

## **Wittenberg University Department Of Education Conceptual Framework for the Undergraduate Teacher Education Program**

*All institutions that prepare teachers have missions, purposes, and philosophies that help describe what they do and why. This is called “the conceptual framework.” It is described below. Our theme is “educational leaders for constructive social change.” We believe the theme makes us unique, but it also challenges us to live up to our reasons for service.*

### Mission

At Wittenberg University we recognize that teaching is a moral enterprise. The intellectual agility, pedagogical skill, and relational dispositions that create effective and sensitive teaching is only elevated above the level of technical training when given direction by moral purpose. This moral purpose grows out of the University’s mission to teach “moral responsibility, social consciousness, vocational commitment, and constructive social change as the foundation of citizenship in the world’s human community and in each person’s particular society.” It is upon that foundation that Wittenberg’s Education Department has developed its own mission and conceptual framework for the teacher education program. Specifically, the mission statement for the teacher education program is the following:

Wittenberg’s Teacher Education Program strives to integrate the ideals of moral responsibility, social consciousness, and vocational commitment into the lives of teachers in such a way that their character, competence, and community involvement establish them as leaders for constructive social change.

The theme of preparing teacher candidates as **educational leaders for constructive social change** grows out of the liberal arts tradition characterized by this mission. The focus on viewing teachers as *educational leaders* places teachers in the role of change agents in the educational enterprise--active decision makers in and beyond the classroom.

In focusing on leadership for constructive social change, we emphasize that Wittenberg expects its teacher education candidates to understand that teaching has a social purpose - not only do teacher education candidates work to help students make a better life for themselves but teacher candidates actively work also to make the conditions of school, community, and society better places to live, learn, and work.

In our conceptual framework, this unique role of the teacher grows out of what we consider to be the three “C’s” of responsive leadership: **competence, character, and community**. These, in turn are concrete embodiments of the respective ideals articulated in the university’s mission: Character is founded on a deep sense of moral responsibility; competence is developed out of an ever-present vocational commitment; and community involvement is born from a deep and abiding social consciousness. This translation of the university mission into the lived experience of teachers is further grounded in the profound belief that social well being depends upon teachers who respond to the needs of their students justly and to the needs of the community actively, thoughtfully, and wholeheartedly. Teachers of good character who demonstrate these qualities of competence will know what it means to be reflective and responsive leaders in their classrooms, in their schools, in their professions, and in their communities.

It is important to note that we do not believe that it is possible to prepare teachers with answers or formulas that might serve them regardless of the immediate situation. That would mistake change as a condition to be attained rather than as an ongoing process requiring constant reflection and action. This latter understanding of change causes us to be most concerned with fostering the decision making abilities of our students, providing them the tools necessary to respond to changing circumstances, make

informed professional judgments, and reflect upon the consequences of their decisions. Our challenge then is to foster independent, self motivated learners who can initiate and lead change as it is rooted in social and philosophical investigations of schools, learning theory, human development, human relationships and moral convictions. Only by being continual learners can teachers be leaders in ever-changing and ever more diverse educational environments.

Important both to the mission of the department and to the larger university is a commitment to the whole person. The ability to integrate knowledge is frequently understood as one skill of the liberally educated person. But just as important is the ability to be an integrated person. Wittenberg University's mission speaks to developing leaders, people who can "live responsibly, think critically and creatively, judge rationally, communicate effectively, appreciate the aesthetic, and develop a commitment, and enthusiasm that will last throughout their lives." An integrated person endeavors to connect what they know to who they are – to bring competence and character together. Again in the language of Wittenberg's mission, integrated people are able to develop in harmony the "intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic, social, and physical qualities which characterize wholeness of person."

We are committed to seeing these qualities extended outward into community life by the preservice and inservice teachers with whom we work. Always in the interest of learning, teacher education operates at multiple levels. We work with people who will work in turn with their own students. Teachers must continually make decisions that affect learning. If they are to assume leadership roles in this effort, teachers must have developed and must model the dispositions and values that drive their own efforts.

Leadership depends on being committed to results, to extending the benefits of learning widely and consistently, and to developing and sustaining the professional competencies necessary to serve. As teacher educators we in turn must seek to model these same dispositions. Modeling leadership for constructive social change means being able to recognize the part we all play in the support of democratic living in our immediate and extended communities.

### Philosophical Underpinnings

In order to develop our theme of educational leadership for constructive social change and grow our mission out of the roots of character, competence and community, we had to wrestle with the fundamental question, “What are the assumptions that lie at the core of our educational thinking?” The answer to that question, though expressed in many different ways by individuals in the department, can be expressed briefly through three basic ideas that have their roots deeply embedded in liberal arts tradition: Faith, hope and care. We share a faith in the potential of education to improve the quality of life and overcome problems facing society. This faith leads to an enduring hope that the patient and dedicated work of teachers and schools will result in transformed lives and social progress. And, finally, we believe that the outward, observable manifestation of that hope can be seen in care: First, in the reverent care that our teachers give to the young people they serve; Second, in the disciplined care our teachers give to their work, first at Wittenberg as students themselves and then in the schools where they teach.

Out of that lineage of values and assumptions has grown the mission of this department. Faith, hope and care are the fibers that connect character, competence and community to each other and to our conception of education as a moral enterprise. We

believe these connections infuse our mission with certain commitments that provide more specific, concrete guidance for our work.

### Commitment to Academic Excellence

Our students come to Wittenberg well prepared academically. They are able to ask the big questions and see the big picture. They come with some advantages being able to connect things intellectually and talk about others from their perspectives. When they leave Wittenberg we are confident that their knowledge of subject matter is both deep and well connected to the methodology of instruction they develop while in our program.

Yet we believe this is not enough. While they are here, we also want our students to develop a critical sensitivity, explore new tactics, and learn to think on their feet. This requires more than intellectual ability; it requires confidence and the poise to “see themselves as teachers,” seeing how all the elements work. Good teachers must be self critical and receptive to suggestions, to recognize what they don’t know. They must represent the profession by engaging in this type of conversation, being able to use the vocabulary of the profession and to talk meaningfully and openly about what they do. This requires asking “why” as well as “what.”

### Commitment to Leadership

We prepare leaders who are active in the school, on committees, in professional organizations. They are the ones adopting textbooks, considering test results, communicating and interacting with the wider community. They are advocates for academic excellence, for student health and safety, for school reform that better serves

children, communities and society and for advances in their own profession. As advocates, these leaders provide not only pedagogical but moral guidance to those they serve.

### Commitment to Change

We believe that advocacy for change manifests itself in our teachers through the characteristic of being “results driven.” Results-driven teachers are researchers who can collect, interpret, and present evidence about teaching and learning. They are teachers who are “ambitious” in their recognition of consequences and in their need to see change and see the need for change. They know what counts as “results.” They can deal with “bad outcomes” and still feel valued for what they do. They can find the success and sustain the energy necessary to reteach.

### Commitment to Diversity

We want to educate teachers who can deal with diversity and avoid being “missionaries” out to “save” the other. Diversity requires a comfort with difference and the confidence to travel across social and academic divides. Intellectually and morally it requires the ability to describe the world accurately from a different position and to see how that position may have larger merit and benefit. It also requires a willingness to serve others, and when justice demands, advocate for them, even when differences make doing so unappealing. Finally, commitment to diversity entails a recognition of the importance of differences to the intellectual, emotional and moral growth of a community of learners.

### Commitment to Technological Competence

We value the wide variety of technologies that aid learning. We want teachers to emerge from our program with proficiencies in using both the older and the newer tools they will find in their classrooms. We are just as concerned that our graduates understand the psychological, social, political and ideological impact of these tools on education – that the tools used for learning help determine not only how much is learned, but what is valued and how one thinks. Our efforts in this regard go well beyond computer training, to investigate issues that help teachers determine where, when and why various uses of learning tools are appropriate and inappropriate for student learning. We also see a responsibility to help our preservice teachers recognize the ethical implications and consequences of using powerful tools that have global reach and provide inexhaustible information access.

### Commitment to Reflection and Responsibility

All of the partners in teacher education at Wittenberg value reflection. This manifests itself in a number of ways. It means being positive and open and being able to take risks. It means being able to enjoy fresh ideas and experiences. At the same time, it means being able to think clearly about oneself and one's experiences – to be critical of both the ideas one encounters and the actions that one takes. And it means taking the responsibility to act in response to those criticisms.

Reflection extends to social responsibility and being able to see education as a social and political agenda. Responsibility means social awareness, a commitment to being an active participant, and the knowledge of knowing how the structure works. It is

through this reflection on their responsibilities that our candidates come to know teaching as a moral and political enterprise.

### Commitment to the Whole Person

The teachers we endeavor to foster know who they are as a person. They should know their strengths and weaknesses, and they can build upon their strengths and experiences.

The professional competence of our teachers also resides in making decisions about how to balance their lives, having the ability to say “no” as well as stick to a task and see it through. Our students should also know themselves well enough to know when it is time to leave. These are issues of character, and we strive to instill in our teachers a recognition that their success as teachers depends in great measure on the strength they develop in this personal area.

### Commitment to Service

Care entails giving, and when this giving is extended publicly it becomes service. We prepare teachers who lead by serving; by being good stewards of the children in their care and by recognizing and addressing needs that arise within the school and larger community. Teachers who have emerged from our program not only advocate for those they serve, but serve by being advocates for positive change within students, schools and the community.

### Research Rationale

To frame education as fundamentally a moral enterprise is in the progressive tradition. At its core, this orientation assumes that “schooling can be about how to make a life, which is quite different from how to make a living” (Postman, 1996, p. x). Dewey

(1916), followed by the more recent work of Boyer (1983), Jackson (1968), and Goodlad (1970), suggests that in constantly reflecting on how education contributes to making lives, teachers necessarily need to develop a sense of purpose which extends beyond the model of expert technician delivering services to clients. We agree with Parker Palmer that “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (1998, p.10). Thus, we believe that even in a society that glorifies high technology (especially in a society that glorifies technology), the healthy development of young people requires that the technical expertise of the teacher must be governed by a deep wisdom emanating from the teachers’ own character. This applies not just to methodology but actual technology use as well. Though we concur with Papert (1993), Shank (1995) and many others that teachers need to be adept at employing computers for educational purposes, we share the concerns of Weizenbaum (1976), Winner (1986) and Burniske and Monke (2001), that these machines have such powerful impacts, not only educationally, but cognitively, socially and politically, that they require a heightened sense of responsibility in their use.

This more critical and reflective relationship between technical proficiency and personal character generates a much richer and more holistic conception of professional competence. It demands that the moral dimension of education not be separated from methodology or choice of educational technologies (Welker, 1993); that competence at least in part be determined by examining the commitments made by students and teachers to each other, to the subject matter and to the media that links teacher, student and subject together (Prawat, 1996; Ohler, 1999). The depth of that commitment is both contingent upon and contributory to the development of community. Implicit in Sergiovanni’s

observation that, “In communities, for example, the connection of people to purpose and the connections among people are not based on contracts but commitments” (1994, p. 4) is the notion that competence, character and community are morally bound to each other. In the classroom, the binding agent of that relationship is the teacher, whose leadership role cannot be confined, then, to mere academic expert. Nor can that leadership be confined just to the classroom, for as Dewey (1916) made clear, if education is to have any impact on society at all, it must not only seek community within the classroom, but engage the external community as well. This is why our conception of character, competence and community lead us to a theme that emphasizes leadership in the effort for constructive social change. Teachers, according to Giroux and Freire, “enact the role of social and moral agents of change; they uncover, reproduce, and produce forms of learning and social relations based on those often repressed memories, stories, and dreams that allow us to analyze and embrace schooling as part of a wider politics of solidarity, caring, and joy” (in Purpel, 1989, p xvii). Given that role of “social and moral agents of change,” we are dedicated to helping teachers become leaders in determining the direction of those changes.

Diverse “memories, stories and dreams” lead to solidarity and the enhancement of that democratic ideal Dewey (1916) termed “associative living,” when they are shared and honored in the community. A great benefit of the liberal arts commitment to a broad general education is the ability to constructively frame issues regarding class, race, sex, special needs and special abilities that more and more confront classroom teachers. Teachers must be able to grapple with enormously complex and diverse considerations,

not only in regard to individuals in their classes, but in regard to the cultural and environmental conditions that exist beyond them.

Thus, we are committed to professional leadership that directs itself both inwardly, within the classroom, and outwardly, into the larger community. This commitment suggests that in our work as teacher educators theory and practice cannot stand apart from one another but must be intertwined within a preservice teacher education that models the conditions of actual school life. It also suggests that preservice teachers develop dispositions upon which incisive intelligence depends. The development of habits of mind that Sizer (1997), Meier (1995) and others emphasize for students in general seem especially applicable for preservice teachers. We understand the liberal arts commitment to a broad general education as a means to develop those habits of mind, not as a separate precursor to course work and experiences in teacher education but as an essential aspect of that effort. Liberal education emphasizes the critical thinking, curriculum integration, and respect for diversity prized in well-prepared practitioners. At the same time, it references the compelling competencies of professional practice: organizing content knowledge for student learning, creating an environment for student learning, teaching for student comprehension, and teacher professionalism. Finally, it is based upon the moral and social dispositions we believe appropriate and fitting for teaching within a democratic society and honoring the range of diverse voices that need support and guidance under a teacher's care (Delpit, 1996).

#### Purposeful Programming

The conceptual framework is an integral part of the teacher education program. The liberal arts tradition; Wittenberg University's mission; professional education

knowledge, skills and dispositions; as well as a firm commitment to faith, hope, and care are foundational to the conceptual framework. This shared vision, in turn, results in our joint commitments. These resolutions, combined with institutional, state and professional standards lead to program performance outcomes. These operationalized purposes provide direction for the teacher education programs and experiences. The performance outcomes provide an important component for the assessment system to provide feedback and make decisions about candidates, and for continual program improvement. Appendix 4.A *Relationship of Conceptual Framework to Program Components* provides a visual representation of this network of connections and the central role of the conceptual framework.

Several programmatic features help us translate our mission into practice. Listed below are certain aspects of the teacher education program that intentionally further our ideals.

#### Liberal Arts

As indicated earlier in this document, Wittenberg University's liberal arts mission and the conceptual framework of the education program reflect one another closely. In practical terms, a substantial portion of a student's academic work must be taken in courses in the arts and sciences. All students must complete approximately 55 semester credit hours (of 130 total) fulfilling general education requirements to gain proficiency in university-established learning goals. The education department believes this broad educational structure helps teacher candidates recognize the vast web of connectedness across curricular areas. It provides them with the wide ranging knowledge needed to

work across those boundaries, an essential quality both for leadership in schools and in the larger community.

### Writing Intensive Courses

This designation identifies the course as one in which students not only learn content but are instructed in writing skills as well. The writing intensive program is part of a university-wide effort to prepare students who can express themselves well through writing. Wittenberg requires students to take seven writing-intensive courses (approximately one fourth of their total courses). The education department supports and promotes this aspect of competency through the large number of writing intensive course offered in each licensure area.

### Community Service

Wittenberg University stipulates a minimum of thirty hours of community service as a graduation requirement. This university wide program contributes to our department's mission of fostering leaders for constructive social change. Many of the education candidates perform their community service in schools as tutors, or through youth organizations such as Youth as Resources. This is one clear example of the articulation that exists between the university's mission and the mission of the education department.

### Extensive Field Experience

Every teacher education course, from the entry-level courses through the advanced methods courses, includes a field experience component. Thus, every teacher candidate accumulates a significant amount of time out in the community, practicing pedagogical skills and growing personally. This sizeable investment of time and energy

beyond the university classroom is a manifestation of our commitment to fostering social change and building community partnerships. It also provides the candidate with many opportunities to heighten their accountability, flexibility, responsibility to others, and their ability to collaborate in a learning environment as they work with a wide variety of practicing teachers.

### Diversity

Our commitment to diversity drives us to seek out experiences affording our candidates opportunities to interact with diverse populations in our education courses. This is facilitated by our geographical location in an urban school district that is surrounded by several districts with rural and suburban schools. Field experiences in courses are linked to particular settings so that every candidate will work in a wide variety of schools with diverse students, faculty and families, including populations with special needs.

### Technology

We prepare our candidates to work comfortably in schools with state-of-the-art technology as well as in school with older technology. Instructors and candidates carefully consider the ethical implications and consequences of educational technologies. Each faculty member has developed a multi-year personal technology plan for developing appropriate technology use for his or her courses and own professional development.

### Departmental Advising

Regardless of major, every Wittenberg student who indicates an interest in becoming a teacher is assigned an education advisor. The complexity of meeting major

requirements, general education requirements and teacher education requirements compels us to offer special care to our candidates and potential candidates. This care represents the kind of modeling we believe candidates will emulate with their own students in their practice.

All of the programmatic efforts listed here grow out of that same fundamental faith. Well-structured curriculum, extensive experiences with healthy practices, and direct contact with caring individuals will effect beneficial change in our candidates. These efforts will result in candidates leaving our program with hope for extending those changes to others. They will care deeply enough to take on the leadership roles necessary to see those changes through in the communities in which they work.

#### Performance Outcomes

The Wittenberg teacher education program seeks to articulate its conceptual framework by addressing three dimensions of candidate development. The first dimension is the capacities for professional competence, as it pertains to content knowledge, pedagogy and curriculum development. The second dimension deals with character, described in terms of personal character, professional character, and service to the community. The third dimension, community, relates to the candidate's care in providing for classrooms, the community at large and issues of advocacy and collaboration.

In discussing performance outcomes, these three dimensions of candidate development provide an organizing structure for describing the qualities we expect to see in all candidates in our graduate and undergraduate programs. However, they should not be taken as distinct and separate categories within a neatly arranged taxonomy. **We view**

**our education program holistically, and in this view we see competence, character and community interpenetrating each other, so that none of the three can fully be described apart from its relationship with the others.** In our program competence is both directed by and helps form character; character, in turn, both relies on community support and furthers the health of community; and community both succeeds by and sets the standard for competence. Breaking these three concepts apart is an analytical convenience for the purpose of describing various learning elements that we promote, but these elements must be understood as threads that weave their way through the entire tapestry of the education program, not just within particular conceptual categories. They necessarily travel across conceptual and curricular boundaries, blending with all other elements to create a strong fabric of learner outcomes.

### Competence

Content Knowledge: The teacher candidate

1. has breadth and depth of knowledge of subject matter content.
2. has a thorough understanding of learners and learning.
3. stays abreast of latest developments in the field.

Pedagogy: The teacher candidate

4. has deep and well connected pedagogical knowledge related to the subject and the diverse needs of learners.
5. communicates clearly and effectively in oral and written form.
6. provides clear and coherent goals ,procedures and structure to lessons to facilitate students' understanding and application of the subject matter.

7. develops students' creative and critical thinking skills and engages and motivates students with real world applications.
8. monitors student learning, collects and analyzes evidence, provides feedback to students, and makes appropriate adjustments to instruction.
9. understands the power and limits of technology.
10. uses various technologies to support teaching and learning.

Curriculum Development: The teacher candidate

11. takes an active role in decisions regarding curriculum, acting on the belief that teachers possess the ability and authority to choose appropriate instructional approaches.
12. creates lessons using content knowledge and an understanding of the student's background, development, and special needs.
13. seeks opportunities to implement an integrated curriculum.

Character

Personal Commitment: The teacher candidate

1. grounds decisions in moral and ethical reflection.
2. responds justly and acts with integrity.
3. acts responsibly.
4. is an independent, self motivated learner with a sense of efficacy.
5. views changing circumstances as opportunities to explore, discover and grow.

Professional Commitment: The teacher candidate

6. demonstrates patience, poise, and enthusiasm for teaching and learning.

7. demonstrates faith in the ability of education to make a difference for the benefit of society and the individual.
8. reflects critically, ethically and creatively about teaching and learning.
9. uses research skills to gather information, form questions, investigate alternatives, analyze data, evaluate outcomes, and articulate conclusions.
10. is a good role model.

### Community

#### Classrooms as Caring Communities: The teacher candidate

1. establishes classrooms that are physically and psychologically safe.
2. creates classroom communities that embody the democratic values of fairness, responsibility, mutual respect, and cooperation.
3. attends to the varying cultural, social, and personal factors that affect students.
4. honors the range of diverse voices.

#### Advocacy: The teacher candidate

5. promotes the recognition of students as citizens with rights and responsibilities to participate in and contribute to society.
6. responds actively to needs of students, parents, and colleagues.
7. helps students apply their learning beyond the local community to further justice and equity.

#### Collaboration: The teacher candidate

8. promotes school reform to better serve the community.
9. shares resources and ideas with others.

10. creates supportive and enduring partnerships to facilitate student learning and development.

### Assessment System Summary

Wittenberg's Teacher Education Program has designed a comprehensive system for assessing qualifications of applicants to the program and performance of candidates as they proceed through their programs of study leading to teacher licensure. One component of this assessment system relies on course grades in selected Arts & Sciences courses as well as in education coursework, plus GPA requirements for overall performance in coursework, in education, and in the major.

Performance-based assessments on program-level performance outcomes provide a second and more comprehensive assessment of applicant qualifications and candidate performance. Performance-based assessment begins with the very first course completed in the teacher education program and continues through the very last course, student teaching. The program-level performance outcomes described in the previous Performance Outcomes section are those performances that are deemed essential for all teacher education candidates to demonstrate if they are to be considered effective teachers and are to receive recommendation from Wittenberg's Education Department.

Course instructors rate the performance of students in their courses on performance outcomes designated for the course. Appendix 5.C *Candidate Performance Record: Early Childhood (P-3)* is an example of one of the Candidate Performance Record forms indicating which courses will report assessment on specific performance outcomes.

The Education Department Faculty meets to consider performance information in order to make decisions about applicant admission to the program, candidate permission to

student teach, successful completion of student teaching, and monitoring candidate progress in the program. An “Unsatisfactory” rating on a performance assessment serves as a cue for more intense review of the applicant’s or candidate’s performance for making decisions about initial admission to the program, continuation in the program, permission to student teach, or recommendation for passing student teaching. Refer to assessments numbers one through eight in Appendix 5.B *Assessment System Overview: Undergraduate Teacher Education Program* for a full listing of candidate performance assessments used in the teacher education program.

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