

**THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK  
of the  
CLAYTON STATE UNIVERSITY TEACHER EDUCATION UNIT**

**May, 2011**

## **Overview of the Conceptual Framework**

### **History**

The original Conceptual Framework document was developed by Clayton State University Unit members and officially approved by the Georgia Professional Commission in July of 2004. At that time, the Unit outlined the Conceptual Framework descriptors that promoted the desired attributes for developing quality teachers, the attributes of collaboration, reflection, competency, caring and commitment.

This document has been further revised as of this date to encompass additional programs added to the Unit, beyond the middle school and music education outlined in the original document. Since its first inception, Clayton State has now added programs in Secondary Education – English, Biology, Math, and History and MAT programs in English, Biology, Math and History. The Conceptual Framework Committee discussed all aspects to the previous CF and presented their recommendations for revision to the PEPC and the Advisory Council. These recommendations included the overarching umbrella phrase of *A Clayton State University teacher-candidate engages in reflective practice* to fully express the need for teacher-candidates to be reflective in all aspects of their training. We also included the phrase *A Clayton State University teacher-candidate is culturally responsive*, to further acknowledge our awareness that we are part of and must create and foster a respectful, tolerant healthy environment for diverse learners, no matter the learning context. These recommendations were approved by the Unit in April, 2011.

### **Vision**

The Teacher Education Unit at Clayton State University envisions a curriculum that includes both academic courses and experiential learning. These two aspects of our vision will prepare our pre-service teachers to become quality educators for Georgia's public schools. Within the context of a field-based environment, our university faculty and partner public school administrators and teachers plan and work together to produce teacher-candidates who engage in *reflective practice*, and who are *competent, caring, committed, collaborative, and culturally responsive*. By effectively integrating content with pedagogy and incorporating appropriate technologies, candidates in our programs acquire the skills necessary to facilitate learning for all students in multicultural and global learning communities. In other words, our candidates have the skills and dispositions to meet the needs of diverse learners in a highly technological society.

## **Theme**

Clayton State University's Teacher Education Unit is dedicated to preparing candidates who engage in *reflective practice*, becoming professional educators who are *competent, caring, committed, collaborative, and culturally responsive*.

## **Mission of the University**

Clayton State University (CSU) has a demonstrated commitment of service to its community and region—particularly the Southern Crescent of metropolitan Atlanta. CSU serves the Southern Crescent area of Clayton, Fayette, Fulton, Henry, Rockdale and Spalding Counties. Bringing educational opportunities for citizens and businesses of the Southern Crescent to contribute to the region's future development is central to the university's mission and aspirations. The University's core mission is to provide superior career-oriented studies that will prepare students to succeed in the world of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and provide services and continuing education that will assist the Southern Crescent and the state in improving the quality of life for residents.

## **Mission of the Teacher Education Unit**

The mission of the unit is consistent with CSU's core mission that advocates "superior career-oriented studies that will prepare students to succeed in the world of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and provide services and continuing education that will assist the Southern Crescent and the state in improving the quality of life for residents." To this end, the mission of the Teacher Education Unit is to prepare professional educators who engage in reflective practice, who are competent, caring, committed and collaborative as well as culturally responsive individuals for teaching diverse learners in today's world. The primary goals are to develop teachers who:

- are knowledgeable about and committed to working with learners,
- understand curriculum and the organization of schools for teaching and learning,
- understand that teaching is inquiring,
- have content knowledge and are lifelong learners,
- value varying learning experiences and diversity, and
- reflect and adjust teaching methods and strategies according to the needs of individual learners.

The guiding principles fostering the development of the mission statement were based on the following dimensions: all components of teacher education programs will be described in outcome-focused, assessment-based terminology and will be designed to enhance student learning, and all outcomes of teacher education programs will be assessed by performance in a variety of settings.

The Teacher Education Unit's mission is to offer teacher education coursework along with content courses in the School of Arts and Sciences and the College of Information and Mathematical Sciences. Required coursework for the middle grades program gives emphasis to breadth and depth of knowledge in the four discipline content areas consisting of mathematics, language arts, social sciences, and science. The departments of English, Math, Biology, and History provide the content knowledge necessary for those seeking Secondary licensure at the undergraduate level. The departments of English, Math and Biology also offer content knowledge within Mat programs. Music courses provide the same breadth and depth of knowledge for music education candidates. Because of our programs' commitment to field-based learning, our candidates receive pedagogical instruction not only from university faculty on campus but also from field-based teachers in partnership school buildings. These mentor teachers provide planned pedagogical experiences for both junior and senior candidates.

## **Conceptual Framework Descriptors**

The Clayton State University Teacher Education Unit has defined its theme through the Conceptual Framework. The Conceptual Framework promotes reflective practice, with an outline for preparing quality teachers who are competent, caring, committed, collaborative and culturally responsive. These qualities are consistent with standards promoted by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC), National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs), National Middle School Association (NMSA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), National Council of Teachers of Math (NCTM); National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), and National Science Teachers Association (NSTA).

The descriptors given below clearly illustrate attributes the Unit desires for producing quality teachers.

### **A CSU Teacher-Candidate engages in *reflective practice*.**

Reflective practice is a critical tool that supports the attributes that the Unit desires for producing quality teachers. Through reflective practice, CSU trains teacher candidates to become competent in their knowledge and skills; caring in their desire to help students grow; collaborative in their interactions when possible; and culturally responsive to diverse groups.

Teacher candidates involved in reflective practice constantly engage in observing classroom teachers and students and learn how to write weekly reflections of what they have observed. It is important for them to understand that reflection is a natural expectation for modifying, adjusting, and improving instruction to meet the needs of all learners. The Unit provides multiple opportunities for juniors and seniors to learn and practice their reflective skills in their professional education field experiences and internships. Once our candidates become full-time teachers, they are capable of making critical reflections concerning their teaching. They apply

this reflection to their practice, as they help learners make higher learning gains and achieve a sense of success.

**A CSU Teacher-Candidate is *competent*.**

Candidates are prepared in their chosen content areas and a broad range of Liberal Arts courses. Additionally, the experiential learning aspect of the education curriculum includes a requirement for field-based learning. Teacher-candidates in the Teacher Education Programs experience a broad range of content and education courses in which they receive instruction on campus, as well as observe and participate in field experiences in area schools. Teacher-candidates learn and observe the nature and needs of students, and how to provide instruction to PreK-12 learners. They also include use of technology within their instruction as a means of promoting learning. Teacher candidates have opportunities to apply their knowledge through extensive culminating experiences so that the Teacher Education Unit is assured that candidates are competent and confident in their ability to teach their chosen content areas. Measures such as the Teacher Work Sample reflect this competency in the field experience.

**A CSU Teacher-Candidate is *caring*.**

CSU teacher-candidates are caring individuals. Our candidates model behaviors and dispositions that communicate compassion and understanding while working closely with all members of the education community, students, other teachers, administrators and caregivers alike. Such teacher-candidates exhibit consistent caring over time, illustrated by interactions among those with whom they work in their field experiences.

**A CSU Teacher-Candidate is *committed*.**

CSU teacher-candidates are committed to remaining life-long learners. Additionally, CSU candidates are committed to remaining current in their content fields and to reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses as potential teachers. They learn the importance of attending professional conferences and workshops pertaining to their discipline and continue to learn how to use empirical research and the latest technological resources to enhance classroom instruction.

**A CSU Teacher-Candidate is *collaborative*.**

The CSU Teacher Education Unit has strong partnerships with a number of school systems in the Southern Crescent region. We believe in maintaining a relevant collaborative relationship with these school districts. This belief is consistent with what effective teachers do. Our teacher-candidates receive effective practice in working with teams, both in their college courses and in their field-based internships. They are given ample opportunity to observe collaborative planning and facilitation of learning. During the junior and senior year while engaged in field experiences and internships, teacher candidates collaborate with teacher teams and with the broader learning communities of the school and county.

## **A CSU Teacher-Candidate is *culturally responsive*.**

The Unit requires that teacher-candidates become knowledgeable about, and sensitive to, issues such as equity, social justice, and human diversity. They are made aware that they are responsible for creating and fostering a respectful, tolerant and healthy environment for diverse learners, no matter the learning context.

To do this, teacher-candidates develop a sense of the school as a microcosm of the larger diverse society in which they live. Each student they teach will be seen as a potentially capable learner with unique needs, regardless of his or her cultural or socio-economic condition. Using school and community resources, candidates will encourage the social, personal, intellectual, and psychological growth of their students. The Unit also emphasizes consistent communication with parents or guardians as an integral part of the culturally responsive teaching and learning process.

## **Philosophy**

The Teacher Education Unit at Clayton State University is dedicated to the idea that the best place to learn about teaching students is in authentic school settings. Partnerships have been formed with schools in seven local counties (Clayton, DeKalb, Fayette, Fulton, Henry, Rockdale, and Spalding) in order to provide unique and diverse experiences for CSU candidates. Upon completion of the programs, our candidates have spent nearly one thousand hours in schools and are proficient in their chosen majors. Their academic knowledge extends far beyond what is needed to teach students. Their required courses have also been developed with the outcome that candidates acquire the content knowledge necessary for teaching the state of Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum standards. Content expectations are high for our candidates as they compete with other upper level discipline majors at the university. They have also developed an extremely high level of competence using computers and are knowledgeable about other technology used in schools. Each of our candidates enters the profession with the confidence of having already been a part of the school community longer than most first year teachers. With this level of experience, our candidates are competent in their content knowledge, reflective in their practice, caring facilitators for learning, collaborative in their relationships, committed to their profession and culturally responsive to each student.

## **Teacher Education Unit Outcomes and Candidate Proficiencies**

The Teacher Education Unit Outcomes and Candidate Proficiencies enumerated below come from the knowledge base that was written to address what candidates should know and be able to do upon completion of the programs. During the programs of study, the following teacher

education outcomes are addressed. These outcomes are aligned with the conceptual framework descriptors and to INTASC Principles and essential knowledge (k), skills (s) and dispositions (d) as relevant.

### **1. Diagnoses Learning Needs-**

The candidate uses a variety of assessment techniques and utilizes appropriate technologies to gather information about all students and integrates this information to determine learners' strengths and areas to be developed. (INTASC 1,8,9 -- Reflective, Competent, Caring, Committed, Collaborative, Culturally Responsive – Skills)

- a. Assesses student knowledge with methods appropriate to the learning goals and objectives.
- b. Synthesizes information from assessment data.
- c. Uses assessment processes appropriate to all student academic development.
- d. Reflects on diagnosis and assessment of learning in teaching experiences for modifying instruction appropriate for all learners.

### **2. Plans for Student Learning-**

The candidate integrates knowledge of content discipline, of the nature of diverse learners, of learning theories, of instructional strategies and of professional standards and state/local curriculum guides to plan instruction. (INTASC 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9— Reflective, Competent, Caring, Committed, Collaborative, Culturally Responsive – Knowledge— Skills)

- a. Uses student input and information from diagnosis of student learning needs in developing learning goals and objectives.
- b. Plans for use of a variety of instructional strategies to address learners with diverse learning styles and special needs.
- c. Evaluates teaching resources and curriculum materials, including educational technology for effectiveness, completeness and accuracy and plans for their appropriate use.
- d. Plans equitable teaching/learning processes to address learners from diverse cultural backgrounds and with exceptionalities.
- e. Plans lessons which incorporate authentic situations, previous learning and inter-disciplinary content.
- f. Reflects on planning for student learning.

### **3. Facilitates Student Learning-**

The candidate implements instructional plans with flexibility and is guided by knowledge of discipline content, of the nature of all learners, of learning theories and of instructional strategies. (INTASC 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,10—Reflective, Competent, Caring, Culturally

Responsive—Knowledge—Skills)

- a. Employs effective classroom management techniques.
- b. Uses individual and group motivation techniques for encouraging positive social interaction and self-involvement.
- c. Encourages individual participation while directing group activity.
- d. Uses multiple resources (human, media, technology) effectively for instruction.

**4. Demonstrates Appropriate Knowledge-**

The candidate has general knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences and possesses discipline specific knowledge at a level appropriate for the chosen teaching field.

(INTASC 1,7—Reflective, Competent—Knowledge—Skills)

- a. Communicates effectively, incorporating the use of technology when appropriate.
- b. Demonstrates discipline knowledge appropriate to the chosen teaching field.
- c. Integrates knowledge across disciplines, including multicultural and global perspectives.
- d. Accesses knowledge to stay current in one's field.
- e. Reflects on one's strength and weaknesses as a learner.

**5. Fosters Student Well-being to Support Learning-**

The candidate interacts with diverse students, school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to foster student well being and learning. (INTASC 5,8,9,10—Reflective, Collaborative, Caring, Committed, Culturally Responsive—Skills)

- a. Identifies socio-cultural factors beyond the school that hamper student learning and uses resources within the school and community to mitigate these factors.
- b. Communicates with parents or guardians as an essential activity in promoting student well-being and learning.
- c. Reflects on use of community resources and interactions with parents and school colleagues to improve the well-being of all learners.

**6. Assumes the Role of Professional Teacher-**

The candidate acts in accordance with the structure, standards and responsibilities of the profession and recognizes the role of the school in supporting a democratic society. (INTASC 1,9,10—Reflective, Competent, Collaborative, Caring, Committed, Culturally Responsive—Knowledge—Skills—Dispositions)

- a. Demonstrates an awareness of the political, legal, and ethical issues that impact on professional practices.
- b. Works collaboratively with colleagues as a professional.

- c. Values using technology as a professional resource and a management tool.
- d. Reflects on professional development as an on-going process.
- e. Exhibits the professional dispositions of a teacher:
  - maintains a professional appearance
  - maintains regular attendance
  - maintains positive attitude and character
  - is collaborative and participatory
  - demonstrates a strong work ethic
  - shows respect for the profession.

## **Technology**

Clayton State University and the teacher education unit have a strong commitment to educating technology-literate graduates and candidates. Clayton State was one of the first universities to become a “notebook university” in Georgia, requiring all entering students and faculty to use computers and related technologies in the classroom when appropriate to instruction. Teacher education candidates use computer technology in all of their courses. Middle School students are required to take EDUC 3020: Instructional Technology for Teachers; this course is also open as an elective for teacher candidates in other programs. All candidates are required to demonstrate various technological skills in courses and during their internships. Discipline-specific and professional education course syllabi reference common technology skills as related to the unit’s conceptual framework, and university faculty and field-based mentor teachers assess candidates’ demonstrated skills.

## **Research on the Knowledge Base Foundation**

Clayton State University’s Teacher Education Unit prepares teachers with strong content knowledge in two of four concentrations for middle grades (math, science, social sciences and language arts); in content areas in English, Math, Biology, and History for those pursuing Secondary licensure, and in music education. Pedagogical skills are gained from experiences in on-campus methods labs and field-based professional education courses. In addition, candidates are required to complete student teaching internships. These various on- and off-campus experiences serve as the foundation for providing pre-service teachers with appropriate theoretical and practical knowledge and skills to function as teachers. This foundation is grounded in the understanding that our teacher candidates are prepared as reflective, competent teachers who are collaborative, caring, committed and culturally responsive.

A major characteristic of CSU’s Teacher Education Programs involves developing the ability of teacher candidates to engage in *reflective practice*. Candidates learn how to think critically and record what they learn from their field-based courses and internship experiences. The process of reflection is not new to education, as Dewey (1933) describes it as “the kind of thinking that

consists of turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration” (p. 3). Teachers think about what they need to teach and decide how best to teach the subject matter prior to and after instruction. Van Manen (1977) posits this process as “three levels of reflection: technical or instrumental action; practical or awareness of alternative principles; and critical or consideration of moral implications to social conditions” (p. 910). Donald Schon, too, is similarly cited in the literature for his research regarding reflective practices. Richardson and Placier (2001) further purport that “the growth in research on reflective practice was advanced by the acceptance of Schon’s conception of the reflective practitioner” (p. 913). Schon sees reflection as “the intermediate zone of practice---uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict” (1987, p. 6). Overall, competent, collaborative teachers who engage in reflective practice are expected to be caring, committed, and culturally responsive individuals who help students to learn and to develop social character. The CSU Teacher Education Unit encourages candidates to demonstrate care for and commitment to their learners and their profession as they matriculate in the program.

It is essential that teachers at all grade levels be well educated in their respective disciplines; they must be *competent* educators. As facilitators of learning, teachers are expected to be knowledgeable in their content areas and demonstrate the ability to convey knowledge and understanding in ways that promote achievement among all learners. In fact, Shulman (1987), a respected teacher educator, has identified content knowledge as one of seven categories of teachers’ knowledge needed for quality teaching. It is of utmost importance that teachers possess subject matter knowledge. In addition, they must also have what Carter (1990) has called classroom teaching knowledge that “includes both personal, practical knowledge that is based on the personal understandings that teachers have of the practical circumstances in which they work and classroom knowledge that is situated in classroom events” (p. 880). Carter further indicates, “Pedagogical content knowledge involves both what teachers know about their subject matter and how that knowledge is translated into classroom curricular events” (p. 880). The knowledge base research studies of Shulman and Carter are consistent with how our teacher education programs are designed as we pride ourselves on producing highly competent educators who possess strong content and pedagogical knowledge.

In addition, our program emphasizes the use of instructional technologies as learning tools to enhance content knowledge and provide pedagogical variety to promote learning among students. Candidates use computers on a regular basis in required courses to demonstrate competence. More importantly, teachers must be prepared to use technology as a means to enhance the teaching and learning process. Pre-service teachers learn from experienced faculty members who use technology in their courses. Candidates must have opportunities to use technology while being mentored by practitioners if they are to become proficient in the use of technology as teaching and learning tools (Collis, 1994; Wetzel, 1993; White, 1994). Thus, our teacher education unit places a strong value on developing technology-proficient candidates who are able to integrate technology in the curricula they are expected to teach.

In respect to *caring*, Noddings (2001) states, “Although the conceptual misunderstanding about caring as a soft, fuzzy notion is easily dispelled (at least theoretically), there are genuine conflicts between caring and professionalization, and they are not unique to teaching” (p. 101). Because teaching is a profession that involves direct contact with people on a daily basis, teachers must demonstrate compassion and interest in their work with people, especially children and youths. Thus, pre- and in-service teachers show commitment to those they serve as a result of displaying care for learners. Caring teachers are committed to working with diverse learners of all socio-economic backgrounds. These individuals promote or inhibit the success of students based on the nature of their interest in the well being of learners. Therefore, CSU’s Teacher Education Unit believes strongly in producing teachers who genuinely care about students and are committed to promoting this characteristic as professional educators. Our pre-service teachers experience university faculty and partnership teachers who model caring attitudes while teaching them as candidates on- and off- campus. Clearly, university faculty and partnership teachers demonstrate their commitment to the teaching profession as demonstrated in their care for teacher education candidates.

Besides being caring individuals, Clayton State University teacher-candidate are *committed* to remaining life-long learners. They are committed to learning the importance of remaining current in the fields by attending conferences and workshops pertaining to their discipline. Empirical research and the latest technological resources to enhance classroom instruction must remain part of their professional development plans. Koch (2009) states that successful teachers love learning, that they are engaged in a “learning life...a desire to know more and to have the skills to acquire new knowledge when the need and desire arises” (p. 37). Throughout their coursework and field experiences, our candidates reflect upon that which they need to know to effectively teach.

Along with having the appropriate subject matter, pedagogical knowledge, and a commitment to life-long learning, our pre-service teachers must be *collaborative*, possessing the ability to collaborate and work in teams. Friend and Cook (1996) describe collaboration as “a style of direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (p. 6). This approach is primarily used in middle school settings where teachers work together in clusters of two or more to “team teach” or “co-teach” a group of students. Additionally, team teaching is not the end result, but a process for two or more teachers working from beginning to end for a mutual cause (Woodard, 1990). In these situations, a group of teachers will plan and deliver instruction to the same group of students and share a common interest in their work. Often these are interdisciplinary teams of teachers who specialize in some combination of math, science, social studies and/or language arts. In addition, teachers in music, English, math, biology and history often collaborate for improving instruction and to share common knowledge and interest in the teaching and learning process.

Consequently, our teacher education unit promotes collaborative involvement of pre-service teachers and collaborative work among university faculty and partnership educators. The CSU Teacher Education Unit provides multiple opportunities for candidates to collaborate and work in teams on assignments and projects. Candidates also observe university faculty and partnership teachers working collaboratively in our pedagogy labs on campus and in field-based courses in partnership schools. We firmly believe that “to be effective, the collaborative effort of university faculty in academic settings and public school teachers in classrooms is required. A partnership in which university and public school faculties work in concert to connect academic learning and practical experience is optimal for student teachers as well as beneficial to the work of the university and public school partners” (Dever et al., 2003, p. 246).

Also, our candidates are able to embrace the importance of cultural diversity while teaching content knowledge to learners. They must be *culturally responsive* to the needs of their students. They are taught to teach a curriculum that is multicultural and inclusive in school settings that are ethnically and culturally diverse. It is essential that our pre-service teachers become sensitive to the ethnic and cultural differences and special needs of all students. The need for teachers who are consciously responsive to their students’ cultural backgrounds and learning styles is considered as crucial by many scholars for improving academic achievement (Delpit, 1988; Dilworth, 1990; Foster, 1995; Irvine, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Nieto, 1994).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the CSU Teacher Education Unit prepares teachers to engage in reflective practice, becoming educators who are competent, caring, committed, collaborative, and culturally responsive. These qualities best ensure that candidates are prepared to help all learners learn. Thus, the unit’s mission aligns well with CSU’s mission statement, which promotes “superior career-oriented studies that will prepare students to succeed in the world of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and provide services and continuing education that will assist the Southern Crescent and the state in improving the quality of life for residents.” Our teacher education candidates will be well-qualified, caring teachers who effectively integrate content with pedagogy and incorporate technologies to facilitate learning for diverse learning communities.

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