

Conceptual Framework

The overarching theme of the Spadoni College of Education's (SCOE) conceptual framework is "The Teacher as Reflective Practitioner." Programs in both the initial and advanced teacher preparation are directed toward the development of knowledge, skills, professional behaviors, and dispositions that will ensure that all candidates are well prepared and meet all university, state, and national expectations of pre- and in-service teachers at the completion of their respective programs of study. The Conceptual Framework is an important document as it describes the Spadoni College of Education's shared vision of teaching, learning, and the preparation of teachers. It outlines our philosophy and commitment to the teaching profession at both the initial and advanced levels. We believe that our conceptual framework is a living document and open to revision.

The "Teacher as Reflective Practitioner" includes references to the professional literature that supports our beliefs and philosophy. It guides programmatic decisions and ensures coherence among program curricula, field experiences, clinical practice, and the unit assessment system. The conceptual framework outlines our commitment to integrate technology, demonstrate dedication to professional behavior and dispositions, engage in reflective practice, work with diverse populations, and apply content and pedagogical knowledge to the teaching and learning process. The conceptual framework mirrors professional and state standards and includes a chart aligning the conceptual framework with state and national standards.

Knowledge Base for Candidate Proficiencies

The Teacher as Reflective Practitioner serves to define the Professional Program in Teacher Education. In this model, five candidate proficiencies, with 14 performance dimensions, are addressed with the program objectives directed toward the development of these characteristics to ensure that our candidates are highly qualified individuals at the completion of their respective programs of study. The candidate proficiencies are:

I. Ability to apply content and pedagogical knowledge to the teaching and learning process

- 1.1 Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of subject matter and use such knowledge to create effective learning experiences for students (ADEPT 5ABC, 6ABC)
- 1.2 Understand instructional planning and design plans based on knowledge of subject matter, students, community curriculum goals and standards (ADEPT 1ABCDE, 2ABC, 6ABC)
- 1.3 Use of a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking and problem solving skills (ADEPT 4C, 5B, 8C)
- 1.4 Manage the classroom to create a positive and safe learning environment (ADEPT 8ABC, 9ABC)
- 1.5 Understand and use formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and monitor student learning and to modify instruction (ADEPT 3ABC, 7ABC)

II. Ability to use technology to improve teaching and learning

- 2.1 Plan and implement effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology (ADEPT 5AB, 8C)
- 2.2 Apply technology to facilitate effective assessment, evaluation, and productivity practices (ADEPT 1AD, 2C, 3BC)

III. Ability to work with diverse populations

- 3.1 Demonstrate knowledge of different cultural, emotional, developmental and cognitive needs of students (ADEPT 5ABC, 6ABC, 7ABC, 8ABC)

- 3.2 Evaluate, plan and provide appropriate activities and experiences to meet the needs of culturally and developmentally diverse student populations (ADEPT 3ABC, 5ABC, 6ABC, 7ABC)

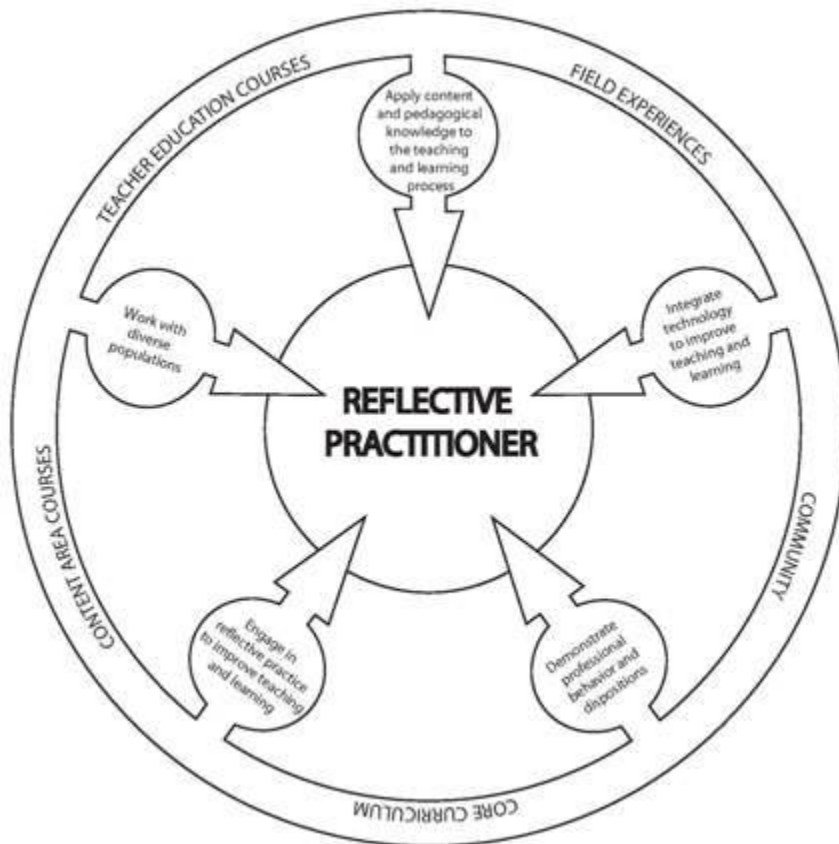
IV. Ability to demonstrate professional behavior and dispositions

- 4.1 Demonstrate a commitment to fair* treatment of students based on their educational needs (ADEPT 8B, 9A, 10D)
- 4.2 Demonstrate a belief that all students can learn and convey confidence and caring in their work with students (ADEPT 4ABC, 8BC, 10D)
- 4.3 Demonstrate professional behaviors and a commitment to fulfilling professional responsibilities (ADEPT 10ABCDE)

V. Ability to engage in reflective practice to improve teaching and learning

- 5.1 Analyze personal performance to improve teaching and learning (2C, 3 BC, 10E)
- 5.2 Analyze student performance to improve teaching and learning (ADEPT 2C, 3ABC)

***Fairness(professional disposition):** The commitment demonstrated in striving to meet the educational needs of all students in a caring, non-discriminatory, and equitable manner.



The following is a discussion of the five candidate proficiencies and the learning environment in which they are mastered.

1. Ability to apply content and pedagogical knowledge to the teaching and learning process.

Candidates are expected to demonstrate a commitment to attaining excellence in their knowledge of learners and learning and to developing a content knowledge base that will allow them to become highly qualified teachers. (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). Candidates show this commitment during their coursework by using the opportunities for higher level thinking that are afforded them. In this higher level thinking, they continuously apply analysis, synthesis, and evaluation to the diverse content, making connections between and among the concepts presented, and diligently applying these connections across their programs (Kahne & Westheimer, 2000). In their field experiences and the student teaching internship, candidates show this commitment by availing themselves of opportunities for professional interaction and continuing education, and by developing collaborative professional relationships (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). As teachers, the candidates are expected to contribute to their profession by participating in decision-making and professional problem solving.

2. Ability to use technology to improve teaching and learning.

Candidates are expected to demonstrate they are able to plan and implement effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology. In addition, they must demonstrate they can apply technology to facilitate effective assessment, evaluation, and productivity practices. While best practice evolves at a measured pace, technological change proceeds at blinding speed (Jonassen, 2004). Teachers must constantly renew their knowledge not only of the technology itself, but its application to teaching and learning (Branch, 2003). They must be willing to devote the necessary time to this endeavor, and to think creatively for the development of instructional applications (Grant, 2004; Brim, 2004). It must be a priority for teachers to differentiate innovations that are instructionally beneficial from those that are eye-catching but superficial (Davis, 2005; Miller & Ewing, 2005).

3. Ability to work with diverse populations.

Candidates are expected to demonstrate knowledge of different cultural, emotional, developmental and cognitive needs of students. They must also be able to evaluate, plan and provide appropriate activities and experiences to meet the needs of culturally and developmentally diverse student populations. These goals are challenging, and they are further complicated by the continued diversification of the population. The diversity of language, cultures, and other aspects of the human condition, previously treated as a comparatively isolated phenomenon in our culture, is now expected to be addressed universally, and individuals within these groups are not best served by traditional approaches (Banks, 2004). Teachers must respond to the broad diversity presented by these constituent groups by accepting the challenge of viewing their own cultures dispassionately, by rising above their own cultural milieu and by making the required changes (Neuharth-Pritchett, 2005). These may not be comfortable changes for teachers to make, nor unanimously accepted by the culture at large (DeMulder, Lepage, Sockett, Wood, Bergin, & Garvey, 2001); this takes courage and strength of will, as well as teachers' confidence in their own professional competence (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004; McFalls & Roberts, 2001; Tierney, 2001). Teachers must be willing actively to seek ways to

address diversity, and not wait for institutionalized change. This is a tremendously demanding expectation, and requires intense focus on the part of teachers.

4. Ability to demonstrate professional behavior and dispositions.

In order to navigate this multiplicity of challenges, candidates must demonstrate a deep commitment to the well-being of the students they teach. They must also demonstrate a commitment to fair treatment of students based on their educational needs, demonstrate a belief that all students can learn and convey confidence and caring in their work with students. In addition, candidates must demonstrate professional behaviors and a commitment to fulfilling professional responsibilities. Sustaining this commitment through a professional career requires a dedication to high ethical standards and dispositions (Carr, 2000). In our culture which presents so many competing points of view, high ethical standards and dispositions serve as a keystone to which teachers may remain secured. High ethical standards can provide a steadfast guide to decision-making, and ensure that the good of the children will persist as one of teachers' strongest goals (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Gerwitz & Kurtines, 1991). As candidates progress through their programs, they are called upon to make increasingly difficult professional choices, and the Spadoni College of Education emphasis on high ethical standards is instrumental in helping candidates finding their best path to career success (McDonald, 2005).

5. Ability to engage in reflective practice to improve teaching and learning.

Candidates are expected to analyze personal performance as well as analyze student performance in order to improve teaching and learning. Donald Schon, (1983, 1987, 1992) introduced the concept of reflective practice as a critical process in refining the skills and knowledge needed for professional practice. Schon recommended reflective practice as a way for pre-service teachers to recognize and develop a consonance between their own individual practices and those of successful practitioners. Teacher educators encourage candidates to put theories they have learned into practice while teaching and to use reflective practice to inform their instruction and essentially to assist in professional growth. Thus, coaching and peer involvement are two important aspects of reflective practice that is used within our unit at both the initial and advanced levels. Reflective practice can be seen in our action research projects, Teacher Work Sample, and other performance-based assessments.