

Lake Superior State University

School of Education - Conceptual Framework

The act of teaching and learning involves a framework of research, reflection, and response. These elements entail an evolving cyclical process, a pathway that learners and leaders of learning use to create powerful knowledge bases, to develop as active members of a democratic society, and to establish and maintain environments conducive to learning. This process of research, reflection, and response is focused upon four areas that are essential elements of effective teaching. These areas include: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, professional dispositions, and learning communities. At the center of this process of acquiring and applying the skills and knowledge of professional practice is the learner. The concept of learner in this case describes all stakeholders in schooling and education.

What is . . .

Research: Effective teachers understand the need to maintain a current perspective on the numerous facets of educational practice. A professional educator strives to engage in the study of pedagogy, to examine the current literature related to teaching and learning, and to pursue the sometimes daunting task of applying this theory to practice.

Reflection: John Dewey stated that the “active, persistent, careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it is reflective thought” (1933, p. 9). Effective teachers are continuously reflecting upon their practice by engaging in learning contexts and pedagogical demands. The act of reflection requires effective teachers to question their behavior, their beliefs as determinants of practice, and to consider carefully the responsibility of being leaders of learning.

Response: Effective pedagogy requires continuous response. To implement change in one’s practice for the purpose of facilitating learning is a critical element in the repertoire of an effective teacher. Response in this sense does not mean change for the sake of change. Response is that act of planned change after careful research and reflection. Given a perceived need for change in the classroom, the professional teacher reviews the current research, carefully reflects, and then implements the change. After monitoring the response to the change, the teacher continues to actively engage in continued research and reflection to improve pedagogical practice.

Content knowledge: Effective teachers are educated in the liberal arts and sciences, and are knowledgeable about the interdependence of the disciplines. They analyze and synthesize ideas, information, and data to make applications of this knowledge in inquiry, problem solving, and critical thinking. The professional educator is an effective communicator, possessing the skills and abilities of listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

Pedagogical knowledge: Professional educators have the knowledge to engage individuals in the learning process. Teaching excellence requires an in-depth understanding of cognition, of the multidimensional qualities of learners and learning, of the skills of research, and of reflective and responsive pedagogy. Through an understanding of human growth and development, of a variety of instructional techniques, assessments, materials, and technologies, coupled with an abundance of practical experience in classrooms, pre-service teachers will mature as effective novice teachers.

Professional dispositions: As models and guides of future generations, professional educators are influential in classrooms, schools, and communities. All teachers and teacher candidates need to exemplify the ethics, values, and professional dispositions of professional

educators. Pre-service teachers engage in active reflection, self-critique. As developing novice teachers, they welcome constructive criticism and incorporate reasonable suggestions into their teaching practice. They are committed to lifelong learning and to the belief that all students can learn.

Learning communities: Schools and classrooms are microcosms of society. They are the venues for students to learn and grow as participants in the community. The themes of caring, responsibility, democracy, and stewardship are woven into the fabric of curriculum as teachers and teacher candidates assume the role of facilitators of environments conducive to learning. In this role, teachers and teacher candidates model tolerance, dignity, participation, and shared decision making with other stakeholders of the learning communities.

Program Vision and Mission Statements

Vision Statement

The Lake Superior State University School of Education is a community of learners bound by the shared values that exemplify excellence in the professional education of teachers.

Mission Statement

The School of Education is committed to provide opportunities for research, reflection, and response in the education. Through situated and contextualized learning experiences, the foundations for the development of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, professional dispositions, a commitment to learning communities, and the dedication to meet the diverse needs of learners are built by those pursuing a career in teaching.

Program Goals and Objectives

To educate teacher candidates in the practices of research, reflection, and response

- To provide opportunities for the development of the skills and knowledge bases that facilitate research, reflection, and response in the contexts of learning, education, and schooling

To emphasize the foundational importance of content knowledge bases in the preparation of teachers

- To educate teacher candidates in the liberal arts and sciences with concentrations in subject-specific disciplines

To be vested in the construction of sound pedagogical knowledge bases by teacher candidates

- To afford students the opportunities to construct the theoretical knowledge and the skills of practice that are grounded in best practice through traditional classrooms and other field experiences

To be committed to the development and assessment of professional dispositions in teacher candidates

- To discuss, define, disseminate, and model the professional dispositions of professional educators

To foster the development and appreciation of learning communities at the university level and within the school and community settings

- To demonstrate a commitment to learning communities in environments conducive to learning, and to appreciate the multidimensional contexts of the learning communities

To be bound by a strong commitment to learners and learner-centered processes

- To embrace the principle and belief that all students can learn