Conceptual Framework for Professional Education

Professional Understandings, Practices, and Identities

The College of Education at the University of New Mexico believes that professional education should seek to help individuals develop professional understandings, practices, and identities. These understandings, practices and identities frame the lifelong learning of professional educators and reflect the values articulated in our Mission Statement and in state and national standards and competencies.

Understandings frame the identity and practice of educational professionals. We seek to help you better understand:

Human Growth and Development: Patterns in how individuals develop physically, emotionally, and intellectually. How to provide conditions that promote the growth and learning of individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including those with special learning needs.

Culture and Language: The nature of home, school, community, workplace, state, national, and global contexts for learning. How social groups develop and function and the dynamics of power within and among them. How language and other forms of expression reflect cultural assumptions yet can be used to evoke social change. How one’s own background and development shape understanding and interaction.

Content of the Disciplines: The substance of the disciplines you teach—the central organizing concepts and factual information—and the ways in which new knowledge is created, including the forms of creative investigation that characterize the work of scholars and artists.

Pedagogy: Theory and research on effective educational practice. How to create contexts for learning in and across the disciplines. How to assess student learning and design, plan, and implement instruction to meet the needs of learners. How to evaluate educational practice.

Technology: Effects of media and technology on knowledge, communication, and society. How to critically analyze and raise awareness of the impact of media and technology. How to use current technology.

Professional Issues: The social and political influences on education, both historically and currently. Local, state, and national policies, including requirements and standards. How to critically analyze and participate in the formation of educational policy. Strategies for leadership, collaboration, and research.

Nature of Knowledge: How knowledge is constructed within social contexts, including the academic disciplines. The differences and connections among the knowledge constructed in different social contexts. How to conduct inquiry into the nature of knowledge within and across the disciplines.
These understandings enable you, as a professional, to value and engage in practices that embody the following qualities:

**Learner-Centered:** Students’ past experiences, cultural backgrounds, interests, capabilities, and understandings are accommodated in learning experiences. Routines promote learner risk-taking and allow learners to take increasing control of their own learning and functioning.

**Contextual:** Experiences engage learners in ways of thinking, doing, talking, writing, reading, etc., that are indicative of the discipline(s) and/or authentic social contexts. Ideas and practices are presented with the richness of their contextual cues and information. Learners are provided with models and opportunities to reflect on their experiences and to relate their learning to other social contexts.

**Coherent:** Learning experiences are organized around the development of concepts and strategies that learners need in order to participate in other similar situations. Learners are assessed on what they had the opportunity to learn.

**Culturally Responsive:** Diversity is valued, and learners are helped to become aware of the impact of culture on how they and others perceive the world.

**Technologically Current:** Available technology facilitates learning. Learners are helped to understand the effect of media on their perceptions and communication.

**Developing a professional identity is central to lifelong growth as a professional educator. The University of New Mexico College of Education will help you to develop the following attributes of a professional:**

**Caring:** Attentive to learners, willingness to listen and withhold judgment, and ability to empathize while maintaining high expectations for learner success.

**Advocacy:** Committed to ensuring equitable treatment and nurturing environments for all learners.

**Inquisitiveness:** Habitual inquiry into the many, ever-changing ways in which knowledge is constructed, how people learn, and how educators can support learning.

**Reflection-in-Action:** Able to analyze, assess and revise practice in light of student learning, research and theory, and collegial feedback.

**Communication:** Skilled in speaking, writing, and using other modes of expression.

**Collaboration:** Able to work cooperatively with students, parents, community members, and colleagues.

**Ethical Behavior:** Aware of and able to work within the ethical codes of the profession.