Peru State College School of Education
Conceptual Framework – Advanced Level Program

Mission Statement

The Peru State College undergraduate conceptual framework focuses on three broad themes of professional development: grounding in foundational knowledge, a professional disposition appropriate for teaching, and a strong professional awareness. The heart of our undergraduate framework presents the teacher as a reflective decision-maker. The School of Education believes that if the undergraduate conceptual framework is to be optimally valued, then it is a strong foundation for our graduate program. Our graduate program enhances and extends reflective decision-making to evolve into a framework for reflective change. It is our desire that the Master's degree candidates become master teachers who can effect positive change in their classrooms, schools, and communities.

Our mission in the graduate program focuses on building upon the strengths and expertise of experienced teachers. The reflective change agent framework is intended to extend the teachers' skills and competencies in order to improve the performance of the students they teach. Graduate students will develop greater technological and pedagogical competencies. Graduate students will be exposed to the reflective thinking processes necessary to be competent facilitators of change in an ever-changing social and cultural milieu.

Conceptual Framework: Creating Exemplary Educators - Teacher Leaders

Peru State College offers a Master of Science in Education Degree with a major in Curriculum and Instruction. It is our belief that graduate offerings should encourage students to function at the highest levels of cognitive reasoning. Since all entering graduate students must possess not only an undergraduate degree and teaching credentials, it is assumed that basic professional skills have been mastered. In the majority of instances, our graduate students are currently teaching and have multiple years of successful teaching experience.

When our graduate program was established in the mid-1980s, it was designed to serve teachers working in rural areas. Access to graduate programs for teachers employed in our economically deprived and remote area was severely restricted. Surveys of practicing teachers indicated a need for technological skills, ability to analyze education environments, curriculum development, ability to be consumers of and contributors to research, an understanding of current issues and human relation skills that could be implemented in their classrooms. These components served as the basis for the original graduate program in pedagogy. In the mid-1990s the growing emphasis of technology in the classroom and a greater demand from urban teachers caused us to reexamine our offerings and expand the Master's degree program to include two areas of emphasis: Teaching and Learning and Instructional Technology. These areas of emphasis were offered until recently, when the decision was made to ensure that these critical aspects of effective teaching were integrated into the required coursework. Our current program,

implemented summer of 2008, now has one primary focus on curriculum and instruction, but provides opportunities for students to select one or more courses to delve into an area of their choice.

At the graduate level, we encourage our candidates to function at the highest levels of cognitive reasoning and to enhance their emotional intelligence (Coleman, 1998). To be instructional leaders in one's classroom, school, and community requires the candidates to have the ability and opportunities to reflect critically upon their experiences. We have continually re-examined our Graduate Program based upon the needs of our students and effective instructional processes. Our Graduate Program emphasizes and nurtures reflective change agents in three areas that extend the undergraduate themes (Tom, 1999). The undergraduate themes are foundational knowledge, professional dispositions appropriate for teaching, and professional awareness. The corresponding graduate themes respectively are the following: enhancement of student learning, collaborative reflection (Buckley, 2000; Cinnamond & Zimpher, 1990) and professional growth.

An examination of the core requirements for the program shows clear emphasis on analytical and evaluative processes. All students must be able to demonstrate competence in analyzing an educational environment. All students must be conversant with current principles of curriculum development. All students are exposed to the most current issues in education and the issues anticipated for the future. The overall program results in teachers who are better equipped to provide effective instructional skills within their sphere of influence.

We are cognizant that many of our teachers need opportunities for collegiality and collaboration, therefore collaborative projects are encouraged. In the interest of building partnerships between our college and local schools, we offer graduate courses for those who wish to mentor pre-service teachers in field experiences. While we encourage keeping abreast of current research, content area subject matter, and methods, we recognize that this focus must be related to best meeting the learners' needs. Thus, at this level, we first encourage the critical analysis of backgrounds and perceptions and how they influence our decisions about subject matter, curriculum, methodology, and assessment (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Delpit, 1995). We then encourage our candidates to develop "an attitude or predisposition… [that] will lead them to inquire continually about those whom they teach; it will strengthen their pedagogy" (Ducharme & Ducharme, 1999, p. 361). The MS in Education program encourages our graduates to return to their schools and communities and be reflective and insightful leaders who help effect positive change in an increasingly diverse and technological world.

Desired Outcomes

An examination of the core requirements for the graduate program shows a connection to our three areas of focus. The following are our desired outcomes for each area. Ideally, these outcomes overlap and intersect and are not fragmented.

Instructional Efficacy

To develop student learning, candidates research, develop, collaborate, and self-reflect on their pedagogical knowledge and skills in order to meet the needs of all students through the use of a variety of instructional strategies, assessments methods, technology, and research.

  1.1.1 Candidates examine, discuss, and analyze current educational theories, issues, and/or content area research in order to develop learning experiences that engage and motivate all students in meaningful and creative ways and promote critical thinking.

  1.1.2 Candidates design and implement a variety of appropriate instructional strategies to meet the unique needs of all students.

1.1.3 Candidates devise, implement, and analyze varied formative and summative assessments (both for individuals and whole class) to engage all students, document progress, and inform instruction.

1.1.4 Candidates effectively integrate technology in planning and implementing instruction to advance student learning.

1.1.5 Candidates demonstrate knowledge of how students learn and develop, recognize student differences and show respect for these differences, and modify and differentiate their instructional practices to advance student learning.

1.1.6 Candidates create a positive, well organized, safe and respectful learning community dedicated to purposeful and engaging learning activities.

Reflective Skills and Collaborative Practices

Reflective practice, while often confused with reflection, is neither solitary nor a relaxed meditative process. To the contrary, reflective practice is a challenging, demanding, and often trying process that is most successful as a collaborative effort (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

Candidates develop professional dispositions, character, skills, and traits that are appropriate for teacher leaders. These skills and traits are honed through professional experiences and opportunities for self-reflection and collaboration with college faculty and colleagues.

2.1.1 Candidates effectively collaborate within the larger learning community to positively impact student learning.

2.1.2 Candidates examine and apply educational ideas, concepts, and current research with college faculty and colleagues.

2.1.3 Through self-reflection, candidates critically examine their teaching to enhance their professional skills, instructional strategies, assessment practices, and collegial competencies.

Teacher Leadership and Professional Development . . . A teacher is defined as "…someone who continually strives to implement the best that is known about how to foster learning and who, by being a reflective practitioner, contributes to that ever-growing, ever changing understanding" (Weaver, C.J. & Peterson, S., 1993).

Candidates build upon the professional identities established at the undergraduate level by continually examining professional practices and using research to effect positive change in their classrooms, schools, and communities.

3.1.1 Candidates analyze research to advance curriculum development and strengthen student learning.

3.1.2 Candidates actively seek to identify key characteristics of the school community and potential partnerships with parents, families, groups, and businesses within the larger community.

3.1.3 Candidates demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning and an openness to grow and develop new instructional and assessment strategies as educational practices evolve. Further, candidates utilize leadership skills to share their acquired knowledge and skills with colleagues.

Supporting Research

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