

## NCATE: Conceptual Framework

The structural complexity of the teacher education unit is pulled together by a common conceptual framework of teacher preparation that is supported by the missions of the university, the colleges and the departments. Our conceptual framework is continually evolving as it is influenced by our study of teacher preparation. We view our program as holistic and dynamic. While supported by the framework that is provided by the INTASC Principles, we would not identify any single course or learning experience exclusively with one of these principles. However, the principles do guide the three themes that are woven throughout our teacher education programs:

- teacher as learner
- teacher as active agent of learning
- teacher as articulate visionary



[Click on Graphic to enlarge](#)

### Foundations of the Conceptual Framework

Teacher Education at the University of North Dakota is supported by a Teacher Education Unit which includes faculty from three different colleges (Arts and Sciences, Education and Human Development, and Business and Public Administration) and from nineteen different departments (Teaching and Learning, Educational Leadership, Educational Foundations and Research, Counseling, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Music, Physical Education, English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Geography, Math, Visual Arts, Languages, Industrial Technology, Communication and Information Systems and Business Education.) The College of Education and Human Development strives to fulfill, and is the organizing unit for, the University of North Dakota's mission in the areas of education and human services.

The mission of the Department of Teaching & Learning in the College of Education and Human Development is to support the preparation of educators and other school personnel. Through teaching, research and service, faculty focus their work on the development of practicing professionals concerned with the promotion of healthy lifestyles, lifelong learning, and human development.

Teacher education at the University of North Dakota operates from a philosophy of

progressivism that, in turn, supports constructivist approaches to facilitate the development of educators. Our progressive orientation is guided by Dewey's view of education, voiced in *Democracy and education* (1966), as being one of "reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (p. 76). These two aspects, making meaning and the added power of subsequent direction or control, indicate directions or goals for education in which to be a "student of learning...[is] to establish and maintain a reflective capacity and to become articulate about one's intentions" (Perrone, 1991, p. 85).

Reflection involves thinking about many things, but in a democratic society, it is essential that educators at all levels continually explore the idea and meaning of democracy. Teachers need to examine social, political and economic institutions, and consider ways to "meet the changes that are going on in the development of new needs on the part of human beings and new resources for satisfying these needs" (Dewey, 1958, p. 47). Our teacher education program fosters learning environments that invite collaboration and cooperation among learners and provide many opportunities for a rich exchange in which learners are asked to be reflective about moral, social, political, and technical issues (Fine, 1995), as well as "the instrumental issues that are imbedded in everyday thinking and practice" (Richardson, 1990, p. 14). Reflection requires active thinking and putting knowledge to use. As such, reflection involves not simply a superficial treatment, but is a way of thinking that implies "a more conscious examination of alternative positions and courses of action" (Valli, 1990, p. 42).

Consequently, progressiveness rather than conservatism, transformation rather than transmission, reconstruction rather than replication guide and define the goals of the basic teacher education programs at the University of North Dakota. On this philosophical foundation, faculty work to enable the development of teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to, as Postman urged, "create a public" (1996, p. 18). The development of human potential is met by working toward the linked goals of a democratic society: opportunity and excellence for all (Rippa, 1997). Within this context, teacher education candidates are asked to continually examine what kind of public do we want to create?

Specifically, our teacher education program works to enable the development of teachers who

- are committed to the continuing process of learning with an emphasis on learning to teach;
- take an active role in promoting the learning of all students;
- can envision alternative solutions to the challenges posed in schools;
- embrace diversity and support pluralistic views; and
- thoughtfully examine the role of technology and apply it effectively in our programs so as to enhance and advance the teaching process.

Constructivist practices provide a seamless match with a progressive philosophy in curriculum and instruction, in assessment, and the research that faculty undertake. We believe, with Dewey (1990) and others (Gardner, 1991; Lambert, 1995; Mansilla & Gardner, 1998; Perkins, 1998) that learning is active and that it is constructed from experience and reflection on the experience. The lifelong process of learning "involves reaching out of the mind. It involves organic assimilation from within" (Dewey, 1990, p. 187).

Similarly to the pedagogy outlined by Perkins (1998), the faculty attempts to help candidates build on their previous understandings and to extend new understandings. Faculty also help candidates examine and challenge their previous understandings, or assumptions regarding the broad array of educational concerns and issues as well as engage candidates in increasing and incremental performance-based understandings and provide timely assessment.

Like Perkins (1998), we view understanding performances as not solely aligned with discovery learning, but as issuing from many instructional modes. Didactic instruction, at times, is logical and appropriate. Other times, it is more worthwhile to engage learners in problem-solving or cooperative learning. Whatever the method of instruction, faculty place increasing importance on candidates' performance-based understandings, which are a combination, and, or demonstration of both theory and practice. Teaching for understanding has dual benefits; i.e., the learner both demonstrates *and* advances his or her knowledge (Perkins, 1998).

Constructivist beliefs also inform the evaluation processes we are trying to articulate. Participation in continuous assessment with candidates offers faculty numerous opportunities for formative evaluation of our programs, which we are learning how to complement with summative evaluation that draws on the later teaching experience of our candidates. Our assessment plan is tied to our conceptual framework and reflects the continuous processes of reflection on and renewal of our programs through self-study, evaluation of our candidates, and feedback from the field.

Constructivism informs our research. Through individual and collaborative work, faculty engage in naturalistic forms of inquiry, describing experiences of teachers and learners at points where connections are made. More traditional research informs our practice in regards to state and national trends, learning situations of students in North Dakota, and summative results of various programs or instructional endeavors.

#### Explanation of the Conceptual Framework

Through a [Venn diagram](#), our conceptual framework represents the teacher as a learner, teacher as active agent of learning and teacher as articulate visionary. Central to these three themes is the learner – who is defined as the candidate, the students they teach or the faculty who are supporting the development of teachers. The following narrative describes the three themes of our model, how they are integrated into our

program, and their links to our assessment plan.

The initial theme, teacher as learner, addresses our goal of developing teachers who are committed to the continuing process of learning about many things, especially about learning to teach. An all-encompassing goal is to recognize the impact of diversity on our ways of learning. The conception of this theme is established in the general education and specialty areas of our programs and continued as an emphasis throughout the professional coursework by studying how one can learn to teach.

The theme supports our work of preparing teachers who see learning as a lifelong process and understand that knowledge is constructed when meaningful connections are made through and among their experiences (Lambert, 1995). The habit of searching for connections of personal experience to education is cultivated in the introductory courses of each program as candidates are asked to reflect on their own experiences as learners and the implications of those experiences for their growth as teachers. Through reflection on their experiences as learners, candidates are helped to establish connections among the role the student plays in learning, the environments in which learning occurs, and the knowledge bases that help teachers support learning (Wang & Palincsar, 1989).

While recognizing the value of a strong identity as a learner for becoming a teacher, we feel that an equally important aspect of our role as faculty is to enable "unlearning" (Barnes, 1989, p.16; Ball 1988). We try to provide experiences that will help future teachers overcome what Lortie (1975) referred to as "the apprenticeship of observation" in which the "intuitive and imitative rather than the explicit and analytical" govern a pedagogy of "continuity rather than change" (pp. 61-67). This continuity or conservatism of teaching might hinder candidates in curricular knowledge, instructional strategies, and in identifying with students who learn differently from themselves. We try to help candidates broaden limited or stereotyped concepts of such terms as "school," "teach," "curriculum," "individualization" and "testing," by offering experiences that provoke dissonance and questions. Thus, while initially accepting the premise that the curriculum of our teacher education must come, to a large extent, from the personal experiences of the learner(s), we promote a knowledge base that informs the experiences offered to candidates who declare their intention of becoming teachers.

In that teachers need to broadly and deeply educate people who know how to continue their own learning, the University of North Dakota's program in teacher preparation is dedicated to the processes and benefits of lifelong learning. The teacher education candidates' programs provide support for the construction of multiple domains of knowledge which may be broadly defined as knowledge of content, knowledge of the learner, and knowledge of pedagogy.

Knowledge of content is supported mainly through the general education foundation required of all students. The experience of a liberal arts education enables the teacher to participate in the "great conversation" of thinkers that transcends time and place

(Schulman, 1989). Moreover, a study of the general education components of our programs and the majors or areas of concentration enable preservice teachers to experience some depth of exploration in the ways of thinking in one or more disciplines. This content knowledge is expanded and enriched through discipline-specific knowledge of the declared majors. For example, elementary and early childhood candidates take content specific courses in the areas of language arts, reading and sciences. We welcome Anderson's concept (1989) of teacher content knowledge as an ecosystem from which organizing principles may be drawn in response to changing life situations, for, ultimately, each person constructs his or her own meanings. Content knowledge is not enough, however, as indicated through the work of Darling-Hammond (1999).

Teacher education candidates need to study child and adolescent development in order to understand how students learn. This knowledge is also supported in complimentary courses that require the candidates to expand and apply that knowledge through practical application.

Pedagogical knowledge is the third type of knowledge that supports the learning of the teacher. Methods courses specific to the declared area of study are accompanied by field experiences that support the candidates making practical decisions focused on the theories presented. Opportunities to apply a range of strategies are presented through the [field experiences](#) (PDF File) that are hierarchical in nature.

A critical element in continuing our own learning is recognizing and supporting the development of the dispositions of the profession. NCATE 2000 clearly articulated the nature and role of dispositions in the preparation of educators. Our programs have developed processes and procedures for identifying dispositions and perhaps, more importantly, are dedicated to supporting the development of professional dispositions in our candidates. From the moment of application for admission to our programs through their student teaching experience, candidates are informed and guided in the development of professional dispositions. Information on candidate dispositions is solicited from faculty not only in the professional development courses, but also from faculty in related disciplines and in the public school environments.

One disposition that is necessary for teachers is the need to be self aware and confident in their learning. Believing as we do that learning builds on experience and reflection on experience, we encourage candidates to critically examine their own and others' learning processes and styles, and compare them both informally and through the lens of developmental psychology ( Wang & Peverly, 1986).

Thoughtful communication is also essential to teaching. Courses in our programs require that students convey and reflect on their experiences in a variety of ways. So that preservice teachers may gain experience and fluency in speaking, listening, and writing, they are offered a variety of opportunities for verbal expression in our programs.

Although many teachers work in isolation, teacher growth is fostered in interaction and interdependent collaboration (Little, 1990). Thus we often ask our candidates to work in groups and to engage in cooperative learning so that they may become comfortable and skilled at developing supportive networks (Brown & Palincsar, 1990). Aware of the power of our modeling, we try to be a community of scholars through our curriculum development, teaching and collaborative work. We are now working to extend our sense of collegiality more explicitly to our faculty partners in the schools through our school/university partnerships. Our own faculty has organized various brown bag discussions, participated in cooperative scholarly activities, and supported and sustained faculty writing groups.

In order for candidates to become increasingly knowledgeable and skilled teachers, the Interstate New Teacher and Support Consortium (INTASC) Principles were adopted in March 2001 to guide our curricular decisions, and, at the same time, to help candidates understand the goals of the program. Several program areas require that candidates, during portfolio reviews, demonstrate knowledge, skills, and competencies as described by the INTASC Principles. The theme "teacher as learner" aligns with all the INTASC Principles, especially 1-8. ([INTASC Matrices](#))

The second theme, teacher as active agent of learning, focuses on developing teachers who are able to take an active role in promoting the learning of all students. As described in the first theme, in order to support the learning of others, teacher candidates must master content knowledge, have full knowledge of the learner and a robust understanding of pedagogical knowledge (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000; 1999). The context of learning and all of the elements that impact that context must be considered.

As an active agent of learning, the candidate must be critically engaged in considering and acting upon the ideals of a democratic society. Faculty plan for candidates to attend to how economic, political, social and moral issues affect decisions regarding school finance, personal relations, home and school relations, and community relations. Faculty also focus on candidates' appreciation and authentic regard for diversity within the society.

Learning is most able to occur in an environment that is rich in resources and organized to promote thoughtful interaction. Creation of a learning environment requires that the teacher explore the material resources available both inside and outside the classroom. It is equally important that the teacher study factors and patterns that promote a learning community with all that implies about a moral atmosphere in which people act with integrity and commitment (Clark, 1990).

As Vygotsky (1993) indicated, understanding is socially constructed and mediated, and needs for social interaction and approbation are met in cooperative and collaborative arrangements (Glasser, 1986). Creation of a climate for learning calls for recognition of interpersonal connections among students as well as those among teachers. A collective perspective is held across the school with structures for caring

and support for democratic learning evident. And finally, connections to family and community are recognized as being critical and are integral parts of the curriculum. (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

While collaboration and group effort are highly valued, the worth of the individual is also upheld as evident with in the democratic ideals of opportunity and excellence for all. As such, teaching requires an understanding of and sensitivity to students' individual needs and their differences. This includes knowledge of child and adolescent development and of the significance of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, culture, class and disability for each student's education. The diverse nature of our society demands a school context where teachers and students together can create new societies of learning. Individual characteristics of learners are carefully considered as attention is paid to development and diversity is appreciated.

The University of North Dakota teacher education programs promote the development of teachers who consider and act on these ideals. This is evident in our programs through traditional classroom experiences and school partnerships and field experiences, which compel attention to diversity, authentic learning opportunities, and performance-based assessment. On-campus work coupled with field placements both in our community and in schools at significant distances from our campus provide candidates with opportunities to experience the rich, variable and complex contexts of education. Teacher education faculty carefully design courses and select resources that develop teacher knowledge and skills while emphasizing reflection on and articulation of the purposes and goals of education. Moreover, professional development relationships and more informal school partnerships are nurtured in order to provide candidates with the broadest possible range of experiences.

Teacher candidates are guided through the processes of respecting diversity and culturally diverse qualities of learning. They are asked to recognize and appreciate the rich fabric of our society even when diversity in our predominantly mono-cultural area might not be immediately evident. Candidates, through readings and discussion in on-campus courses and during field-based experience, come to see individual differences along lines of gender, religion, learning interests and aptitudes, for example. Moreover, in those situations where economics and race make diversity more visible, candidates need to be aware of and responsive to difference, but may also need help to see commonalties among the diversity.

Reflection on our work, our teaching, and our lives is critical if we are to truly become active agents of learning. It facilitates the development of quality processes of assessment and evaluation of student learning as well and our own learning and supports the teaching of others.

Teaching demands that student learning be continuously assessed at multiple levels using a variety of methods (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Formal and informal processes must be used to gather as much information as possible about the student and the learning context. Teacher education candidates are exposed to a range of assessment

techniques both in theory and practice throughout their programs. Traditional paper pencil activities are but one way evaluation data is gathered. As Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, and Ford Slack (1995) have pointed out, authentic assessment can evoke meaning making in students and support the constructivist perspectives on learning.

Our program fosters evaluation practices which raise meaningful questions, which are integrated as much as possible with the ongoing experiences of candidates and which advance learning rather than becoming an end in themselves, (Haney, 1985; Hanhan, 1988; King & Franklin, 1989; Zidon, 1996). As our assessment plan indicates, authentic assessment plays a critical role in the assessment of the teacher education candidates in the program at the University of North Dakota and portfolio reviews are held periodically at predetermined points in the program. Through experiencing these diverse assessment activities at a personal level, teacher education candidates are provided with a foundation on which to develop their personal assessment strategies for teaching. The field experiences provide multiple opportunities to apply theory to practice as candidates evaluate their teaching effectiveness and their students' learning in classroom settings. While the methods courses for each discipline are certainly a prime learning place for these strategies to be constructed, assessment is emphasized throughout the programs. As Darling-Hammond (1997) has pointed out, we know the characteristics of schools restructured for success. They are places where students and teachers are actively involved in in-depth learning that is evaluated through authentic assessment.

Our beliefs in constructivism and student performances of understanding support the notion of providing the learner with opportunities in an environment that supports the creating of connections between and among the experiences and attitudes of the learner. As a result, what we can do is to create environments that support the constructivist process of learning. This means that the reciprocal nature of learning is recognized and the constructivist premises described by Lambert et al. (1995) are woven into our programs. We support nurturing, trusting environments in which old assumptions and myths about learning are abandoned while we focus on the construction of meaning and provide alternative ways of assessing and evaluating knowledge and understanding. These basic premises describe the parameters that guide our program and support the teaching and learning that occurs among all involved. This theme is developed most strongly in the methods and materials courses and clinical experiences of our programs and aligns most closely with INTASC Principles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10.

The third theme, teacher as articulate visionary, permeates all professional coursework. It is through this theme that professional educators are developed who can examine and analyze the dilemmas posed in schools, envision and articulate alternative solutions, and demonstrate the dispositions required of advocates for quality educational programs.

Development of schools that are healthy environments for learning and teaching



requires educators to think critically about educational and societal issues. While reserving prolonged exploration of the roots of educational issues for advanced students, we believe that persons preparing to be teachers must recognize some of the complexity of the context in which educators work and acquire a vision of broad educational goals and a teacher identity which can help them steer a course through this complexity (Goodlad, 1984). Toward that end, faculty engage candidates in reading, and reflecting upon and discussing these foundational aspects of education.

The reflective process, one of the hallmarks of constructivist education, serves as a vehicle for transforming experiences and creating new information. In Lambert et al. (1995) *The Constructivist Learner*, Schon (1983) is cited as maintaining that self-reflection is "central to clarifying one's understandings and making applications to learners of any age." (p 22). Through reflection, candidates can see more clearly the path that must be taken to continuously improve instruction and facilitate learning. Reflective journals, papers and projects are applied throughout the programs to encourage teacher education candidates to be actively involved in the reflective process.

Teachers need to be able to offer students thoughtful academic and social experiences that broaden and challenge them. In the interaction of experience and education where the candidates become astute observers, flexible thinkers, and thoughtful decision makers, the teacher's work is to provide opportunities for engagement that will promote growth and thought. The ability to do this calls on the teacher's grasp of content, on the teacher's ability to relate it to the past experience of students, and on the teacher's perception of meaningful and appropriate experiences that will extend students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers need always to be thinking about what is possible and responding interactively to bring students toward the possible. It is important to recognize that we see curriculum development as an interactive, visionary process that contrasts sharply with the static march through imposed content seen in some classrooms (Eisner, 1985).

Teachers also need to be able to seek, plan and implement creative and humane solutions, and ones that are inclusive and respect diverse communities. They need to clearly articulate those visions and collaborate with others to make them realities. This theme supports teachers as they develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to assume strong leadership roles in our communities and to create schools for today and the future (Darling-Hammond, 1995; 1997). This theme is aligned with INTASC Principles 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10.

### Advanced Programs

Advanced programs continue these themes in ways that promote deeper inquiry about educational issues from the perspective of one or more professional specializations. Masters programs are offered by the department in the areas of Early Childhood Education, Educational Leadership, Education - General Studies, Elementary Education, Measurement and Statistics, Reading Education, and Special Education.

Doctoral programs are offered in the areas of Teaching and Learning and Educational Leadership. The Specialist Diploma in Education Leadership is also offered.

These programs, also, reflect a view of learning that centers on the learner. Learning is the active construction of meaning from personal experience. It requires reflection and dialogue with others whose meanings may differ. The creative and critical capacities brought by the learner to the learning process influence its development. Graduate programs seek to admit active and passionate learners who are committed to continuing to grow in some of the directions available. Advanced program candidates are expected to be self-directed learners who already have considerable experience in education in formal or informal settings. Viewing knowledge as holistic, interconnected and never fully defined, we seek individual definitions of programs of study while trying, at the same time, to offer programs that meet certification/licensure or accreditation standards in various fields. Some of our programs do not lead to certification/licensure or endorsement and offer the candidate considerable flexibility (M.S. Education; M.S. General Studies, M.Ed. in Elementary Education, M.S. or M.Ed. in Measurement and Statistics, and Ph.D. or Ed.D. in Teaching and Learning). Other programs include sequences of courses that may lead to certification or endorsement and are much more highly structured. These include the degrees in Educational Leadership, the M.S. or M.Ed. in Reading in Education and the M.S. or M.Ed. in Special Education. Even in structured programs, however, we strive for dialogue among various education specialties and for expansion of each candidate's repertoire of approaches to learning.

Advanced programs of the teacher education program continue the themes of the basic programs in ways that promote deeper inquiry about educational issues from the perspective of one or more professional specializations. For programs that result in advanced levels of certification/licensure for candidates, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards are used as a framework for candidate performance. For our doctoral level programs and those programs for non-certified personnel, program goals specific to our college are used as the guide. In both cases, our advanced programs are based on the notion of critical inquiry. Critical inquiry usually begins when an educator encounters a dilemma or problem. This occurs quite frequently in the graduate classroom, as teachers and administrators discover differences in their approaches to the same problem, pose problem situations, or discover discrepancy between their own practice and what may be suggested by another.

In application of critical theory, the candidate begins by describing his or her present practice or patterns of resolving the problem that has arisen. Then the candidate explores alternatives that are desirable or possible. Once the alternatives have been laid out, their consequences are explored with particular attention to their consequences for learners. As the process proceeds, the candidate is encouraged to explore the socio-biological, historical, or organizational roots of his/her present practice and of the possible alternative and to identify reasons for the discrepancies between them. Along the way, the candidate also must think about what knowledge or

skills would be required to enable change.

### Assessment

The assessment plan that has been developed and proposed by the faculty is linked to these three themes that are woven throughout our basic and advanced programs. Through multiple assessments across time and several settings, the candidates are evaluated in terms of their progress across the three themes. The relationship of the themes to the programs is being more clearly defined as the programs are reviewed, and with faculty involvement in the processes of continual renewal. All of these programs reflect a view of learning that centers on the learner and on learning as the active construction of meaning from personal experience.

The formal domain of basic and advanced curricula for the department is learning and teaching in its various settings. Learning is a lifelong process, but because learning is the societal goal for schools, our focus is on teaching and learning in school settings. Such learning occurs best, we affirm, when educators recognize that knowledge is holistic, interconnected, and never fully defined. Each of our programs has been developed to reflect views of learning and teaching that have potential for contributing to a more just and humane society.

Thus, the three themes of our programs are established in a dynamic way and are continuously referred to as we facilitate the development of teachers through the intertwined processes of teaching and learning. Each of these supports the continuing development of quality programs that prepare teachers who are learners, active agents of learning and articulate visionaries. They support the core standards of INTASC and NBPTS which provide the framework for our programs leading to certification and/or endorsement and the performance outcomes of the professional disciplines. In addition, our programs are aligned with the standards established by our state and the Educational Standards and Practices Board (ESPB). It is in light of these theme and standards that we evaluate our programs.

### [References](#)

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