

Calumet College of St. Joseph

Conceptual Framework for the Education Unit

Overview

The Education Unit is deeply committed to the Calumet College of St. Joseph urban educational mission to prepare a diverse student body for professional careers and graduate education. Consistent with the mission of the College, this conceptual framework empowers teacher candidates to become effective educators, demonstrating the requisite knowledge, dispositions, and performances outlined in the guiding principles of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC).

The Education Unit contributes to the building of a socially just society so that the inherent dignity and rights of the individual are respected and protected. Through quality education, teacher candidates are challenged to engage in the transformation of values and social structures within the community. The result is the flourishing of human dignity, freedom, responsibility, and creativity, fulfilling an essential tenet of the College mission: *the formation of spiritual, moral, and ethical values in support of social justice and personal responsibility.*

The conceptual framework of the Education Unit offers three essential and inter-related pillars: *professional preparation, continuous and critical reflection, and ongoing personal and professional transformation.*

The pillar of *professional preparation* provides teacher candidates with appropriate content knowledge and skills that reflect current research on effective teaching and best practices in the field. The pillar of *continuous and critical reflection* challenges teacher candidates with opportunities to evaluate best practices and research with a view towards appropriating the knowledge, performances, and dispositions that will foster effective teaching. The pillar of *ongoing personal and professional transformation* engages teacher candidates in the dual process of personal evaluation of the skills and dispositions of an effective teacher, leading to professional transformation, and the application of Catholic social justice values that lead to quality involvement in society.

Preparation

An overarching focus of the Unit is to develop exemplary educators grounded in a liberal arts education. Candidates require relevant content knowledge in the academic disciplines in conjunction with critical knowledge of the field of education. Teachers must know both the subject matter and state mandated teaching standards for content areas to ensure that young people learn the subject matter of the various content disciplines and can apply their learning in a constructive manner. As Vito Perrone notes in his *Letter to Teachers*, education is a matter of facilitating the construction of new meanings for the ultimate purpose of creating a “more productive community-oriented life” (Perrone, 1991). Understanding the social context of schooling assists teachers in creating a bridge between the content of the school curriculum and the lives of their students.

The Unit faculty prepares teacher candidates to use appropriate instructional approaches and authentic assessment procedures to ensure that all students meet Indiana’s state standards. Teacher candidates learn to appreciate the importance of cultural diversity and multiple learning styles. They develop the ability to address diversity through various instructional methodologies. Candidates understand learning theory, curriculum development and effective ways to incorporate educational technology in assisting P-12 students to achieve quality outcomes.

In addition to acquiring a knowledge base for professional education, teacher candidates must have the professional dispositions (e.g., values, commitments) that help students learn to become fully effective as professional educators by understanding the affective nature of education. The dispositions of successful educators include enthusiasm for the discipline they teach, a commitment to lifelong learning, high achievement expectations for P-12 students, and an ability to develop productive, caring, and respectful relationships with families from diverse backgrounds. When candidates align content knowledge, pedagogical expertise and affective understanding, P-12 students benefit from an environment conducive to quality learning. According to Fenstermacher and Soltis (1998), the teacher’s manner can be “grouped under the heading of moral and intellectual virtues” (p. 42). Thus, manner is part of the instructional process, since while imparting content the teacher also demonstrates an

approach to the content. A second component of teacher manner focuses on character traits that are taught largely through modeling rather than by direct instruction.

Particular attention to the needs of the richly diverse population of students in Northwest Indiana requires that CCSJ teacher candidates be prepared with a variety of multicultural educational experiences. They must be able to appreciate and build upon the various forms of diversity in today's schools, e.g. ethnicity, race, religion, class, gender, family, language and exceptionality, to facilitate learning and promote critical thinking and tolerance. It is essential that future educators be prepared to provide an equitable environment that enhances achievement for exceptional P-12 students and those who are non-native speakers of English. In addition, all teacher candidates must be prepared to address various learning styles throughout the curriculum, including those influenced by cultural factors. They must also utilize effective classroom management techniques to ensure that all P-12 students achieve at high levels.

Teacher candidates must demonstrate a theoretical and functional understanding of how learning occurs (knowledge construction, skill acquisition, and habits of mind). Candidates utilize instructional strategies and assessments that promote student learning while aware of the multiple factors that impact a student's social, emotional, moral and cognitive development. This requires that the Unit faculty prepare teacher candidates to know and apply developmentally appropriate practices and motivational principles to make accurate curricular and methodological decisions when planning lessons. Teacher candidates must also understand the uses, advantages, and limitations of various assessment procedures when selecting, constructing, and utilizing developmentally appropriate assessment strategies for the evaluation of learning outcomes.

The Unit faculty structures each course syllabus to provide measurable mechanisms for assessing teacher candidate progress in demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and dispositions requisite for the effective urban professional educator. Teacher candidates are provided with various experiences in designated courses throughout the program that encourage them to demonstrate competence in implementing Indiana State Developmental Standards and the INTASC principles.

Reflection

Reflective teachers are thoughtful practitioners who continuously evaluate their professional thinking and behavior to improve educational performance. Reflective practitioners engage in what Paolo Freire (1970) refers to as *praxis*, education that connects theory with reflection and action. These reflective teachers must be motivated to analyze educational situations in a critical manner, set goals, plan and monitor activities, analyze and evaluate results, and reflect on their professional thinking, behaviors, and values. Moreover, teacher candidates are expected to illustrate their knowledge of democratic and ethical principles as they consider the long-term social and ethical implications of daily decisions. In their mimetic role as teachers, candidates must reflect on the transformative nature of education and their importance as role models for students (Jackson, 1986). Therefore, the program engages teacher candidates in the development of the art of reflective thinking that enhances professional growth, provides an opportunity to reflect on ways to address the diversity of students, and increases the likelihood of success for all students.

The Unit faculty provides multiple mechanisms for teacher candidates to develop the skills and attitudes needed to be reflective practitioners including participation in field experiences throughout the program and mentoring by experienced teachers. Using observation forms developed by the Unit, teacher candidates are required to observe classroom teaching throughout the program and interview experienced teachers. Written reflective assignments provide the students valuable opportunities to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the effectiveness of educational practices. These reflective field experiences also provide the Unit with valuable data on the teacher candidates' classroom experiences.

All teacher candidates attend required professional development seminars several times each semester. The seminars provide an opportunity for students to reflect on current critical issues germane to the teaching profession. Unit faculty members extend these reflections into discussions and activities within their courses.

Teacher candidates develop personal philosophies of education after analysis of major educational theories and philosophical approaches to education. These philosophies reflect the teacher candidates' reasoned judgment concerning what is most

important for learning and how children best achieve educational goals. Subsequent to the study of philosophers and theories, candidates analyze, reflect, and evaluate a practicing teacher's philosophy after a classroom observation and interview.

Recognizing that knowledge and reflection prompt transformation, teacher candidates revisit and revise these statements prior to student teaching so that a final philosophy of education accurately reflects *praxis* on the part of the candidate. Candidates document progress through an electronic portfolio, analyzing their ability to assess reflectively and critically their own performance and growth in matching their practices to state standards, developmental standards, and INTASC principles.

The culminating reflective activity for teacher candidates occurs during the student teaching experience. Teacher candidates begin student teaching by observing the pedagogy of their cooperating teacher and writing daily reflections in their journal. Unit field supervisors and cooperating teachers model reflective skills through regular written observations throughout the duration of the candidate's placement. In a collaborative effort, the combination of reflection and feedback through journals, video taped lessons and conferences create an ideal environment for professional development.

Transformation

The transformation of teacher candidates into committed, caring, socially conscious, and effective teachers requires a lifelong commitment. This transformation begins with the initiation of the candidates into the Education Program of Calumet College of St. Joseph and develops throughout the teacher candidate's student teaching experience and educational career. Recognizing this formational approach, the Unit faculty not only offers a curriculum of preparation to potential teacher candidates, but also regularly offers the wider community of professional educators the opportunity to participate in enriching courses.

The transformation of teacher candidates is a foundational tenet of the Unit, influencing teacher candidates to transform through education the lives of the P-12 students who will be eventually under their care. The Unit faculty assists teacher candidates in their transformative efforts to acquire and apply to the professional world of education the knowledge, skills, and dispositions as clear indicators of effective teaching

identified in the literature and professional educational organizations such as INTASC. In this manner, well-prepared, reflective teacher candidates from the Unit will transform the lives of P-12 students by positively and effectively facilitating the achievement of identified Indiana standards outcomes.

These positive outcomes will serve the educational needs of the community in such a manner as to foster the achievement of “larger hopes” (Perrone, 1991). Such larger hopes would include the creation of classroom environments that, in the words of Piaget, prepare children to mature into “men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done – men and women who are creative, inventive, and discoverers ... who can be critical, can verify, and not accept everything they are offered” (quoted in Greene, 1978, p. 80).

Furthermore, consonant with the larger mission of the College as both Catholic and committed to the principles of social justice in a predominantly urban environment, the Unit faculty seeks to transform the lives of teacher candidates by stimulating awareness of and appropriation of professional dispositions and ethical values. Education at its best has been described as both a moral and intellectual endeavor (Nelson, Polansky and McCarthy, 2000). The Unit advocates not only the valuing of education itself but also the enduring moral values that can serve as a foundation to help shape a just and caring society. Noddings (1992) has called for an “ethic of care” to shape the conditions of the classroom. She argues that “schools should be committed to a great moral purpose: to care for children so that they, too, will be prepared to care” (p. 65). For this reason, the Unit faculty addresses both character education and multicultural education and the need for schools to address the societal power structure that has historically subordinated groups and rationalized their school failure (Gay, 1997).

Transformation of teacher candidates into educational advocates for the values of social justice is a particularly significant focus of the Unit. An ethic of social justice strives for an ideal where all students have equal access to a high quality education (Johnson, Dupuis, Musial, Hall & Gollnick, 2002). In their course of studies, teacher candidates are therefore exposed to and made aware of the inequalities present in society and in the current educational system, and encouraged to work towards the personal

empowerment of their P-12 students and the social transformation of the schools in Northwest Indiana.

Anyon (2001) has stressed the importance of high quality teaching in inner cities as a vital prerequisite to social change. She has found in her work with exemplary urban teachers that they are characterized by a belief in the capacity of their students to learn and to make a positive contribution to society. These exemplary teachers also demonstrate caring by showing a willingness to learn about their students' languages, cultures and histories. The Unit faculty fosters these dispositions in teacher candidates as well by incorporating diverse perspectives in the curriculum through participatory, experiential activities. These mechanisms assist the teacher candidates in achieving not only professional transformation into more effective teachers but also into persons committed to valuing education as one means of achieving social justice in their communities.

Conclusion

The curricular design of teacher preparation seeks to transform well-prepared candidates into reflective, committed, and socially conscious professional educators. The student teaching experience, guided by close and supportive Unit faculty and cooperating professionals, culminates in the transformation of teacher candidates into truly effective professional teachers. Personal and professional transformation requires an ongoing educational process that encompasses the development of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances requisite for effective teaching. This process of critical reflection on contemporary educational theory, principles and standards, as well as the values of social justice in service to the larger hopes of the richly pluralistic educational community of Northwest Indiana remains the foundational Unit goal.

References

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