and evaluate instruction, use a variety of instructional techniques, manage the classroom so productive learning occurs, provide for the needs of P-12 students with disabilities and cultural differences, and use appropriate interpersonal techniques to work effectively with parents, colleagues, and other professionals. By studying and
practicing these competencies, preservice teachers attain sufficient facility in their use. Initial field experiences provide structured, guided opportunities for candidates to apply their newly acquired general pedagogical skills. Candidates can practice their skills in field settings where they are given increasing autonomy and responsibility, while still being closely supervised.

C. **Specialized Pedagogical Knowledge** (Methods courses, Field Experiences associated with Methods courses, Student Teaching)

Candidates also acquire knowledge of more *specialized pedagogical skills*. Some skills relate specifically to the content to be taught, while other skills relate specifically to the age or ability of the learner. Still others help teachers learn the specific strategies they need to work effectively with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Thus, professional studies in specialized teaching skills help candidates use appropriate instructional strategies, materials and management techniques for each subject taught in the curriculum. They also learn how to adapt these strategies in response to individual differences such as student age, exceptionality, ability, or cultural/linguistic background. Further, candidates develop the habit of adjusting their plans to meet the ongoing needs of their students. They come to realize that ends and means do not follow a precise, linear sequence, but instead require constant reassessment based on research knowledge and the immediate context (Thompson and Zeuli, 1999, p. 350).

Candidates also come to understand the importance of **assessment** that is authentic, frequent, purposeful, and varied to meet individual needs (Howey and Zempher, 1989, pp. 465, 469; Eisner, 1998, p. 216, NMSA, 2003). They must appropriately use both formative and summative assessment to inform instruction and design or select assessments that not only measure factual knowledge but also critical thinking. They must understand the issues related to nondiscriminatory assessment and how to select or construct assessments that are nondiscriminatory. They must also be able to articulate the ethical issues related to assessment, particularly those related to accountability measures, like achievement or proficiency tests mandated by governmental agencies. Finally, candidates must clearly and accurately communicate assessment information to students, parents and other professionals, using technology or other resources to accomplish this task.

Further, our candidates develop **collaboration and communication skills**, essential 21st Century skills. Throughout their program, they are expected to effectively collaborate with students, peers, parents, cooperating teachers, administrators and representatives of community agencies. In this way, they exchange information and develop understandings so as to create optimal learning opportunities for all students. They become proficient at articulating their beliefs as to what constitutes “best practice” in teaching and are able to sensitively describe those beliefs to others both within and outside the profession. They learn how to respond to the work of students and each other in ways that are supportive, as well as sensitive to cultural, linguistic,
developmental, and gender differences. They also become skilled at clearly, accurately, and sensitively communicating information about children to parents and other professionals. We work to insure that candidate’s repertoire of communication tools includes oral and written presentation skills, nonverbal skills, and the use of technological resources.

In each licensure program, we design learning experiences for our candidates that are cumulative in nature, moving them from novices to experts. As candidates progress through their licensure program, they grow professionally toward full responsibility for classroom instruction. To achieve this goal, our curriculum is structured so that they have multiple opportunities to practice teaching strategies and techniques in their college classrooms, questioning, analyzing, discussing and writing about their developing constructs regarding teaching and learning. They then have the opportunity to try out their developing understandings in field experience and student teaching settings that include students with diverse backgrounds and learning needs. Support and feedback from college supervisors and field-based cooperating teachers, along with each candidate’s personal reflections, help these prospective teachers develop complex understandings of how teaching supports the development of all learners. These understandings, in turn, provide them with a sound theoretical perspective for making instructional decisions.

III. Theme Three: Character and Professionalism

Teaching is a deliberate social, moral, and political act that involves reconstructing knowledge and values, then communicating these understandings to novice learners (Beyer, Feinberg, Pagano, and Whitson, 1989, pp. 16-18). The OWU Teacher Education Unit nurtures preservice teachers as they move beyond their personal self-interest and begin to identify with the intellectual culture of teaching (Goodlad, 1994, pp. 83-4). The liberal arts foster the habits of heart and mind conducive to participation in a democratic society. Campus and community programs provide the context for this participation. Professional study unites the two.

These experiences lead to teachers who are reflective practitioners (Zeichner, 1983; Van Manen, 1991; Schón, 1983), committed to teaching as an honorable profession. Such teachers believe all students can learn and that it is their mission to develop the intellectual skills and habits of mind that lead to a love of learning. They are convinced that the continuation of our society compels them to embrace a democratic mission founded on multiethnic, multiracial, multinational, and multiecological relationships. Our candidates understand the role of education in a democratic society, and believe that equality of opportunity, equity, and excellence should characterize all classrooms and schools (Goodlad, 1983, p. 29; Meier 1995; Goodlad & Soder, 2001). They develop an ethic of care that is grounded in the human condition (Noddings, 2002, p. 148; Dalton and Watson, 1997) while simultaneously respecting the intellectual mission of schooling. In essence, they become “thoughtful” teachers (Clark, 1995, p. xv-xvii) who show enthusiasm and
commitment to their professional development. Completing a teacher education program, however, is only the first step to take in becoming an effective teacher. Candidates must continue to learn about themselves, their students and their subject area to remain effective teachers who are advocates for both children and the profession (Garcia, Spalding, & Powell, 2001).

Thus, we strive to develop the following dispositions in our candidates through our specialized pedagogical courses:

A. Commitment to Teaching.

Excellent teachers are passionate about teaching. They love working with students and can’t imagine doing anything else with their lives. They understand that becoming a good teacher is a complex journey that engages a person intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, morally and spiritually. It is an endeavor that links one’s past, present and future in ways that connect mind and body, emotion and intellect, sense and spirit. Thus, it is not for the faint of heart. Candidates must be fully committed to and engaged in the journey to be successful.

B. Collaborating with Colleagues, Families and Community.

Effective educators know they must make use of a variety of resources outside the classroom to facilitate student learning. Responsibility for helping all students achieve is shared by educators, families and communities. Wise teachers welcome parents and caregivers into the schools and make them an integral part of the learning community. Teachers must also collaborate with each other, sharing new knowledge and teaching strategies and engaging in joint decision-making about students. They must be open to new ideas and to listen to alternative perspectives from their colleagues. This open exchange permits the kind of professional collaboration that enhances learning. Effective educators further make use of community resources to support student achievement. These can be learning resources like museums or universities, or they can be support resources, like social service agencies.


We expect our candidates to accept responsibility for helping all students achieve. Good teachers establish a positive, caring environment in which they communicate that all students can learn. They don’t make excuses for poor performance. Rather, they take responsibility for student learning, analyzing how they must enhance the learning environment, so all students are successful.

D. Commitment to the Democratic Ideals of a Multicultural Society.

Contemporary teachers face increasingly complex challenges to work effectively with students from diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and developmental
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Thus, prospective teachers must be committed to creating lessons that allow for the use of a variety of materials, methods, and assessment strategies appropriate for these differences. They must affirm cultural differences while realizing that individuals across cultures have many similarities. They must also be committed to eliminating inequities within classrooms and schools, to helping students become active participants in governing their classrooms, and supporting students as they question societal practices related to equity and social justice (Gollnick and Chinn, 2002).

E. Engaging in Reflection and Life-Long Professional Growth.

Teachers who critically examine their daily practice and decision making are more effective in guiding student achievement than those who do not (Darling-Hammond, 2000). They create a community of learning – with themselves and their students – that is dedicated to accomplishing the tasks before them. They make decisions about what will transpire based on their analysis of the environment, and how they can adjust it to support student social relationships, motivation and academic achievement. They examine multiple courses of action, selecting what they believe, through experience and theoretical knowledge will be most supportive of their students’ development.

However, analyzing one’s current practice is only the beginning. Effective teachers should be disposed to continual learning: viewing it as a gift rather than an imposition. Students are more likely to learn from teachers who are themselves open to new learning, who question, analyze, and make continual efforts to solve problems (Shulman, 1999). Continuous learning nurtures a deeper knowledge of subject matter, a more skilled understanding of pedagogy, and a greater sensitivity to student needs. This, in turn, leads to higher student achievement. The goal of continued professional development is to develop expertise in the many tasks involved in the teaching/learning enterprise (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Overarching Commitments

The two overarching commitments are infused into every course in the Teacher Education Unit. Below is a description of the Ohio Wesleyan Teacher Education Unit’s commitment to diversity and technology.

Commitment to Diversity

Fostering respect for diversity underlies all our work with prospective teachers. Candidates are expected to understand how culture, family structures, race, language, exceptionalities, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic factors can affect student achievement. All humans have the need to learn; education should therefore help all children fulfill their educational potential. Thus, teachers must understand the cultures of the students they teach, communicate positive attitudes about cultural diversity, and use various instructional
approaches that accommodate diversity (Villegas, 1991). Similarities and differences among learners should be viewed as assets, showing all students that each individual has worth. These understandings form the basis for learning environments that promote equity, fairness, and self-efficacy in all students.

However, awareness is not enough. Candidates must also have teaching experiences in schools that serve diverse students. Within these settings, candidates must develop instruction that is inclusive; that celebrates and makes accommodations for the many diverse qualities of students. These experiences expand candidates’ understandings and awareness of how diverse qualities affect learning. To this end, our candidates work as volunteers with districts in programs like the Ohio affiliates of America Reads, after-school tutoring, the inner-city Columbus Initiative project, and the like. They tutor high-risk children in their Educational Psychology course. They all complete field experiences and many student teach in districts that serve students with diverse learning abilities and backgrounds.

Following are the curricular objectives in relation to diversity that guide us in developing appropriate learning experiences for our candidates.

- Candidates know the history and effects of prejudice, discrimination, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and disability on oppressed and dominant cultures. (OWU Conceptual Framework Theme One)

- Candidates can articulate the effects of policy and practice on culture, race, class, gender, and other categories of diversity. (OWU Conceptual Framework Themes One and Three)

- Candidates know the patterns of social, physical, and cognitive development, as well as learning styles in marginalized cultures and in individuals with disabilities. (OWU Conceptual Framework Theme Two)

- Candidates know how linguistic backgrounds are shaped by contextual influences and can adjust their teaching to ensure that all students learn and are supported by home, school and community. (OWU Conceptual Framework Theme Two)

- Candidates know effective strategies for teaching and assessing a wide range of diverse students. They can use this knowledge to plan effective instruction and assessment for all students. (OWU Conceptual Framework Theme Two)

- Candidates can create classroom and school climates that value diversity. (OWU Conceptual Framework Theme Two)

- Candidates possess the disposition that all students are capable of learning and teachers must ensure that such learning occurs. Their behaviors with students consistently convey their beliefs that all students can learn and that it is their responsibility to construct classroom environments that are fair and equitable. (OWU Conceptual Framework Theme Two)
Conceptual framework Theme Three)

Commitment to Technology

We further believe {technology} must play a significant role in a teacher preparation program. Effective pedagogy now includes the meaningful incorporation of an array of technological resources to facilitate enhanced learning for all students. Not only must candidates be exposed to and learn how technology facilitates their own learning, they must also become committed to the skillful use of technology in their own work with students. The goal is not simply to use technology, but to use it purposefully as a means to enhance lessons, extend student thinking, and stimulate motivation.

Thus, teacher candidates must communicate and understand terminology associated with technology and information literacy. They must also learn to use basic computer applications, computer instruction, and presentation technology in their course work. In turn, they design and produce technologically enhanced lessons in their work with P-12 students, evaluating the effectiveness of their efforts. Additionally, they learn how to support student use of technology to further independent learning.

So that our candidates become skilled in using technology, our faculty work diligently to use technology in courses. Class web sites, online research, blogs, wikis, e-mail, and the use of software provide models to candidates about how to use technology effectively to enhance learning. Methods courses in the various disciplines specifically train teacher candidates in the use of technology-based instruction that supports learning in that particular discipline. The Unit has two classrooms, both of which have equipment and appropriate wiring for technology based instruction including a LCD projector, Elmo projector, laptops, Smart Board, printers, and similar equipment. A computer lab on our floor has 23 computers for class use. The entire campus is wireless as of 2007.

The Ultimate Goal

In short, the ultimate goal of the teacher education Unit at Ohio Wesleyan University is to foster learning in all students, P-12, as well as in our teacher candidates. We believe this mission will lead to the creation of informed critical thinkers who contribute meaningfully and ethically to our democratic society. Candidates model the qualities that they develop during their undergraduate studies, desiring for their students what they have experienced for themselves (Eisner, 1998, p. 206). We aspire to develop teachers who effectively and humanely guide the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth of all students, while respecting individual cultures, needs and differences (Clark, 1995). Most importantly, these teachers are confident that they possess the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be competent, committed, professional teachers for a diverse, democratic society.
Philosophical Perspectives and Theoretical Assumptions
Underlying the Conceptual Framework of the Ohio Wesleyan Teacher Education Unit

Our faculty share strong philosophical beliefs and theoretical assumptions about teaching and learning. These form the foundation for how we conduct our professional lives, provide the focus for how we design our courses and programs, and are adopted by new faculty who join us. These convictions and understandings are aligned with our mission, our themes, as well as the goals and outcomes we’ve established for each program, and the outcomes we’ve established for the Unit as a whole.

Our conceptual framework reflects the thinking of renowned scholars in the field of education. Some of the main theorists include Chomsky, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Dewey, Erickson, Goodlad, Heath, Greene, Bruner, Snow, Piaget, Vygotsky, Elkind, Maslow, Kamii, Clay, Katz, Dyson, Montessori, Gardner, Greenspan and Delpit. The latest research on best practices and knowledge acquisition in various content areas, and guidelines from national standards movements (NCATE, INTASC, NAEYC, NMSA, IRA, NSTA, NCTE, NCTM, NCSS) also undergird the Unit’s programs. Additionally, these beliefs are informed by the INTASC Standards for Teacher Education adopted by the State of Ohio, as well as the Ohio Academic Content Standards for students in P-12 classrooms. This body of research leads us to hold the following values, theoretical beliefs, and philosophical tenets:

- Teachers must possess a thorough conceptual understanding of the content they teach. This gives them the tools and habits of mind to make informed judgments about what to teach, when aspects of content should be presented, and how to discern student levels of understanding. In-depth content knowledge provides the foundation. Pedagogical content knowledge informs understandings that help teachers communicate knowledge effectively to students. Thus, content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge work in tandem to help teachers plan instruction that is cognitively engaging and responsive to student needs and developmental levels (Shulman, 1987; Goodlad, 1994; Brophy, 1991, 1995).

- Many disciplines undergird the P-12 curriculum for all students. Prospective teachers must understand how knowledge is structured in these disciplines, as well as how this knowledge can be appropriately and effectively communicated to all learners (Smith, 1985; Clay, 1991; Sims et al, 1995; Stauffer & Davidson, 1996; National Committee on Science Education Standards and Assessment, 1996; National Council of the Social Studies, 1997; National Council of Teachers of English, 1996; International Reading Association, 1998; Neuman, Copple, and Bredekamp, 1999; National Reading Panel, 2000; National Council for Teaching Mathematics, 2000; Katz and Chard, 2000; Kamii, 2000; Clements, Sarama and DiBiase, 2001; Bruner, 1966; Ohio Academic Content Standards, 2002).
Teachers must be prepared to work in 21st century schools with 21st century students. They must provide a curriculum that is technology-rich, problem and inquiry-centered, and “intensely individualized.” (Cochran-Smith, 2010; National Research Council, 2005)

Teachers must be able to communicate effectively with all students, adjusting their interactions based on age, developmental level, cultural/linguistic background and student response. Effective communication leads to the development of a community of learners (Cazden, 1988; Delpit, 1988; Garcia, 1994; Heath, 1993).

The effects of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can prevail over the influences of student background factors like poverty, linguistic differences, exceptionalities, and minority status (Cochran-Smith, 2010, Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

An evolving research base of effective practice in teaching many disciplines is available to teachers. Although this knowledge is continually revised as new knowledge is generated, teachers can use these principles to guide their teaching (Brophy, 1991, 1995; Bredekamp, 1995, 1997; Daniels, et al, 2001; Kontos and Wilcox-Herzog, 1997; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, et al, 1995; Snow, 1994, 2002; Shulman, 1999).

The Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality and its corresponding Work Sample Methodology provides teacher education programs with a “product” to evaluate candidates’ learning and their impact on PreK-12 students’ learning, as well as, a “process” for evaluating the effectiveness of the teacher education program (Pankratz, R., 2008).

High quality teacher education programs provide accountability for teachers’ learning and students’ learning (Cochran-Smith, 2010)

Growth in cognition, language, social competence, physical abilities, aesthetic awareness, and morality is developmental and contextual. This means that young learners differ significantly in their development from older learners – and sometimes markedly from each other at the same age. Teachers must respond appropriately to the developmental age/stage and individual characteristics of each learner. This represents developmentally appropriate/developmentally responsive practice. Environments in which teachers use developmentally appropriate/responsive practices can significantly influence student learning (Piaget, 1952; Chomsky, 1972; Gilligan, 1982; NAEYC, 1996, 2000; Gardner, 1993; Kohlberg, 1984; Bredekamp and Copple, 1997; Levine, 2002; Vandell, 2002; King & Kitchner, 1994; Snow, et al, 1995).
Development in P-12 students occurs as an integrated whole with progress in each area influenced by growth in other areas (Piaget, 1952; Kohlberg, 1984; Gilligan, 1982; Maslow, 1970; Pucket and Black, 2001).

Learning is a dynamic, active process. Teachers must develop students’ competencies in critical thinking, problem solving, and conceptual understandings by actively engaging them in authentic, cognitively engaging contexts (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

P-12 students actively construct their knowledge. They learn through interacting with an environment of rich, varied experiences that is facilitated or structured by adults and mediated with peers. Thus, they need many varied opportunities to represent their knowledge through play, talk, writing, artistic expression, and other active/creative experiences (Dewey, 1938; Kamii, 1993, 2000; Dyson, 1989; Brooks and Brooks, 1993; Gardner, 1993, 1999; DeVries et al, 2002; National Middle School Association, 2003; Greene, 2000; Wells and Chang-Wells, 1992; Jambor, 2000; Paley, 2004; Wilson, et al, 1987).

P-12 students’ thinking is integrated. Thus, they need a curriculum that is structured so that connections are made between disciplines and students’ experiences, making learning holistic, and thus meaningful, relevant, and challenging (Dewey, 1938; Katz and Chard, 1989; Edwards, Gandini and Forman, 1998; National Middle School Association, 2003).

P-12 students are intrinsically motivated to learn, grow, and become competent by acquiring skills in reading, writing, computing, and thinking. Teachers must respect and nurture this natural motivation and curiosity (Maslow, 1970; Montessori, 1995; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Effective teachers scaffold learning by providing their students with learning opportunities just beyond their independent level, but within their “zone of proximal development” so as to give sufficient intellectual challenge that leads to growth in knowledge and understanding. From this perspective, learning is a mutually constructed experience (sometimes termed a “social transaction”) between teacher and student (Vygotsky, 1978; Berk and Wisler, 1995).

Teachers must know and use a wide variety of instructional strategies, to meet the needs of all students, encouraging their critical thinking, problem-solving capabilities and development of their knowledge base. They must be skilled in adjusting or varying these strategies based on student response, cultural/linguistic background, and developmental level (Bruner, 1996, 1990; Garcia, 1994; Wells and Chang-Wells, 1992).
Assessment of PreK-12 students should be naturally embedded in curriculum and daily routines and should be authentic (related to real-life tasks and concepts), while maintaining respect for individual needs and differences. Effective teachers are engaged in the assessment of learning (pre-assessment and formative assessment) and they use this data to make instructional decisions that will support all students learning (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

All students’ learning is affected by their self-concept, sense of autonomy, security, independence, and competence, as well as their feelings of self-efficacy. Therefore, schools must support the development of these qualities by providing a nurturing, supportive, and accepting environment that values individuality and diversity, yet provides challenging expectations for all students (Erikson, 1963; Maslow, 1970; Katz & McClellan, 1997; National Middle School Association, 2003).

Students are diverse. To work effectively with students from various cultures and communities, as well as those with special developmental needs, prospective teachers must value human dignity, equality, and diversity. They must foster empathetic and just interactions with students of different races, ethnic backgrounds, economic class and sexual orientations as well as those with differing abilities or physical needs (Cusher, McClelland and Stafford, 2002; Perez, 1994; Wolery & Wilbers, 1994; Delpit, 1996; Dyson, 1997; August & Hakuta, 1998; Tabors, 1998; Kohn, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Manning, 1999; Sandall, et al, 2000; Darling-Hammond et al, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Meier, 1995).

Teachers must be knowledgeable about and skilled in using multiple teaching and learning approaches that are fair, unbiased and account for student diversity and learning differences (Delpit, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Giroux, 1988; Freire, 1990; Garcia, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Tabors & Snow, 2001; Tomlinson, 1999; Council for Exceptional Children, 1997).

Committed teachers are advocates for developmentally appropriate practices within schools and for helping all learners become thoughtful, ethical, democratic citizens (McEwin & Dickinson, 2001; King & Kitchener, 1994; Bredecamp & Copple, 1997; Dewey, 1916; Giroux, 1988).

Because the lives of all students are embedded in their families and communities, prospective teachers must value, respect, and celebrate families and communities as significant partners who have much to contribute to the educational process. They must be sensitive to and accepting of the diverse languages and cultural backgrounds of families and community members, using this knowledge to communicate appropriately and effectively with all stakeholders in the educational process (Bronfenbienner, 1986; Epstein, 1991,
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- Teachers must be effective communicators with professionals within their building and district as well as with members of professional groups.

- Teachers must develop an ethic of caring for students who have been entrusted to them. They must consider themselves as counselors and advisors, not just transmitters of knowledge (Noddings, 2002; Dalton & Watson, 1997).

- Reflection is a fundamental activity in teaching. It is a deliberate act, carrying the connotation of making choices, of coming to decisions about alternative courses of action. It implies change as teachers use their reflections to enhance and guide the development of subsequent lessons. It becomes a powerful catalyst to change practice. Reflective teachers seek the company of like-minded colleagues, thus benefiting from the support of a professional community (Schön, 1983; Zeichner, 1983).

- Committed teachers are models of lifelong learning. They know that attaining an initial teaching license is the beginning of a journey, not the end. They understand they must continually examine their practice and search for improved ways to do their work. This search is multifaceted and focuses on new research-based pedagogy, new instructional materials, new technologies, and new subject matter knowledge (McEwin & Dickinson, 2001).

- Teaching is more than a career. It is a mission, a calling. Teachers must be thoroughly committed to their work, viewing it as a moral, socially responsible pursuit with significant challenges and immeasurable rewards (Noddings, 2002; Ayers, 1993).

OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
UNIT CANDIDATE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Our graduates attain the qualities of competent, committed, professional teachers for a diverse, democratic society by achieving the following Ohio Wesleyan University Teacher Education Unit Candidate Learning Outcomes. These outcomes are derived from the principles espoused in our conceptual framework, guided the creation of our course content, are the criteria the Unit uses to define what we mean by competent, committed, professional teachers for a diverse, democratic society, and determine the basis for assessing both candidate performance and program effectiveness. Thus, we have established coherence between our philosophies, curriculum, and learning outcomes. Assessment documents are aligned with these learning outcomes so as to ensure coherence between learning outcomes and candidate/program assessments (see description of the OWU Assessment System). Additionally, all professional
education course syllabi are aligned with the Conceptual Framework and Learning Outcomes to
demonstrate **coherence** within licensure programs across the Unit.

**Learning Outcome #1:**

Candidates possess *knowledge* of disciplines being taught and the *ability* to organize,
integrate and convey knowledge so that it is comprehensible to all students. (Theme One)

Candidates demonstrate this competency by:
- Using basic competencies in reading, writing, and quantitative analysis in their work.
- Articulating a commitment to the liberal arts ideals of critical inquiry and lifelong
  learning.
- Using major concepts and principles of content matter to construct lessons.
- Creating interdisciplinary connections that allow students to integrate knowledge from
  several content areas.
- Translating content knowledge into developmentally appropriate instructional goals and
  plans.
- Knowing content-related pedagogy.
- Selecting appropriate and diverse methods and resources (including technology) that are
  appropriate for the content being taught.
- Applying content to real world settings.
- Designing instruction that is clear, well-sequenced, coherent, and appropriate for the
  content.
- Using assessment strategies that are compatible with the content and appropriate for all
  students.
- Using appropriate grouping strategies for content being taught.

**Learning Outcome #2:**

Candidates possess *knowledge* of human development, motivation, and learning, as well as
the individual and contextual factors that guide one’s ability to develop instruction that is
appropriate for all students. (Theme Two)

Candidates demonstrate their competency by:
- Articulating the intellectual, social, moral, linguistic, emotional, and physical
  characteristics of the age group they are teaching.
- Applying knowledge of intellectual, social, and emotional characteristics of relevant age
  group to their work as teachers.
- Using knowledge of what students bring to the learning situation (interests, cultural, and
  experiential background, varied approaches to learning, etc.) to plan developmentally
  responsive instruction.
- Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students.

**Learning Outcome #3:**
Candidates possess knowledge of classroom organization, management, and curriculum and the ability to design, implement, and manage the learning environment in ways that support active student learning, and independence for all students. (Theme Two)

Candidates demonstrate this competency by:

- Organizing time, materials, and space effectively to support learning.
- Creating a safe physical environment that is conducive to learning.
- Establishing an environment of mutual respect and rapport.
- Creating and maintaining appropriate interactions with students.
- Setting high expectations for learning.
- Promoting meaningful, purposeful work.
- Establishing and maintaining consistent standards of behavior.
- Creating a dynamic learning environment characterized by trust, equity, risk-taking, independence, and collaboration.
- Supporting students’ continual engagement in authentic work.
- Setting lessons within the context of a broader curricular framework.
- Using district, state, and national curricular guidelines for creating instruction.

Learning Outcome #4:

Candidates possess knowledge of various instructional strategies and materials, including technology, that encourage student problem-solving, critical thinking and independent learning and the ability to select and implement instructional strategies that account for and adapt to all contexts, learners, and content. (Theme Two)

Candidates demonstrate this competency by:

- Communicating clearly and accurately in ways that also honor student linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
- Using time effectively and encouraging students to do the same.
- Making smooth transitions.
- Striving for active involvement of all students.
- Using effective oral and written language.
- Applying information literacy skills, including appropriate use of technology.
- Using diverse instructional strategies that meet the needs of all students.
- Making appropriate adjustments during implementation of instruction to make learning accessible to all students.
- Using questioning and discussion techniques that engage and challenge all students.
- Encouraging students to extend their thinking and apply what has been learned.
- Using questioning, probing, and redirecting techniques to facilitate the extension, refinement, and meaningful use of knowledge by all students.
- Encouraging student collaboration where appropriate.
- Using variety of instructional materials that meet the needs of all students.
- Developing instruction that is aligned with the Ohio Academic Content Standards for
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Pre-12 students.
• Creating integrated units of instruction.

Learning Outcome #5:

Candidates possess knowledge of a variety of assessment strategies that are embedded in instruction and the ability to use formative and summative assessments to monitor and evaluate student learning, as well as to inform one’s teaching. (Theme Two)

Candidates demonstrate this proficiency by:
• Using various formative and summative assessment strategies to monitor student understanding and adjusting instruction accordingly.
• Providing feedback that is accurate, constructive, substantive, specific, timely, and free of bias.
• Fostering student’s reflection on their own work.
• Using student performance data to adjust subsequent instruction.

Learning Outcome #6:

Candidates possess the disposition of commitment to teaching as a viable, honorable profession. (Theme Three)

Candidates demonstrate this proficiency by:
• Articulating enthusiasm for teaching and learning.
• Presenting an appropriate professional appearance and demeanor during all school-related events, as well as within the greater community context.
• Being reliable, punctual, dependable, respectful, and professionally dressed.
• Following school procedures.
• Maintaining accurate and meaningful records.
• Attending professional conferences and meetings to enhance knowledge and skills.

Learning Outcome #7:

Candidates possess the disposition that fostering collaborative relationships with colleagues, families and the larger community is an important activity for teachers. (Theme Three)

Candidates demonstrate this proficiency by:
• Collaborating regularly and effectively with all colleagues who work in some capacity with their students.
• Maintaining consistent contact with parents/caregivers and viewing parents/caregivers as
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a viable part of the instructional team.
• Communicating effectively with all families, respecting their perspective, as well as their cultural/linguistic background.
• Collaborating and communicating effectively with the education community, social service agencies, and other community entities to support student learning and development.
• Participating in school and community functions.
• Recognizing that students are best understood in the contexts of family, culture, and society.

Learning Outcome #8:

Candidates possess the disposition that it is important to affirm one’s efficacy as it relates to student learning. (Theme Three)

Candidates demonstrate this proficiency by:
• Declaring a belief that all students can learn.
• Asserting that one’s teaching can have a positive effect on student learning.
• Persisting in helping students learn despite initial difficulties or failures.

Learning Outcome #9:

Candidates possess the disposition that competent, committed, professional teachers are essential for ensuring that the democratic ideals of a multicultural society are the foundation of all teaching and learning. (Theme Three)

Candidates demonstrate this proficiency by:
• Treating all students respectfully regardless of abilities, exceptionalities, cultural differences, and life experiences.
• Articulating the ideals of social justice and equality.
• Declaring the need to attend equitably to all learners in the educational setting.

Learning Outcome #10:

Candidates possess the disposition that engaging in reflective practice is an important act for all teachers and that such reflection implies a commitment to lifelong professional development. (Theme Three)

Candidates demonstrate this proficiency by:
• Continually reflecting on the effect of one’s teaching on student learning.
• Using constructive suggestions to improve.
• Articulating commitment to lifelong professional improvement.
• Collaborating with other candidates, supervising teachers and faculty on ways to improve
one’s own teaching, as well as the profession.

- Attending faculty and staff-development meetings, workshops, professional conferences, etc.

Candidate Proficiencies Aligned with State and Professional Standards

The Unit’s candidate proficiencies (termed “Ten Learning Outcomes”) are aligned with the Conceptual Framework, as well as Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession and Praxis II standards as required by the State of Ohio. Additionally, the Unit’s performance outcomes are also aligned with the Ohio Academic Content Standards, as well as the national specialty professional associations (SPA’s).