I.4.a Conceptual framework

Conceptual Framework for Preparing Education Professionals

Aligned with the mission statements of East Carolina University, the College of Education, and the Educator Preparation Provider unit, the conceptual framework represents the vision that drives the work of all administrators, faculty, and candidates. Through our commitment to excellence through partnership, our efforts to prepare reflective education professionals dedicated to democratic principles and practices, including the empowerment of all learners in all aspects of educational decision-making, define the core of this vision. The conceptual framework is responsive to the changing needs in education and allows for adjustments in the unit's priorities without altering the entire framework. Current priorities include enhanced emphasis on the areas of diversity, assessment, technology, and research.

The essence of the unit's conceptual framework is the empowerment of all learners. The reference to "all learners" includes the unit's candidates, the students in P-12 school programs, beginning and career educators and administrators, and education-related professionals. This definition of "all learners" recognizes and embraces the diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and the ability that is present in our society and in any learner population. The unit focuses on empowering these learners to play meaningful roles in the ongoing processes of democracy and to support the role of public education in support of democratic principles and practices.

The conceptual framework's emphasis on all aspects of educational decision-making recognizes that the unit's activities extend beyond just the preparation of education professionals. These actions influence the practices in the field, the continuing professional development of beginning and career educators, and the policies that are adopted at local, state, and national levels. The unit's efforts are influential both directly and indirectly. The faculty within the unit has direct impact as they engage in any of these activities, but greater influence comes from the unit's candidates who are prepared to assume leadership roles in their professional careers and impact the field through their involvement in these endeavors.

The preparation of reflective education professionals establishes the foundation of the conceptual framework and underlies the unit's efforts in all educational endeavors. In order to empower all learners, educational professionals must be willing to analyze and modify their practices. They must...
assess learner needs and learning styles, plan and implement programs that are aligned with standards and learner needs, evaluate and analyze learner outcomes, and modify practices based on this reflective process. They also need to reflect on how those practices contribute to the larger purposes of education in a democratic society.

Achieving excellence through partnership is the overriding theme of the conceptual framework. It acknowledges that the empowerment of all learners is not a goal that can be achieved in isolation, or by a single entity. In keeping with our commitment to democratic values, empowerment must be a collaborative effort by the university, public schools and the community. Candidates must be prepared to recognize and assume their roles as leaders in a larger effort to empower all learners, and strive to achieve educational excellence in partnership with their school and community colleagues.

While pursuing the purposes advanced in the conceptual framework, the unit must be responsive to continuing changes and needs in education, and the results of feedback regarding the unit's performance in meeting its goals. There is a fluid element to the conceptual framework that can respond to needed changes without undermining or altering the entire framework. This component of the framework includes priorities that require focused attention and increased unit resources. These priorities include the development of candidate knowledge, skills and dispositions in the areas of diversity, assessment, and technology, and promotion of the unit's responsibility to conduct, disseminate and apply the results of clinical research.