

**New Mexico State University  
College of Education**

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

**INTRODUCTION**

The conceptual framework establishes the shared vision for the College's efforts in preparing educators to work effectively in P-12 schools. It provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance, scholarship, service, and unit accountability. The conceptual framework is knowledge-based, articulated, shared, coherent, consistent with the unit and/or institutional mission, and continuously evaluated. The conceptual framework provides the bases that describe the unit's intellectual philosophy, which distinguishes graduates of one institution from those of another (NCATE Unit Standards, 2000).

The framework for the College of Education at New Mexico State University (NMSU) has been developed through continual dialogue between administrators, faculty, students, and members of the College Council. Information was gathered from NCATE Standards, NMSU's Mission Statement, and conceptual frameworks from universities similar in size/purpose to NMSU, the College's 1995 conceptual framework, and the College of Education's Five-Year Plan. Input was additionally incorporated from recommendations that were generated at three faculty retreats (1998, 1999, 2001) held for the purpose of examining the status and future direction of the College of Education. The emerging conceptual framework under girds the curriculum, instruction, field and clinical practice, and assessment of candidates in all credential and degree programs in the College.

## NMSU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The College of Education at New Mexico State University develops, implements, monitors and assesses programs designed to prepare professionals who will work in school and clinical settings. In collaboration with it academic and community partners, the unit articulates and evaluates candidates' competence in content mastery, skill development, reflective practice, respect for diversity, and the integration of technology. The **theme** which best represents the vision of teaching and learning in the NMSU College of Education is:

### **Partners in Preparation: Collaboratively Developing Educational Practitioners and Leaders to Work Effectively in a Diverse Society**

- **KEY CONCEPTS OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

**Partnerships/Collaboration-** Collaboration may be defined as working collectively to identify common goals, developing strategies for attaining those goals, and jointly resolving problems that arise in the process. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Education Association, the Holmes Group and other professional organizations advocate that school change and reform should be a collective endeavor in order to promote successful and meaningful program implementation. The College of Education does not function in isolation, but involves and interacts with other units on campus, public and private schools, families, social service agencies and other professional, state and institutional partners.

**Educational Practitioners and Leaders-** The College of Education has a responsibility to focus not only on candidates preparing to teach or teachers who are continuing their professional work, but also on persons preparing for other professional roles in schools such as principals, school psychologists, counselors, speech-language pathologists, and physical educational specialists. The College has a commitment to develop creative, innovative and reflective leaders both inside the classroom and in other school-related arenas.

**Effectiveness-** The College prepares effective practitioners and leaders who demonstrate competencies that are aligned with professional and state standards, who are reflective about practice, and whose dispositions include those attitudes, inclinations, ethics and values that are requisite to the jobs they seek. Effectiveness is determined by the extent of content, pedagogical and professional knowledge, skills and dispositions a candidate possesses in order to assure that all students learn. Assessment of a candidate's effectiveness is performance-based, utilizes multiple measures, and is authentic.

**Diversity-** The diversity of the school population in the United States is changing dramatically. Classrooms in the country are becoming more inclusive as larger numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse learners and students with special needs are enrolled. Demographics illustrate the extent of the diversity that is represented in and addressed by the College's programs.

With regard to the growth of cultural and linguistic groups in the country and local communities, the 2000 census confirmed that more than 28% of the nation's residents

are now minorities, although in some states (New Mexico being one), Hispanic and Native American residents outnumber the “majority” culture. By 2010, it is anticipated that the Hispanic and African American populations will be of equal size, and by 2025; a majority of youth aged 18 and under will be other than non-Hispanic white. Already, in New Mexico, and especially in the border community where NMSU is located, Hispanics make up anywhere from 60-95% of school communities. There are important implications for programs that prepare educators and clinicians to serve these increasingly diverse populations. At a time when the need for additional teachers is critical and ethnic and racial diversity is increasing in the schools, numbers of minority teachers are declining. The U.S. Department of Education predicts a need to replace 2 million teachers who will retire or leave teaching in the next decade, and adds that another 200,000 will be needed to match the pace of enrollment growth. However, teachers from diverse backgrounds currently make up only 12% of the total teacher population, a figure that is projected to decline to about 3% in 2010 (Hirsch, Koppich, & Knapp, 1998). The College of Education at New Mexico State University has a responsibility and an opportunity to address this critical need.

Also increasingly present in general education classrooms in this country are students with disabilities. The U. S. Department of Education reports that nearly six million children and youth with disabilities are served in America’s schools each year. Based on the presumptions manifest in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990, 1997), schools must educate students with disabilities with students who do not have disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate, and schools may not remove a student from the regular education environment unless he or she cannot be educated there successfully. As a result of this inclusion policy, today’s elementary and secondary classrooms serve larger numbers of pupils with special needs than they have in the past.

In order to accurately represent the diversity that exists in its geographic community, the College of Education not only recruits minority and disabled faculty and students, but also offers learning and clinical experiences, which reflect the diverse dimensions of the State and, to the extent possible, the country. In order to assure that **all** students learn, the College is committed to the utilization of curriculum, instruction, classroom materials, and field/clinical activities that recognize critical awareness, use of prior knowledge (funds of knowledge), differences in learning style, equity, social justice, and the importance of employing technology as a means of promoting learning. It recognizes the importance of developing dispositions in its candidates so that candidates demonstrate professionalism, accommodation and respect for difference in their work with students. The body of knowledge, which addresses issues, related to sociocultural issues and inclusion, and which provides a research base for instructional decisions related to diversity includes works by numerous theoreticians and practitioners.

## **MISSION**

The mission of the College of Education at New Mexico State University is to serve the people of New Mexico through education, research, extension education, and public service with specific emphasis on innovative practices, overcoming barriers to learning, international activities, technology, and literacy for the diverse populations of New Mexico, surrounding states and border communities. New Mexico State University’s geographic location and its status as a land-grant institution drive the College’s purpose, which is consistent with the University’s mission. As a result, the College serves

constituents in both urban and rural settings, and responds to border issues because of its proximity to Mexico.

The Mission of the College of Education is represented by five goals which are congruent with its conceptual framework: recognition of diversity, development and practice of innovative models of instruction, promotion of activities in diverse and international settings, advancement in the use of technology, and the enhancement of literacy through well-developed pedagogy. Through its Mission, the College seeks to empower professionals by enabling them to acquire knowledge, skills, and dispositions and apply them so that all students learn. In order to realize its Mission, the College encourages its faculty to excel in scholarship, service and teaching, to collaborate with colleagues in the disciplines and the schools, and to self-assess their effectiveness on candidate performance. In order to address and actualize the five identified goals, faculty in the College collaborates with educational professionals on campus, and in the schools and community to ensure coherence among curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, assessment and evaluation. Finally, the outcomes of program efforts and student progress are continually assessed in order to evaluate candidate knowledge and performance, and in order to assure consistency with the institution's mission.

- **PHILOSOPHY**

The College of Education's Theme, which supports a collaborative approach to developing educational practitioners and leaders to work in a diverse society, is grounded in paradigms informed by a number of researchers and educationists. Theories which propel teaching and learning activities in the College include those which are embodied in historically significant educational movements such developmental learning, inquiry, inclusion, cooperative learning, zone theory, social constructivism, literacy/biliteracy development, student-centered learning, and collaboration. Within this framework, learning is perceived of as an active, social process that occurs in stages. New knowledge is acquired when, with the teacher's help, pupils are encouraged to make connections between new information and existing networks of prior knowledge. In this paradigm, multiple explanations and strategies as a means of encouraging inquiry, critical analysis, and synthesis of a subject are valued. Faculty in the College recognize, too, that content knowledge and educational experiences are affected by the economic, sociocultural, and cognitive realities of their students, and they know the importance of making necessary adjustments to enhance students' learning. Collaboration is a theory that the College advocates by promoting individual and cooperative learning opportunities, creating powerful learning partnerships across disciplines, and building effective school/home/community partnerships. The College's philosophical foundations have significant implications for the preparation of educational practitioners and leaders.

According to Darling-Hammond (1997), programs must be structured to support learning. This structure must include the use of curricula that integrate current theory and content; allow multiple opportunities for engagement, practice and reflection; employ skillful instructors; integrate technological resources; build on cultural understandings and encourage the development of appropriate dispositions; and utilize standards and authentic assessments as indicators of progress. An effective program structure can be defined using Darling-Hammond's model where individual differences are allowed, students are helped to realize their distinctive talents, and multiple forms of demonstration and representation are encouraged (Eisner, 1997). Successful teaching (at the university or school level) is inquiry-based, focuses on real questions or issues,

emphasizes collaboration, applies both qualitative and quantitative research data problem resolution, and practices formative accountability (Wagner, 1998). These philosophies support and lay a foundation for the College of Education's Theme and Mission by valuing and monitoring the development of educational practitioners and leaders who will work in a diverse society.

Philosophical and theoretical statements that reflect the bases for individual programs in the College of Education are included in an attachment to this document.

- **AIM**

The Aim of the College of Education is to ensure that students will have the opportunity to become creative and critical thinkers who can make appropriate decisions relative to their professional roles and responsibilities. The College of Education places a significant value on producing educational and clinical professionals and leaders who are reflective, effective planners, and sensitive to individual differences so its graduates can succeed in an ever-changing educational environment. In order to assess its candidates' proficiencies and the unit's success in achieving its aim, the College uses multidimensional, outcomes based measures of knowledge, skills and dispositions.

- **EDUCATIONAL GOALS/OUTCOMES**

As a result of the efforts of the College of Education, professional educators and leaders will possess a general education knowledge background that provides an intellectual foundation in fine arts, humanities, mathematics, natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences.

**(Grounded thinkers)**

Know the philosophical, historical, and sociocultural foundations of education, teaching and learning, and be able to use that knowledge to challenge assertions, solve problems, and draw conclusions.

**(Critical thinkers)**

Have preparation in a major academic area related to a field of educational specialization and be able to apply appropriately and effectively content and pedagogical knowledge in educational and clinical settings.

**(Content specialist)**

Demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply content and pedagogical knowledge in educational settings. Recognize individual differences in students and adjust practice accordingly.

**(Effective practitioner)**

Reflect on individual differences, diverse contexts and changing environments. Exhibit ability to identify and analyze classroom problems, and make decisions about means for enhancing learning.

**(Reflective practitioner)**

Develop alternative strategies to educational problems. Helping students identify various approaches to finding solutions.

**(Problem solver)**

Utilize and integrate technology in to research, instruction and assessment.

**(Technology Proficient Educator)**

Demonstrate the ability to serve and transform educational settings where optimal learning leads to the success of all children by providing leadership in classrooms, schools, districts, clinics and agencies at the state and national levels. *(Added Spring 2002)*

**(Educational Leader)**

- **KNOWLEDGE BASE**

**The Grounded Thinker** will be mathematically literate; capable of using the spoken and written word to communicate effectively; understand basic principles and concepts in the social, physical, and life sciences; be widely read; aware of other cultures; and understand something of themselves as people and citizens. Grounded Thinkers will know how to work with others as well as alone. They would expect to be held to high, consistent standards, capable of monitoring their own progress and assessing their own goals (Conley, 1996). The Grounded Thinker will be part of a learning community where the institution's broad expectations and standards are integrated into coursework and assignments that emphasize research skills, critical and analytic thinking, and writing. The importance of a broad-based general education is manifest in historical and theoretical trends, which affect public education. Professional educators are better able to understand and evaluate the call for school reform when they have studied paradigmatic shifts in societal perceptions. The movement from modernism and progressivism to post-modern thinking, for example, has resulted in less emphasis on universals and regularity to stressing sociocultural differences and realities with multiple truths (Elkind, 1995). Armed with broadly focused coursework, professional educators are not only grounded in academic content fields and proficient in language and communication skills, but are also knowledgeable about events and beliefs, which influence educational change.

**The Critical Thinker** will be able to utilize knowledge about the philosophical, sociological, and historical foundations of schooling in order to analyze issues of curriculum planning, governance, policy and practice in education. Professionals emerging from the College will practice the "judicious suspension of belief" when examining schools of thought and prescribed pedagogy (McPeck, 1981). As critical thinkers, these individuals will use their knowledge of educational theory and practice to focus on how and why learners use cognitive processes, how they organize and store information, and assimilate that into meaningful experience (Flavell, 1985). Professionals prepared by the College will additionally understand the effects of language and culture on the students with whom they work, recognizing that children/youth come to school with a diversity of lifestyles and experiences, and with varying expectations about learning (Heath, 1983). The Critical Thinker will be able to integrate the knowledge and skills they gain, make sagacious decisions about instruction and practice, and foster intellectual curiosity and respect within supportive learning environments.

**The Content Specialist** will have sufficient preparation in a major academic area related to his/her field of practice to be able to apply appropriately and effectively content and pedagogical knowledge in educational and clinical settings. Excellent educators possess more than narrow subject-matter knowledge plus some “tricks of the trade.” They have both broad general knowledge and an impressive range of knowledge in their own discipline (Noddings, 1996). The American Council of Education’s report *To Touch the Future: Strengthening the Preparation of Teachers for the Next Century* (1999) concludes with an action plan which addresses concerns related to the overall mission of schools of education. One concern speaks to the need for quality of preparation in the subject fields in which educators work, and targets adequacy of preparation and adherence to competency standards in the specific disciplines. Similarly, Secretary of Education Riley’s *1999 State of American Education Address* urges colleges of education to focus on content and process in teaching, challenge conventional ways of preparing educators, and emphasize outcomes, expectations and performance results. The College of Education’s graduates will have in-depth knowledge of the subject matter that they plan to teach as described in national and state standards. Candidates for school support roles will have a thorough understanding of the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of their field as outlined in professional and state standards. More importantly, professionals prepared by the College will utilize their content knowledge and skill, and will be responsive to diversity in order to help students achieve high standards of learning, to utilize technology, and resolve real-world problems.

**The Effective Practitioner** will be able to design, implement and evaluate lesson plans and utilize materials that are responsive to diverse groups, as well as to individual students. He/she will be a consumer of educational research and understand its relationship to theory and practice. The Effective Practitioner will be knowledgeable about and disposed to address the characteristics and needs of diverse learners, including those from various cultural and linguistic groups and those with exceptionalities. Not only will the Effective Practitioner have basic knowledge about the process of learning, but will be able to integrate and apply content and pedagogy in the context of schools and communities, utilize educational software and technology, and employ appropriate evaluation strategies. The Effective Practitioner will understand how students learn and how to ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner. Constructivist researchers (Bruner, Gardner, Eisner, and Goodman among others) have applied this orientation to learning by stating that

- **Learning is not the result of development; rather, learning is developmental.**
- **Errors are not to be avoided, but viewed as evidence of seeking to learn.**
- **Learners organize and generalize their knowledge across experiences.**
  - **Learners represent their knowledge through a variety of actions and communications.**
  - **Learning is enhanced in authentic situations.**
  - **Demonstrations and modeling are essential components to good teaching.**
  - **Students learn best through active engagement with ideas, materials, and other learners.**

- **Learners perceive and interact with their environments based on their cultural experience (Reutzel & Couter, 2000).**

Effective Practitioners developed in the College of Education will be prepared to establish educational environments that support student learning.

**The Reflective Practitioner** will not only have in-depth knowledge of the subject matter he/she plans to teach or a thorough understanding of the central concepts and structures of their field of specialty, but will reflect on practice and make necessary adjustments to enhance student learning. The Reflective Practitioner will seek the advice of others and draw on educational research and scholarship to improve practice. He/she will critique and reflect on work as it relates to student performance. Reflection has several benefits (Spindler & Spindler, 1987). It can be used for the purpose of observing and reviewing activities, and exploring the relationship between the teacher's or support person's methods and student's response. Reflection can also assess the impact of teaching or clinical events, and provide insight to behavioral phenomena. One of its most productive uses is in the study of self-allowing the practitioner to think critically about areas of concern, conflict, or stress (Trueba, 1989). Reflection on dispositions which are congruent with those expected of professional educators may result in necessary adjustments on the part of the educator. Udall and Rugen (1997) note that researchers have found that significant changes in the beliefs and attitudes of {educators} depend on their gaining "evidence of change in the learning outcomes...and efficacy of innovation...on their students" (p. 407). The Reflective Practitioner from the College of Education will not only think systematically about his/her own practice and disposition, but will foster active inquiry, reflection and evaluation of choices and actions in learners as well.

**The Problem Solver** will demonstrate critical analysis, synthesis and personal inquiry. He/she will present content to students in challenging, clear and compelling ways, analyze responses, and make necessary revisions to enhance student learning. The Problem Solver will provide multiple explanations and develop strategies so that all students have access to ideas and solutions. He/she will encourage students to explore topics, make guesses, and take risks in order to find an answer to a question (Tompkins, 1998). In terms of the Problem Solvers own approach to problem resolution, this professional educator will develop the ability to conduct and apply research, access educational resources, and foster relationships with colleagues, parents/families, and agencies in the larger community. Collaboration will be a keystone of the Problem Solvers strategy. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics indicate that collegiality and collaboration is key to successful program development, implementation, and problem resolution. Kenneth Wilson (1999), co-author of *Redesigning Education*, states collaboration allows a school community to construct and negotiate what is valued; determine what its professionals should know and be able to do; and decide how action plans should be developed, implemented, evaluated and revised. The effective Problem Solver developed in the College of Education will look for a connection between a problem and its possible causes, consider a set of solution possibilities, analytically assess the options, select and implement a strategy, and assess the outcome (Reutzel & Cooter, 2000).

**The Technology Proficient Educator** will be a knowledgeable and skilled user of computer-based technologies for teaching and learning. She/he will be able to evaluate

growing electronic resources for appropriateness; apply the latest theories of technology and learning as part of planning and designing effective technology-enhanced learning environments for all students; use a variety of technologies to gather data and assess learning; and use technology for classroom management, productivity and further professional development. Knowledge of specific technology applications and resources appropriate to the content area to be taught is expected. The College of Education integrates technology and its application throughout all aspects of its teacher education program and offers a state-approved endorsement for information technology coordinators. It also has graduate programs that prepare specialists in technology integration and leadership.

## **EVALUATION SYSTEM**

The College of Education has a professional responsibility to ensure that its programs are of the highest quality. This pursuit requires the systematic gathering and evaluation of information, which may be used to strengthen the College, its program and the performance of its graduates. Because the preparation of school professional personnel is a dynamic and complex responsibility, evaluation of its programs and candidates' performance in the College of Education is comprehensive, developmental, criterion-referenced, contextualized, and cohesive. The plan for evaluation evolves from the Conceptual Framework and program goals. It embodies professional, state and institutional standards, and addresses the following:

- **Knowledge of subject and pedagogical content.**
  - **The ability to apply subject and pedagogical knowledge in instructional or clinical settings.**
  - **The use of multiple, formative measures which accurately assess the performance of the College's candidates and graduates.**
  - **The application of evaluation information to program improvement.**

The Aim of the College of Education is to ensure that students will have the opportunity to become creative and critical thinkers who can make appropriate decisions relative to their professional roles and responsibilities. The College of Education places significant value on producing educational and clinical practitioners and leaders who are reflective, effective planners, and sensitive to individual differences so its graduates can succeed in an ever-changing educational environment. This Aim is operationalized through eight (8) outcomes:

### **Teachers and other related professionals in the College of Education will:**

- **Demonstrate knowledge of general, intellectual foundations in the humanities, mathematics, natural sciences, fine arts, social and behavioral sciences.**
- **Know the philosophical and historical foundations of education, teaching and learning.**
- **Have preparation in a major academic area related to a field of education.**

- **Demonstrate the ability to apply content and pedagogical knowledge in educational and clinical settings.**
- **Reflect on individual differences, diverse contexts, and changing environments.**
- **Develop alternate strategies to educational problems.**
- **Utilize technology in research, instruction, and assessment.**

Therefore, evaluation in the College is a continuous process for determining the extent to which the Mission, Aim and conceptually developed outcomes are realized. The College's system of evaluation allows the Unit to review its conceptual plans, and to assess the need for improvement. Evaluation has been described in the literature as a concept with early origins. The philosophies of Socrates and Plato emphasized the importance of assessing an individual's competencies and aptitudes for vocational selection. Binet influenced thinking about measurement by suggesting that carefully planned assessment could differentiate between individuals who could function in a given environment, and those who could not. Traditional views of evaluation that support the use of randomized, controlled experiments and quantitative/summative assessments have had many proponents (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). There is, however considerable support for examining alternative paths to the conduct of evaluation...particularly that which is designed for use in educational settings.

Educational evaluation is described as having many purposes. Good and Brophy (2000), for example, focus on the advantages of examining the effectiveness of how well educators apply what they know to instructional settings. Guba (1978) stresses the need to utilize measures, which allow for the study of emergent data, which is contextual, allows the use of multiple decision-making frameworks, and is reflective of diverse audiences and settings. According to Guba, we must "expand the art and science of evaluation to include crucially important factors that have not really been taken account of in the past" (p. 16). The model for evaluation that is utilized by New Mexico State University's College of Education is performance based. The contextual, performance based model is supported in the literature (Seybert, 1990; Swanson, 1995). It includes the collection and review of two types of data that is utilized to determine whether graduates are acquiring the learning outcomes, and whether the unit is achieving its overall aim. Assessment data include internal and external checks on student performance and on the unit's operational strengths. Examples of data on student performance follow:

#### **Internal**

- **Candidates' Portfolios**
- **Observations made by teaching, administrative, counseling or clinical faculty**
- **Reflective Journals**
- **Videotapes of candidate**

- **Scores or grades on criterion-referenced measures**
- **Lesson plans or therapy notes**
- **Surveys completed by Graduates/Supervisors**
- **Checklists of competency completion**
- **Observational and reflective case studies developed by educator-trainee**
- **Evaluations by intern supervisors/cooperating teachers**

#### **External**

- **Results on standardized exit tests**
- **Results on state licensure exams**
- **Performance on subject-area exams**
- **Employer Interviews**
- **Employer evaluations**

Developmental data is collected on a continuous basis, and is reviewed periodically by faculty and clinical personnel (at predetermined intervals) for the purpose of assessing student knowledge and skill acquisition. Data is collected and reviewed at several points so that decisions can be made about students' readiness for and competency in teaching, administrative, counseling, therapeutic or other educational activities. Evaluation of faculty performance and its impact on student learning is reviewed annually. (See Decision Points in Standard 2.)

The College of Education's evaluation process enables it to determine whether or not the Unit has developed a program, which is congruous across curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, assessment and evaluation. The outcomes in question are related to the Unit's Mission, Aim and Goals to prepare professionals whose knowledge, skills and dispositions promote student learning in diverse settings and environments.