

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Education Department's Conceptual Framework contains three interdependent components:

- *Organizing Theme and Philosophy*, which describes the three dimensions of a professional educator as scholar, inquirer and moral agent;
- *Theoretical Grounding*, which explicates the underlying values and ideas supporting the three-dimensional view of the educator; and
- *Code of Ethics*, which describes how these values and ideas can be translated into action by professional educators in the course of their practice.

This Conceptual Framework guides faculty and students in the Education Department. It is considered to be a “work in progress” that is continuously re-examined and refined by the faculty and students of the Education Department.¹

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK—ORGANIZING THEME AND PHILOSOPHY

Purpose and Rationale. The purpose of this Conceptual Framework of the Education Department is to clearly state to fellow educator, to potential teacher education students, and to the community at large, the values and beliefs of the University of Detroit Mercy teacher education programs. These essential values are focused in the Education Department's mission.

This mission of the Education Department is the development of educators who:

- Are ethical, value-directed persons;
- Possess a scholarly mastery of subject matter;
- Recognize that all children can learn; and
- Engage students in an interactive, dynamic process of learning.

While the mission drives the Conceptual Framework, the Conceptual Framework—as a living document—further the mission of the Education Department by providing a foundation of concepts and guiding principles for the construction of all education programs and courses.

The Conceptual Framework acts as a beacon, drawing to it those who share the Department's conviction that education in a metropolitan community can be a powerful force for renewal and growth. It is a starting point for dialog with community partners and University colleagues about many issues related to education, schooling, and professional teaching. It summarizes the ideas used by Education Department faculty for their professional activities. Prospective students can also examine the Conceptual Framework as a set of beliefs against which they can compare their values to determine whether there is a fit with their own.

Organizing Theme and Philosophy. The precepts emphasized in the mission are manifested in a conceptualization of the role of the teacher as having three dimensions:

- A *scholar* who uses the research-knowledge base for teaching, integrated with the liberal arts and sciences disciplines;
- An *inquirer* who is skilled in decision-making and in ethical, critical, and reflective thinking; and
- A *moral agent* whose values reflect those of the Education Department’s Professional Code of Ethics.

The Department’s mission is implemented by faculty and students who, through collaborative efforts, address the three dimensions of the role of educators.

To prepare educators with the competencies to teach and administer schools, UDM teacher education programs implement the Department’s mission through the collaborative efforts of faculty and students. These efforts address the development of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for successful teaching and learning in schools. Department programs are based in the belief that those who are preparing to teach and administer schools need to demonstrate competency in the three dimensions of the role of the teacher. These dimensions, therefore, are linked to specific goals. The goals encompassed in the dimensions of the teacher’s role—scholar, inquirer, moral agent—are stated in such a way as to serve as outcomes for the teacher education programs. As such, the goals also stand as guidelines for the assessment of program effectiveness.

To achieve these ends, the curriculum in each program is designed to develop:

A scholar who:

- Competently practices the art of teaching using knowledge gained from a diverse research base;
- Designs instruction that provides meaningful content through disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches;
- Bases instruction on principles of the cognitive, social, and emotional development of students;
- Creates instruction to meet students’ diverse learning styles;
- Integrates the needs of students and the community with curricular and content goals;
- Uses appropriate assessment strategies to promote students’ cognitive, social, and emotional growth; and
- Conducts research within the teaching/learning environment and shares findings with other practitioners.

An inquirer who:

- Develops critical, reflective, and analytical thinking to design meaningful instruction for students;
- Uses creative and ethical thinking in decision-making;

- Applies metacognitive thought to analyze teaching practice;
- Promotes students’ growth in critical and analytical thinking as well as problem-solving;
- Uses instructional strategies along with appropriate educational technology to create a classroom atmosphere of inquiry and collaboration;
- Critically examines his/her own practice to assess competence; and
- Continuously develops his/her repertoire of professional knowledge and skills.

A moral agent who:

- Commits his/her efforts to promoting social justice in urban society;
- Develops his/her own ethical reasoning;
- Follows the ethical standards of professional teaching’
- Incorporates value, moral, and character education into instruction;
- Creates a supportive network advocating for students with all stakeholders in the educational enterprise; and
- Engages imagination and dialog to work for a better world.

These three dimensions, along with their associated goals, guide the selection of ideas from practice, research, and policy which faculty include in the curriculum design of all programs and the teaching and learning experiences within these programs. The Conceptual Framework compels faculty to link the three dimensions so that content knowledge, pedagogical theory, and ethical conduct are integrated within the learning experiences that they provide for students.

Opportunities for reflection and dialogue provide the faculty and students the time and space to contribute to their own and others’ professional development, the ongoing renewal of the Department’s programs, and the renewal of the Conceptual Framework itself. The Conceptual Framework thus fulfills its purpose of guiding faculty and students through a lived experience of the organized theme: teacher as scholar, inquirer, and moral agent.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK—THEORETICAL FOUNDING

The philosophical organizing theme of the Education Department’s Conceptual Framework is grounded in the wisdom of educators—historical and contemporary, practitioners, and theoreticians. Within the dimensions of the teacher as scholar, inquirer and moral agent, students learn to listen to their own developing wisdom and to actively seek the wisdom of professional educator colleagues. Students also develop skills to integrate established and contemporary theory and research so that they understand the broad body of knowledge that constitutes effective pedagogy. In addition to leaning from colleagues, students are challenged and guided to listen and to collaborate with their students, parent, community and other professionals to develop their understanding of the complex dynamics inherent in the context surrounding effective teaching and learning.

Four major theoretical constructs are used in the Conceptual Framework to support students as they develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be a scholar, inquirer and moral agent in their own educational practice. These constructs are *constructivism*, *reflective practice*, *systems thinking*, and *social justice*. Education department programs are designed to embed these theoretical constructs across the three dimensions of the role of teacher. Deliberate efforts are made in the design of courses to provide learning experiences that help frame the student's developing view of the teacher as scholar, inquirer and moral agent who is guided by the Educator's Code of Ethics in her/her professional practice. In this way, the courses within a program are complementary and in agreement with the Conceptual Framework. The Conceptual Framework is the glue that unifies all programs, and within a program, unifies the program components.

The Conceptual Framework with its organizing theme of teacher as scholar, continuous inquirer, and moral agent allows an examination of the multiple decisions a teacher must make to plan, prepare, implement, and assess teaching and learning. These decisions require an intense interaction among subject matter inquiry, students' personal purposes, and students' prior knowledge and dispositions.

The multiple decisions teachers are required to make are best understood by linking three constructs of constructivist teaching. These constructs are pragmatic intelligence (Dewey 1910/1933), action-research (Lewin, 1948) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). All three of these conceptual constructs are used in continuous decision making cycle analogous to surfing (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1993). This cycle, like surfing, requires reflection, critical reasoning and critical engagement to occur so rapidly that they appear as simultaneous operations. Riding the curl of the wave of subject matter inquiry requires knowledge of discipline content, students, and dynamics of the learning environment. It also requires the decision making skills to make the moves which use the energy and momentum of teaching to capture the curriculum outcomes for learning.

In teacher education classes at the University of Detroit Mercy, students get the opportunity to tease out one or the other of these decisions, but never so far as to remove it from the context needed to develop an understanding of the dynamics needed to use its potential to influence student learning. Access to a broad pedagogical knowledge and skill base provides theoretical and practical research findings for choosing effective teaching strategies. In choosing effective strategies, teacher education students are guided in a dialectical inquiry process to use differing perspectives to examine the learning context. This inquiry process uses the professional norms of the Code of Ethics to put the student at the center of decision making.

In order to keep students at the center of the decision-making cycle, teacher education students can draw from a wide range of educational theory and research perspectives. Teachers who use constructivist practices scaffold instruction with metacognitive guidance for learning (Palincsar, 1986). They engage students as active participants and conscious agents in problem solving, inquiry, and authentic forms of assessment (Brooks and Brooks, 1993). Knowledge, skills, and attitudes are learned by using cultural

referents to empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Vygotsky, 1962).

One application of these practices can be found in teacher's decision making regarding the current cultural shift generated by rapidly developing electronic technology. Within constructivist teaching and learning environments, the use of technology is one of constructing learning possibilities which empower students (Perkins, 1992). Questions of how, when, and where to use these learning tools involve designing learning experiences which engage students' critical thinking and problem solving skills to make choices which alter outcomes, build models, and test solutions within a systems approach to learning (Senge, 1994). Students and teachers work together to construct the knowledge required to engage in meaningful learning.

Use of constructivist practices is not limited to classroom applications. Programs in the Education Department are designed to guide students in the identification of issues and challenges to effective teaching and learning within the context of the need for ongoing educational and school renewal. Because school reform occupies the attention of not only educators, but citizens as well, UDM students must be ready to help community members sort out workable solutions to this persisting dilemma. (See especially Berliner and Riddle, 1995; and Postman, 1995.) To prepare UDM education students to take leadership roles in the active search for more effective schools, the issue of what constitutes effective is confronted directly in coursework.

A framework for viewing educational change—first order change, or “repair” contrasted with the second order change, or structural change (Cuban, 1988; Tyack & Cuban, 1995)—is developed so that students can view a particular instance of school reform in terms of its relationship to the existing system. Systemic change is offered as a challenging but effective approach to lasting and meaningful school reform (Sarason, 1990, 1982; Glickman, 1988)

The Conceptual Framework of the Education Department also addresses the belief that scholars, inquirers and moral agents need to reflect on their actions afterward as well as “in the moment” (Schön 1991, 1990, 1987, 1983). Our classrooms create lab situations. In essence, we can stop and focus on specific skills, reflect on real and imagined outcomes, and think about designs for using the results of our having this “luxury” of space and time. In this way, teachers learn to construct their own local theories of teaching and learning, expanding and refining these theories as they come to learn from each of the many instances in which they consciously practice. (For a discussion of teacher theorizing see: Connelly and Clandinin, 1988; Ross, Cornett, and McCutcheon, 1992; Stone 1992.) By sharing these local theories with one another at school, at conferences, and in other professional settings, teachers can expand their personal knowledge base for teaching and learning, as well as expand the communal knowledge base (Grimmett and Erickson, 1988; Hollingsworth and Sockett, 1994).

By exploring differing perspectives, participating in dialogue, and engaging in action research, education faculty and students continue to breathe life into the Conceptual Framework and fulfill the Mission of the Education Department.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK—CODE OF ETHICS

Teacher education students at the University of Detroit Mercy develop the construct of social justice by infusing a normative point of view into the conceptual framework through a student-faculty developed Professional Code of Ethics. This code addresses ethical behaviors for professional competency with the three audiences of school-based practices—students, parents, and school systems. Constructivist teaching theory once again provides a base for understanding our normative code through what Henderson (1996) calls a “4C” approach: teaching is a calling (Bogue, 1991); is caring (Noddings, 1984); creative (Eisner, 1994); and centered or authentic (Greene, 1988).

The Code of Ethics makes visible the theoretical constructs of the Conceptual Framework in a manner which demonstrates how teacher as scholar, inquirer and moral agent can use knowledge, skills and attitudes to be an educator who collaborates with parents and the community to benefit students; to contribute positively to the renewal of the profession, the school system and ultimately to building a better society.

TEACHER CANDIDATES’ CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

As Educators we realize the trust placed in us by the community—the preparing of its children for their future place in society. We are awed by the magnitude of this responsibility and wholeheartedly accept its challenges because we believe that all children can learn.

This Code of Ethics is our pledge to the community that we will vigilantly pursue the highest standards of performance from our professional ranks; that we will carefully nurture the students entrusted to our care; and that we will make an effort to interact with all members of society, who like educators, are concerned with the rights and well-being of our young people.

The goal of an Educator is to inspire students toward excellence while promoting learning as a lifelong process. The Educator has the responsibility of teaching this nation’s greatest natural resource. Therefore, it is imperative that the Educator teaches and believes in the dignity and integrity of all students. The Educator needs to be of good moral character and model the appropriate social skills and values. The Educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards.

Regarding Professional Competency, the Educator shall:

- Possess a mastery of academic content areas and a mastery of instructional skills to practice the art of teaching.
- Strive to achieve and maintain the highest degree of professional competency and will always uphold the honor, dignity and ethical standards of their profession.

- Exert every effort to raise professional standards, to promote a climate that encourages the true exercise of reflective teaching, professional judgment and to foster collaborative relationships among colleagues, parents and community.
- Recognize the need for continuing professional and educational development, and pursue opportunities to acquire new skills, develop new techniques, and become informed of new research methods, and educational technology.
- Make every effort not to allow personal problems or conflicts to interfere with professional effectiveness.
- Maintain professional relationship with students, parents, school personnel, and the community.
- Respect each person with whom he/she is working, and deal justly and impartially with each regardless of his/her physical, mental, emotional, political, economic, social, cultural, racial characteristics or sexual and religious preferences.
- Be committed to the holistic, integrative development of youth including caring for special needs children, teaching critical, creative and ethical thinking with a dedication to social justice.

Regarding Students, the Educator shall:

- Base relationships on integrity and mutual trust; the Educator shall recognize and reflect a concern for student dignity.
- Not tolerate policies, procedures, or attitudes that impede student success.
- Strive to help each student realize his/her potential as a worthy and effective member of a democratic society by developing a personal code of democratic values.
- Work to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals and moral character.
- Prepare students for full participation in a global, multicultural society by facilitating independent action and differing viewpoints.
- Respect students' right to privacy and confidentiality.
- Acknowledge his/her position as a role model for students.

Regarding Parents, the Educator shall:

- Recognize the importance of parental support and seek to obtain this by establishing contact with parents.
- Communicate with parents about their child regarding progress and problems in a truthful and timely manner.
- Communicate to the parents recommendations meeting the educational needs of their children.
- Respect the parent's right to privacy and confidentiality except in cases of abuse.
- Attempt to become aware of the student's home situation through encouraging and facilitating frequent and open communication between the home and school.

Regarding the School System, the Educator shall:

- Become knowledgeable of the organization, philosophy, goals, objectives, and methodology of the school system for which he/she works.
- Recognize that an understanding of the goals, process, and legal requirements of the educational system is essential for an effective delivery of educational services.
- Be familiar with the curriculum, instructional materials, and teaching strategies of the school for which he/she works.
- Recognize the need to familiarize him or herself with the attitudes and expectations of the community.
- Actively engage in activities directed toward developing and improving the educational system.

ⁱ The creation of a Conceptual Framework for the Education Department was initiated in 1990 as a joint effort between faculty and students, led by Professor Joan Wilder. In 1994, a document was produced, and that document continues to be modified by current faculty and students. The Conceptual Framework was expanded by faculty in 1996 to incorporate specific statements of goals to provide further guidelines for faculty and students. These goal statements reflected the faculty's commitment to Michigan's Entry Level Standards for Beginning Teachers (1993), and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Council (INTASC, 1992) standards. In 1997, additional work by faculty expanded the theoretical component of the Conceptual Framework.

The original document was composed by individuals from many different ethnic groups, age groups, and geographic locations, and thus reflected the heterogeneity of the metropolitan Detroit area. As they conceptualized the document, it was to be a product of a diverse group that spoke equally to the common ground shared by members of the University community and to the uniqueness and individuality of each community member. The Conceptual Framework continues to reflect such diversity.