

**The Conceptual Framework for Professional Education Programs:
*Inquiry, Research, and Reflection; Diversity of our Communities and Learners;
and Lifelong Learning and Professional Development***

Our Story

Designated as a “Research One” institution, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities is the land grant institution in the state of Minnesota with a rich history that began before the state constitution was adopted. Founded on the belief that all people are enriched by understanding and dedicated to the advancement of the generation of new knowledge, understanding, and creativity, our faculty fulfill this mission through a broad range of educational programs. The University has a strong commitment to serve a ***strong and diverse community of learners*** who benefit the people of the state, the nation, and our global environment.

Founded by UMN in 1905, The College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) serves as the operational unit for the University’s professional education programs. In 2006 the College of Education and Human Development became part of a newly organized college that now includes the former General College (now the Department of Postsecondary Teaching and Learning) and two units of the former College of Human Ecology (the School of Social Work and the Department of Family Social Science). In addition, several programs (e.g., Adult Ed, Human Resource Development) merged into the Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development department (OLPD) when the Department of Work and Human Resource Education closed in 2009.

The new CEHD college mission statement was adopted in April 2007 to reflect the expansion of CEHD across multiple human development endeavors:

The College of Education and Human Development is a world leader in discovering, creating, sharing, and applying principles and practices of multiculturalism and multidisciplinary scholarship to advance teaching and learning and to enhance the psychological, physical, and social development of children, youth, and adults across the lifespan in families, organizations, and communities.

Conceptual Framework for Professional Education in CEHD

The mission of CEHD professional education programs is to provide ***leadership*** for:

- Promoting ***inquiry, research, and reflection;***
- Honoring the ***diversity of our communities and learners;*** and
- Fostering a commitment to ***lifelong learning and professional development.***

In the summer of 2003, the Steering Council of the (then) Council on Teacher Education (CTE) established a comprehensive examination of our mission and Conceptual Framework serving both initial and advanced licensure programs. The conceptual framework was developed and presented during the NCATE review in 2005. This framework has endured for our unit. Our professional education community reviewed the Conceptual Framework in the spring of 2008 when we embarked on a significant redesign of our initial teacher license programs and reaffirmed the three core principles as foundational to our programs. Our professional education community has again revisited the conceptual framework and reaffirmed it in spring 2012.

The three core principles of the conceptual framework serve as the underlying foundation for all initial and advanced programs for P-12 professional education under the CEHD unit.

Through inquiry, research, and reflection, CEHD education professionals develop skills and practices that enable them to identify and evaluate research-based educational resources. This is critical in an educational environment that requires teachers and other school professionals to ensure that all students learn and develop to their highest academic potential. CEHD candidates also learn to explore and understand significant educational issues from multiple perspectives. These perspectives not only include the ideas and experiences of students in P-12 schools – they also include the viewpoints of powerful stakeholders such as parents, policy makers, and business leaders. We also are developing a “culture of evidence” within and across educator preparation programs. CEHD uses national, regional, and state data, data generated from our programs and our graduates, and employers to guide continuous

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program improvement and ongoing professional learning of teachers and administrators in our partner school districts.

It is important that CEHD professional education candidates understand and facilitate diversity in educational organizations that are outlined in Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice. Our communities are becoming increasingly diverse at the local, state, and national level. The alarming achievement gap evident in Minnesota and elsewhere across the nation creates the urgency for our educators to enter schools with the skills and dispositions necessary to ensure that all of our students learn regardless of their racial, cultural, or socio-economic backgrounds or gender. Upon graduation, candidates are prepared to view P-12 students as entering schools with the academic and social assets generated from their backgrounds that facilitate learning rather than viewing students as having deficits that impede learning. As part of our efforts to recruit and prepare equity-minded teachers of diverse learners, we take the following stance on our recruitment goals.

The ideal candidates for an Initial Licensure Program (ILP) at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities are those who bring with them an array of lived experiences in a variety of cultural settings, a variety of world views, and who have lived in multi-lingual settings. Our goal in diversifying our teacher candidate pool is to identify future teachers who will work successfully in classrooms with learners who bring a diverse set of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic world experiences. We are looking for candidates who will strengthen the learning of students by being able to relate to their diverse lived experiences and ways of learning. – College of Education and Human Development Statement on Diversity (May 2011)

The commitment to lifelong learning and professional development begins when CEHD candidates enter our programs. Once accepted into a program in CEHD, candidates are exposed and engaged in a broad collection of cutting-edge research created by international and nationally known scholars who serve as faculty in CEHD. As candidates understand the research and make connections to their professional practices, they also have opportunities to question it. Candidates then become engaged in their own research related to teaching, learning, leadership, and human development. This commitment to seek knowledge requires that candidates build skills in research and learn about new ways of teaching, learning, and leading.

The CTE systematically and consistently monitors all licensure programs to ensure that we meet the BOT Standards of Effective Practice as well as the emerging issues faced by schools.

Scholarly Foundation for CEHD Conceptual Framework

To ensure that our Conceptual Framework is grounded in the current research literature, articles were selected for review through an extensive literature search, seeking the work of leaders in teacher education (e.g., Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Linda Darling-Hammond, Suzanne Wilson), and consulting with the chairs of CEHD college committees on diversity and international education. Nine core articles were identified to supplement and extend the research base underlying our Conceptual Framework.

Inquiry, research, and reflection

The initial licensure and advanced programs in CEHD are based on developmental and instructional approaches situated around the themes of inquiry, research, and reflection. These three concepts are often used interchangeably; indeed, we find that the boundaries between them are more fluid than distinct. In the scholarly community, their definitions are evolving, problematic, and contested (e.g., Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Eisenhart & Towne, 2003; Feuer, Towne & Shavelson, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005).

Each of these three concepts is central to our mission as an “R1” university and in the preparation and support of P-12 education professionals. Faculty and staff embrace the “spirit of inquiry,” of seeking knowledge, and information and engaging in formal “scientific inquiry” (or research) as a way of systematically exploring significant issues. CEHD candidates are asked to continuously reflect on their experiences and role in creating and attributing meaning to those experiences. We believe that educational practitioners who understand major findings and issues in educational research offer a broad collection of

responses and interpretations to their practice, especially in educational complexities in the 21st century. Our candidates learn to be **reflective practitioners**, consistent with the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers. They are taught to demonstrate their ability to think about values and limitations of research in their own teaching and leadership practices and are offered opportunities to practice and reflect on teaching while they are still in their preparation programs.

Educational professionals engage in inquiry to ask questions and challenge assumptions about practices and issues in schools (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999; Hollingsworth, 1994, 1997; Meyer, 1998; Van Manen, 1991; Wells & Change-Wells, 1992). Inquiry engages candidates in investigations that help them understand any misconceptions about teaching and learning and develop alternative ways of practice (National Research Council, 2005). Candidates engage in all of the elements of the inquiry processes: 1) identify questions related to educational practices and context, 2) address the questions through a systematic collection of data (classroom observations, interviews, surveys, focus groups), 3) analyze data both through empirical analysis and reflection, and 4) discuss with colleagues such as professors, cooperating teachers (at the school site), or other candidates (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; NRC, 2002).

Candidates learn to connect theory and practice through their own inquiry, research, and reflection practices by following a logical chain of reasoning that connects their findings to theories learned in courses and in their clinical experiences. It is imperative that teachers, administrators, counselors, and psychologists reflect on the efficacy and suitability of their decisions about instruction, leadership, policies, and collaborations within the schools (Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990; Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Russel & Munby, 1992; Schon, 1987; Valli, 1992; York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2006).

The physical, social, cultural, economic, and historical environment in the schools is complex, and practitioners need the inquiry and reflective skills necessary to understand how these contextual factors affect student outcomes (NRC, 2002). Furthermore, our candidates learn the “critical skills and dispositions” that enhance their reflective capacity. These include open mindedness, responsibility and commitment, care and respect for P-12 students, and careful observation and logical, reasoned analysis (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). Educational professionals need to have skills to understand basic ideological assumptions that could interfere with effective practice. For example, if a candidate believes that teaching is about knowledge transmission rather than constructivism or interpretation, then his/her teaching experiences will reflect that underlying belief. This could create challenges in the candidate’s school experiences both as a graduating candidate and as a teacher.

Diversity

A recent National Research Council report showed that the United States has experienced a tremendous increase in the number of immigrants. While immigration growth is not a new phenomenon, wide distribution of immigrant populations across the United States is unprecedented. Historically, California, Texas, and New York had the highest rates of recent immigrants. From 1990 to 2000, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, Nevada, and North Carolina experienced 100 to 200 percent growth in their immigrant populations. More than half of these recent immigrants (55%) originate from Spanish-speaking countries compared to 25 percent Asian immigrants and 4 percent African immigrant (NRC, 2010).

In a large study of 1.2 million teachers (43 percent of the national teaching force), only 11 percent are certified in bilingual education, 18 percent are certified to teach English-language learners; these teachers received an average of four hours of in-service training related to ELL students within a five-year period (NRC, 2010). The shift in our population creates an imperative to ensure that all students learn. Every candidate entering CEHD must attain the skills and capacity necessary to meet this challenge.

The NRC further describes the change in the percentage of students who present with specific disabilities. Approximately 11.5 percent of public school students present with mild to severe learning disabilities. Furthermore, schools see an increasing number of students with other disabilities such as speech or language impairments, cognitive disabilities, mild to severe medical and emotional disabilities, and physical disabilities (NRC, 2010). The NRC concluded that work in schools is becoming increasingly complex as our educational professionals provide high quality, effective teaching in equitable school environments.

According to the 2009 NCES Digest of Education Statistics, the proportion of white students to students of color has changed dramatically over a 10 year period. The population of students of color enrolled in Minnesota P-12 schools was 14.5 percent in 1997 compared to 23.6 percent in 2007. This reflects an increase of 61 percent (e.g., a 9.1 percent point change) within a short time frame. Furthermore, the percentage of Minnesota students eligible for free and/or reduced lunch changed from 25.6 percent during the 2000-01 school year to 31.7 percent in 2007-2008. These demographic changes have a significant impact on Minnesota schools as our teachers and administrators' demographics do not match those of the students in our schools. In the 2007 school year nearly 24 percent of our school population comprised students of color. Only 7 percent of the full-time equivalents (administrators) were people of color and 4 percent of full-time teachers were people of color.

Diversity becomes increasingly important when the achievement gap is examined. Nationwide, in 2007, Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin, Anderson, and Rahman (2009) reported a 24 point gap between African (African and African American) and Caucasian fourth grade students on the National Assessments of Educational Progress (NAEP) math test. A 31 point gap exists for eighth graders. In Minnesota, there was a 31 point gap for fourth graders and a 37 point gap for eighth graders. Although the gap narrowed between 1992 and 2007 (from 38 points in 1992 for fourth graders and 41 points in 1992 for eighth graders), the decrease was not statistically significant. The gap is only slightly better in reading nationwide (26 points and 21 points for fourth and eighth graders respectively). Minnesota, however, is one of eight states performing lower than the national average (33 point difference and 28 point difference for fourth and eighth graders, respectively). The performance gap between African/African American and Caucasian students is troubling especially in a state that espouses equity values.

Addressing the variety of diversity in education demands that adults develop complex orientation to the multicultural/multiracial world in which they live (Eberly, Rand, & O'Conner, 2007; Kegan, 1998;). A challenge faced in candidates' conceptualizations and attitudes toward diversity is that instruction often fails to account for developmental readiness. Many times, instruction is based on familiarization with those who differ from students. Instead, Eberly, Rand, and O'Connor (2007) suggest that when we offer candidates cognitive challenges such as those experienced in multicultural conflict (whether implicit or explicit), they can experience a transformation that helps them develop both perspective and disposition needed to interact positively with students and families from other cultures. These "crises" offer a turning point for candidates to move forward developmentally or stagnate (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

One of the major goals of CEHD educator preparation programs is to move our candidates forward in their practice. Our educator preparation programs account for the underlying meaning-making systems that operate and inform their experience and learning about diversity. As candidates become aware of their attitudes, emotions, values, and beliefs, they engage in 'identity formation.' This can generate shifts in thinking that lead to the understanding of racial and ethnic differences (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Eberly et al., 2007).

Lifelong learning and professional development

When beginning teachers enter their first teaching job, they do not generally receive effective support for continued learning. Instead, they rely on informal learning opportunities. Most often, teacher learning is

self-generated through experimentation, trial, and error (Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011). Professional development is essential for teachers' lifelong learning. We believe that improvements in student achievement occur when teachers build their capacity for improved instructional practice. Recently, the education sector has experienced a shift toward job-embedded learning through collaborative professional learning communities in which professionals test new practices and share their experiences with their colleagues. (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, & Orphanos, 2009).

Additionally, the research (Wei et al., 2009) shows that effective professional development should be deeply connected to the everyday practice of the teacher, focused on student learning, preferably in a content area, extended over time, and collaborative in nature. Most teachers in the United States do not have access to professional development that meets these criteria. However, when teachers engage with one another in instructional inquiry focusing on instructional improvement and student achievement, they are more likely to adopt practices that will facilitate student academic growth (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). CEHD is committed to the preparation of teachers who will learn from teaching throughout their careers.

Much of the recent literature focuses on "effective" professional development paying particular attention to the tasks or activities in which participants engage rather than their relationship to actual professional learning. However, teacher learning is situated in a complex set of systems and subsystems. Instead, Opfer and Peddar (2011) say that professional learning is not clearly understood without knowing how local knowledge and context shape and are shaped by teachers' practices and beliefs. School contexts (structure, social capital, communication, and control) also mediate professional learning (Opfer & Peddar, 2011).

Teachers want to improve their skills and continue to grow their practice. The contributors to lifelong learning for teachers include their preparation programs, the district and school context, personal attributes, and support systems. Teachers who are well trained in inquiry also find that those tools encourage learning (Steffey, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 1999).

Interrelationship of conceptual framework components

Inquiry, research, and reflection are included in our preparation programs because teacher candidates need to develop metacognitive strategies in their instructional practice. This metacognitive approach lets teachers take charge of continuous learning in the classroom. The analysis of events and situations that occur in classrooms and schools helps them understand how to handle the complexities that arise and adapt to changing environments as needed (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). Thus, the skills teacher candidates acquire help them with site-based lifelong learning that is generated by their own classroom and school experiences.

Shulman (2004) found that a teacher's learning becomes active because he/she experiments in the classroom, and reflects through writing, dialogue with others, and questioning about the activities that happen in classes. One of the significant components of our teacher preparation programs is the engagement of teacher candidates in professional learning communities (PLCs), which promote a commitment to and venue for lifelong learning and continuous professional development. Thus, our candidates set the foundation for their own lifelong learning using the tools of inquiry, research, and reflection.

Beyond the contributions to lifelong learning, inquiry, research, and reflection activities also help teacher candidates develop attitudes, values, and beliefs that will help them work positively with P-12 students from different cultural, linguistic, and geographic backgrounds. By understanding and analyzing their own experiences and assumptions, candidates learn to recognize that their students also have their own assumptions and experiences that contribute to their ways of understanding the world of schooling. To

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respond positively to students' learning needs, candidates can cross boundaries through their own understanding and knowledge of both self and other. This arises through a reflective practice designed to understand their own cultural, racial, ethnic identities.

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