

Conceptual Framework

School of Education

Initial Level Teacher Education Programs



Mission Statement

The Teacher Education Unit is committed to preparing exemplary professionals in the field of education. The faculty and staff of our teacher education unit understand the complexity, interrelatedness and recursive nature of the teaching/learning process. We are committed to preparing our teacher education candidates to be reflective professionals, knowledgeable in general studies, specific content areas, and pedagogy. In addition, we want their educational experiences to equip them to be effective communicators and wise decision-makers in a democratic and increasingly technological society. We also want our graduates to appreciate diverse cultures and viewpoints. Therefore, we create and update courses based upon our study and reflection of current research and professional writing. We encourage diverse field experiences, co-curricular activities and professional opportunities. We believe that learning is a lifelong process that involves continual growth in three broad conceptual areas: foundational knowledge, professional dispositions and integrity, and professional competencies.

Peru State College is Nebraska's oldest college, a normal school founded in 1867. It is nestled in rural, southeastern Nebraska, bordered by the banks of the Missouri River and rolling farmlands where one can still spot a one-room schoolhouse. Known as the "Campus of a Thousand Oaks," Peru State College is a learner-centered school with dedicated faculty and staff, committed to personal attention, small classes, and modeling innovative methods and performance-based assessments. We believe strongly in the dignity and potential of each human being, and we understand that all persons learn in unique ways. To ensure additional opportunities for continual growth and professional leadership, we offer a Master's Degree in Education.

Peru State College's commitment to individual attention and needs is evident in our teacher education program. We also encourage our students to hone their passion for teaching and their unique talents through integrated community service opportunities related directly to their professional courses and activities. Our faculty and staff are committed to modeling that learning is an ongoing, challenging enterprise engaged in by committed persons – teachers, teacher candidates, and community members together, all part of an exciting and rapidly changing world.

Conceptual Framework: Creating Exemplary Educators - Reflective Decision-makers

At Peru State College, our mission is based upon the premise that each person has unique potential to be enhanced by his or her educational experiences. Therefore, as educators we acknowledge our role in this enhancement, our own responsibility to be reflective practitioners: persons grounded in a knowledge of the past, respectful and cognizant of the present cultural context in which we live, and highly aware of a future that requires adaptability and critical thinking skills. Our conceptual framework has long acknowledged the belief that our teacher candidates should be wise decision-makers.

Drawing upon critical and constructivist theory, we have come to realize that wise decision-making is based upon one's ability to reflect critically upon one's experiences and to acknowledge the "indeterminant zones of practice – uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict..." (Schön, 1987, p.6) We believe for ourselves and our students that a reflective program "...must cultivate activities that connect the knowing- and reflection-in-action of competent practitioners to the theories and techniques taught as professional knowledge in academic courses" (Schön, p. 312).

Years ago Dewey voiced his belief that democracy should be an integral part of school experience and a way of living and working with others. Our ideal is to provide "...students with the knowledge, skills, and values they will need to exercise the civic courage, compassion, and leadership necessary to find their own voices while learning how to both understand and connect such voices to the exercise of social responsibility and civic courage" (Giroux, 1989, p.131).

To work toward this ideal, we must focus on providing learning opportunities for growth in three broad areas. First, we want to provide rigorous foundational knowledge in general and liberal studies, content area studies, and pedagogical studies. Second, we want to cultivate in our candidates effective professional dispositions and integrity. Finally, we want to instill a passionate commitment to ongoing professional growth and development. Opportunities for reflection are an integral part of these three areas.

To accomplish our mission, the unit's goals are addressed in our conceptual framework and subsequently in specific course syllabi. Our syllabi state objectives, assessments, and bibliographic information showing the theory and research that have informed our collective philosophy and consequently course direction and planning. This philosophy is integrated into our professionally affiliated student organizations, which are advised by members of the unit faculty. These organizations include the Council for Exceptional Children, Peru State Education Association, and Kappa Delta Pi. In addition, we encourage participation in America Reads, America Counts, Reading Buddies, and Games on the Green. We believe that these organizations and programs provide our teacher candidates with unique learning and professional opportunities that enlarge their world view.

Below are our three broad themes (standards), each followed by a specific list of outcomes. Each outcome serves as a subsystem within an integrated whole. The experiences leading to our desired outcomes do not live in isolation, but are provided in a variety of contexts.

Foundational Knowledge . . . *"The message for teacher education is clear: Beginning teachers should have a solid grounding in whatever it is they are to teach coupled with the skills to know how to acquire additional knowledge on a lifelong basis and the attitude to want to continue to learn"* (Ducharme & Ducharme, 1999)

Peru Standard 1 - Foundational Knowledge: Teacher education candidates have a broad background of knowledge and skills in three domains identified as general and liberal studies, content area studies and pedagogical studies. These studies serve to enrich, enlighten, and expand candidates' knowledge and skills. As they reflect upon their experiences, teacher candidates make informed decisions.

1.1 General and Liberal Studies

The purpose of the General Studies Program at Peru State is to prepare the student for advanced college work as well as of life-long learning. The General Studies Program consists of specific courses that are designed to assist the student in acquiring the intellectual foundation that will last for lifetime of learning.

The General Studies Program requires that its graduates 1) can write, speak, and compute effectively, 2) are computer literate, 3) can think critically and independently, 4) are open to and have the capacity for change, 5) are prepared to assume their social and civic roles and leaders in an increasingly interdependent world, and 6) are equipped to pursue lives that are intellectually, ethically, aesthetically, and physically rewarding. (Peru State College Catalog)

1.1.1. Teacher education candidates develop a broad foundation of knowledge across disciplines and connect and interrelate that knowledge to positively impact instruction and student learning.

1.1.2. Teacher education candidates demonstrate strong communication, computation, research, and technology skills.

1.2 Content Area Studies

To develop content area expertise teacher candidates will have a broad knowledge in the field or subject in which they choose to specialize.

1.2.1. Teacher education candidates interrelate all content areas, use tools of inquiry, and emphasize the significance of literacy and diversity across the curriculum.

1.2.2. Teacher education candidates identify, select and evaluate appropriate resources to support a coherent lesson sequence in their content areas which creates meaningful student learning experiences.

1.2.3. Teacher education candidates demonstrate comprehension of the evolving nature of theory and research in their content areas.

1.3 Pedagogical Studies

To develop pedagogical content knowledge, teacher candidates will demonstrate a repertoire of methods that make content knowledge easily understood and relevant by a variety of learners (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990).

1.3.1 Teacher education candidates plan and implement appropriate instruction and assessment based on their knowledge of human development and socio-cultural, philosophical, and historical foundations of education processes in a democratic society.

1.3.2 Teacher education candidates effectively use technology to plan and implement instruction and enhance student learning.

1.3.3 Teacher education candidates develop, plan, and implement standards-based curriculum that reflects current research.

1.3.4 Teacher education candidates design and teach lessons that differentiate instruction for each learner and positively impact student achievement.

1.3.5 Teacher education candidates design and implement a variety of quality formative and summative standards-based assessments to measure individual student progress and inform ongoing planning and instruction.

1.3.6 Teacher education candidates create a positive, well organized, safe, and respectful learning community with clearly defined classroom goals dedicated to purposeful and engaging learning activities.

1.3.7 Teacher education candidates promote the development of problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and goal setting skills for all students and help students assume responsibility for their own learning.

Professional Disposition and Integrity . . . *“Learning-all forms of learning-will prosper when it is founded on good relationships. The human spirit thrives on caring and compassion, on esteem and trust”* (Waldon, Collie & Davies, 1999, p.36)

Peru Standard 2 - Professional Disposition & Integrity: Teacher education candidates develop professional dispositions, character, skills and traits appropriate for the teaching profession. The candidates demonstrate professionalism, dependability, social maturity, a cooperative attitude, enthusiasm, initiative, and confidentiality, especially as it relates to student information.

2.1.1 Teacher education candidates refine, model and reflect upon the characteristics, skills, and traits appropriate for the teaching profession and encourage the potential of the students they teach.

2.1.2 Teacher education candidates model moral, ethical and legal behaviors as well as sensitivity to the culture and norms within a school community.

Professional Development . . . *“Teacher educators must be acutely aware of the fact that producing teachers who are individually good teachers is not sufficient; they must also be stewards of good schools.”* Goodlad, 1994, p.196.

Peru Standard 3 - Professional Development: Teacher education candidates recognize what is involved in being a lifelong educator, establish their own professional identities, and effectively collaborate within the learning community.

3.1.1 Teacher education candidates analyze and reflect upon constructive feedback to initiate change and refine practices that address the needs of all students.

3.1.2 Teacher education candidates participate in opportunities for collaboration and on-going professional development activities to maintain currency in education-related issues.

3.1.3 Teacher education candidates analyze current educational research and information about what is considered best practices as well as resources available for lifelong professional growth and development.

Supporting Research

- Ball, D. L. & McDiarmid, G. W. (1990). The subject-matter preparation of teachers. In Handbook of Research on Teacher Education. New York: Macmillan.
- Delpit, L. (1995). Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom. New York: New York Press.
- Dewey, J. (1916). Democracy and education. New York: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1927). The public and its problems. Chicago: Swallow.
- Ducharme, E. R. & Ducharme, M. K. (1999). Responding to Goodlad: The primacy of teacher education in SCDEs. Journal of Teacher Education, 50 (5), 358-362.
- Giroux, H. A. (1989). Schooling as a form of cultural politics: Toward a pedagogy of and for difference. In H. A. Giroux & P. McLaren, Critical pedagogy, the state, and cultural struggle. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Goodlad, J. I. (1990). Teachers for our nation's schools. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Goodlad, J. I. (1994). Educational renewal. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Peru State College (2004). Peru State College 2004-2006 Catalog. Peru, Nebraska: Peru State College.
- Schön, Donald (1987). Educating the Reflective Practitioner. Jossey-Bass.
- Waldron, P. W., Collie, T. R. & Daview, C. M. W. (1999). Telling stories about school: An invitation... Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.