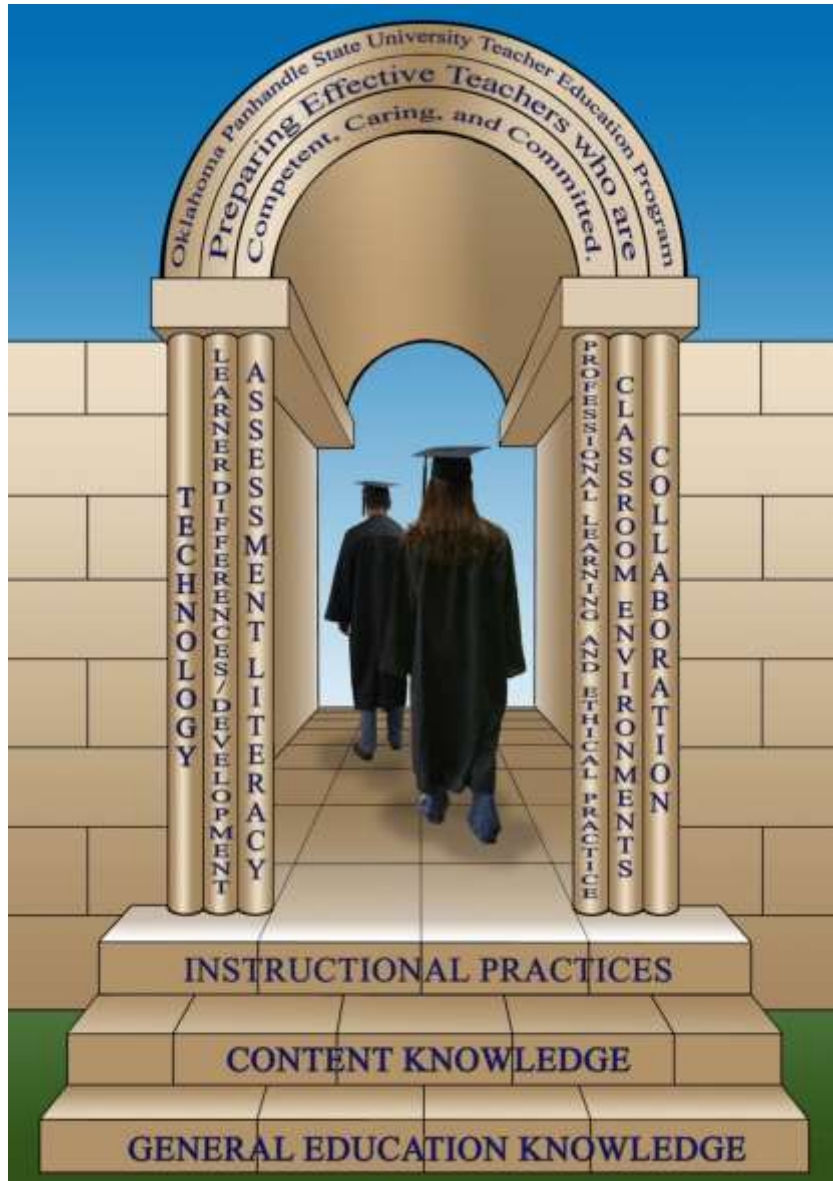


Gateway to the Future



*Preparing Effective Teachers who are
Competent, Caring, and Committed!*

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

History of the OPSU Conceptual Framework

The Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU) Conceptual Framework, *Gateway to the Future*, was initially designed in 1991 and has undergone many modifications since that time. In 2000, the unit determined that the existing conceptual framework was an “input” model, rather than an “output” model, and a major revision was undertaken. This revision represented a significant paradigm shift from a focus on program inputs to a focus on program outputs, or a change from what we teach to what our candidates learn. This change to the conceptual framework resulted in many changes throughout the program, especially in the way assessment was viewed and conducted.

As a result, a Conceptual Framework Committee made up of four Teacher Education Council (TEC) members began research and revisions. Committee members researched contemporary education philosophies as well as the views of their peers and the educational community. In September of 2001, the committee presented the first draft to the TEC for initial approval. Following its approval by the TEC, the conceptual framework was reviewed yearly to insure the unit was continuing to follow it. During the fall 2006 semester, another ad-hoc committee was established to ensure that the conceptual framework correctly reflected the philosophy of the unit, institution, and the community, and that it portrayed an “output” model of education. While some of the changes to the conceptual framework made during the fall 2006/spring 2007 revision reflected refinements of the unit and university values and beliefs, other changes reflected the unit’s commitment to adopting the most current and appropriate research and educational theory. One again, the committee thought the conceptual framework was too much of an input model and not enough of an output one. Therefore, there were some changes to the graphical

representation of conceptual framework. The unit still believes, as evidenced in our conceptual framework, that there is a great deal of input involved in the preparation of future teachers, but our conceptual framework now centers on the graduates leaving our programs. Modifications were again made in the graphical representation to better reflect the skills expected of the candidates rather than the components of the program.

Following positive feedback from the 2008 accreditation visit, the 2007 revised conceptual framework has been in place and operational. However, due to national and state modifications regarding teacher candidate competencies via InTASC Standards, the unit began a review and modification of our conceptual framework in the spring of 2013 when Oklahoma accepted the 10 InTASC Standards fully. The first proposal of changes to the conceptual framework to better reflect the new InTASC Standards were presented to the TEC by the Conceptual Framework committee on January 30, 2013. After feedback from the TEC, the committee continued to revise the conceptual framework to better reflect the InTASC Standards and continue the alignment to the unit’s beliefs and philosophy. On October 31, 2013, a formal proposal of revisions to the conceptual framework were presented and accepted by the TEC with a vote to approve said modifications. These adaptations to the 10 InTASC Standards along with the approved revisions are reflected in both our visual representation and the content of this handbook.

Table One presents the indicators for the OPSU Conceptual Framework.

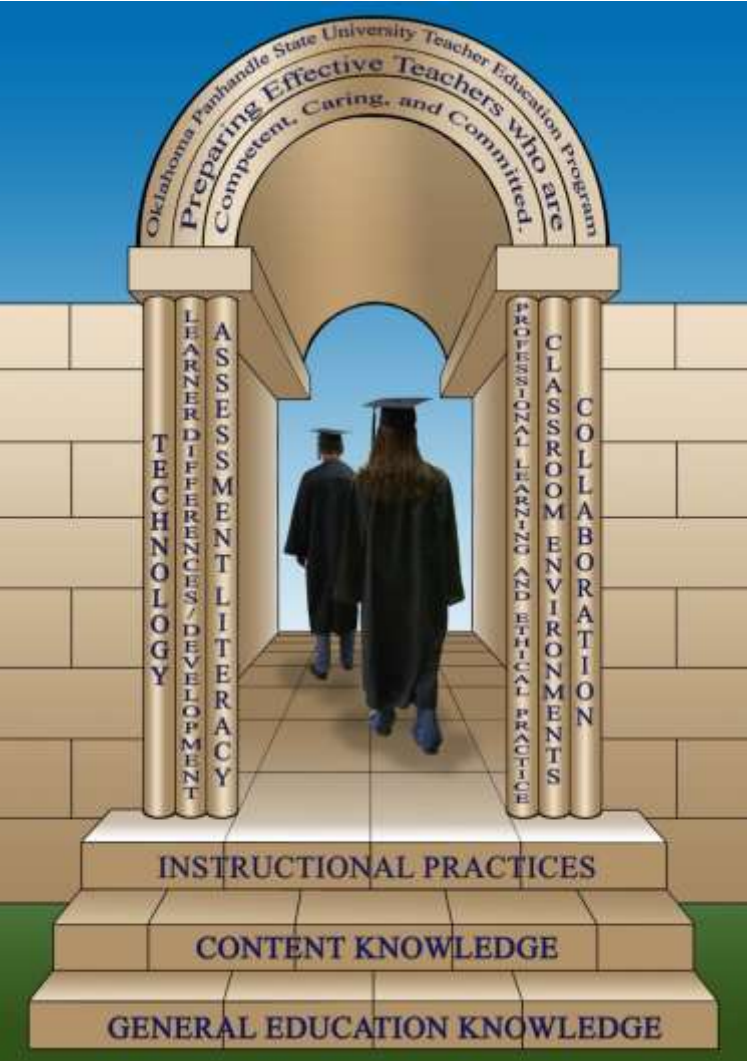
Table One: Conceptual Framework Indicators

Indicators for Conceptual Framework	
Shared Vision	The vision of the unit, to become the preferred source of PK-12 teachers in the five state service area, is the driving force for the Conceptual Framework of the unit, the <i>Gateway to the Future</i> .
Coherence	All aspects of a teacher candidate’s program are monitored, assessed, and evaluated by the OPSU Teacher Education Council comprised of representatives from each of the program areas.
Professional Commitments and Dispositions	All faculty and teacher candidates are committed to the profession of teaching and complete various activities that enhance their professionalism and

	strengthen their commitments to the goals, objectives, and dispositions of the unit.
Commitment to Diversity	Diversity is a part of every teacher education degree program and is reflected in both course content and field experiences.
Commitment to Technology	All OPSU teacher programs include the integration and use of technology by both instructor and teacher candidate.
Candidate Proficiencies Aligned with Professional and State Standards	All OPSU teacher programs are aligned with national and/or state competencies as documented in the program reviews.

Gateway Arch: Symbol of OPSU Teacher Education Program

The unit employs the gateway arch to symbolize its shared philosophy and vision (presented on the following page). Traditionally the arch stands for stability and strength; thus, it is used to represent the power of our program. Just as traditional architecture continues to change, educational philosophies alter as education educators discover new theories about learning, and as society itself changes.



The OPSU Teacher Education unit's conceptual framework drives everything within the OPSU Teacher Education Program. The unit's conceptual framework is built upon the three foundations (represented by the steps) of General Education Knowledge, Content Knowledge, and Instructional Practices.

The General Education Knowledge step occurs as candidates begin their college career. All students at OPSU are required to complete 40+ hours of General Education including coursework in English composition, speech communication, mathematics, American history, political science, economics, psychology/sociology, biological science, physical science, and humanities. Candidates majoring in elementary education are also required to complete additional hours in mathematics, science, social studies, and English to fulfill the "4x12" requirement.

The Content Knowledge step represents the necessity for the teacher candidate to know his/her chosen teaching area. For example, the unit realizes that a teacher cannot effectively teach math if he/she does not know math; therefore, the unit has designed programs of study that meet the national and state standards of the professional organizations and that prepare the teacher candidate for the certification examinations in the different areas. Each candidate will complete a minimum of 40 hours in his/her chosen degree program.

Finally, the Instructional Practice step represents the professional aspect of education—how students learn, how to teach, how to be a professional educator. The unit believes that the creation of an instructional toolbox is invaluable to the teacher candidate and an area that will assist in the retention of teachers in public schools.

The base, columns, and three-tiered dome of the arch portray the unit program. The gateway arch stands upon a solid base of educational principles firmly grounded not only on traditional

philosophies, but also on contemporary research. Candidates proceed through their programs in a sequenced study that develops from general education classes to specialized fields of study and progresses to introduction of educational principles and methods courses in their specific areas.

The mid-level of the foundation and program represents knowledge that teachers must possess. It begins with a sound general liberal arts and sciences base and progresses to specific courses in the candidates' fields. Each of the degree areas is aligned with its own Specialized Professional Association (SPA) or, if no SPA is available, with the standards presented by the State of Oklahoma. This mid-level of the gateway helps support the next level of Instructional Practice and characterizes our belief in the equal importance of conceptual knowledge and teaching skills. All candidates have a minimum of 40 hours in general education coursework, complete 30+ hours of instructional practice, and fulfill more than 70 hours of field experience.

Two parallel columns, divided into three sections each representing technology, learner differences/development, assessment literacy, professional learning and ethical practice, classroom environments, and collaboration, link the base with the dome representing the proficiencies our candidates gain throughout their studies. The six columns represent the identified attributes that every professional teacher must have: the ability to utilize technology; the ability to reach diverse students; the ability to assess student learning; the ability to act and conduct themselves professionally with students, parents, and administration; the ability to manage classroom environments; and the ability to collaborate with other professionals in the teaching of students.

The first section symbolizes the importance of candidates' proficiency with technology. We believe that "technology" is best defined as the application of knowledge. As stated by Earle, "Technologies must be pedagogically sound" (2002, p. 9). Technology is not only represented by

the use of new things; computers, digital projectors, the Internet, etc., it is also represented by the application of new theories, methods, and processes, as well as blended learning. Blended learning is recent trend to develop at the start of this century, and it is important that teachers and other training professionals understand the concept (Bonk & Graham, 2006). Technology is represented by the transfer of existing theories, methods, and processes from one discipline to another. Using this definition of technology, we believe that technology is infused into every aspect of the OPSU teacher education program.

Specifically, we believe that there are two areas for which we must prepare our candidates. The first is the seamless and transparent application of the most appropriate technology to the task of teaching. We believe that candidates must have the ability to adopt and adapt the latest educational technology as well as recognize and use the most appropriate technology to accomplish classroom goals. The second area for which we must prepare our candidates is in the preparation of their students for life in a world in which technology changes at an ever increasing rate. Students entering school today will be graduating from high school into a world that possesses technology that we have yet to imagine. By the same token, candidates graduating from teacher education programs today will, in ten years, find themselves using classroom technology that has yet to be invented.

OPSU candidates, upon completion of their program

- exhibit knowledge in sources and uses of technology.
- are skilled in the use of technology for teaching and learning.
- are able to access and utilize the latest technologies in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning.

- are able to transfer existing theories, methods, and processes from other disciplines into the classroom to enhance teaching and learning.
- are able to seamlessly and transparently apply the most appropriate technology to accomplish their classroom goals.
- have the technology skills to research and write papers, access information, utilize Smart Board© technology, evaluate web sites, create web sites, create Wikis @, use social media, develop and present PowerPoint© presentations, create virtual lessons, utilize grade book programs, create electronic portfolios, and function effectively in an interactive television classroom.

By mandate of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, incoming freshman who did not have computer classes in high school must take or test out of an introductory computer class, thus helping to ensure that students will have the computer skills needed for classes. From their first general education classes, all students use computers for communication, coursework, research and completion of papers. In their education classes, candidates learn to use technology to access information and evaluate websites for the preparation of lessons they will teach.

Candidates must take a technology class specifically geared to teaching, EDUC 4333 Educational Technology. In the class, they learn to create websites for later use with their own classrooms, to develop and present PowerPoint© presentations, to create virtual lessons and computerized learning games, and to utilize online grade book programs. Creation of an electronic portfolio, a requirement of all candidates in the program, is one of the larger projects required during this class.

The second section represents learner differences/development. Historically, many of the candidates have come from communities with little or no diversity. Although this may still be

true of some communities in the more remote parts of the service area, expansion of the pork industry has led to a dramatic shift in the ethnic population. This shift is reflected in the public school systems as well as the population in general. Currently, over 70 languages and dialects are spoken within the service area. The unit strives to expose its candidates to as many diverse populations as possible by including field experiences at schools with large enrollments of a diverse student and staff population. The field experiences also ensure that our candidates are observing inclusive learning environments. The OPSU Cultural Committee provides extracurricular presentations by groups from other cultures to enhance the experiences of our students. In the past, groups of Hispanic dancers and musicians and Native American singers and dancers have performed on campus. OPSU also encourages enrollment of students from other countries and cultures. Interaction with these students provides new and diverse experiences both in and out of the classroom.

The unit produces candidates whose knowledge of diversity, ethics, and sensitive issues enables them to react professionally and with empathy. Candidates must take and achieve at least a grade of “C” in all courses regarding diversity and specific educational issues. While all candidates may not have experienced every situation involving diversity or ethics, they understand the theory and are able to adapt it to every situation (Mendes, 2003). Not only understanding and effectively teaching diversity a mandate for educators in order to meet accreditation, ethical, and professional standards in service of the greater good, but it is also a professional imperative for all educators who enter schools and classrooms to work with diverse student populations (Spradlin, 2012). The unit educates all candidates to teach diverse populations. Candidate knowledge is enhanced through a course in diversity that focuses first on the similarities among cultures and moves to the study of differences (Robles de Melendez &

Beck, 2010). Diverse classroom experiences in K-12 settings are often called “Multicultural Service Learning” (MSL) and are found to be essential in building multicultural knowledge among pre-service teachers (Chang, Anagnostopoulos, & Omae, 2011). Additional research has shown that pre-service teachers can be placed in diverse school environments for as little as a week or as much as an entire school year and still build varying degrees of knowledge around diversity and multicultural education (Bleicher, 2011; Chang et al., 2011). Diversity in the instructional process has a positive impact on attitudes toward racial issues, opportunities to interact with those who are different, and an overall satisfaction with the educational experience (Spradlin, 2012). These benefits are especially important for our candidates, who may have had fewer opportunities for such interaction.

A third section of the column portrays assessment literacy. Assessment literacy signifies that our candidates not only understand what assessment is, but also how to use assessment to increase student achievement. According to InTASC, “The current education system treats assessment as a function largely separated from teaching.” (CCSSO’s Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 2013, p. 4). In effort to break the current trend in education systems, the unit believes the teacher candidates must be able to understand the value of effective assessment tools and the use of multiple methods of assessment to guide instructional decision-making. Faculty members provide candidates with ample opportunities to study, develop and utilize formative and summative assessment techniques including portfolio, growth-factor, authentic, and traditional assessments. They are also exposed to measurement trends; rubric construction; grading systems; standardized test interpretation; assessment of populations with special needs; and the importance of reflection for the purpose of improving instruction. Candidates are required to demonstrate via the portfolio process their instructional impact on the

performance of three different students in their student teaching environment. Within all these experiences, candidates are to use data from various assessments to impact student learning.

“When properly designed and appropriately used, assessments procedures can contribute to more effective instructions and greater student learning” (Waugh & Gronlund, 2013, p. 3).

The fourth section indicates professional learning and ethical practice. The unit encourages the teacher candidate to take responsibility for student learning and to use ongoing analysis and reflection to improve their planning and instructional practice. In addition, the teacher candidate must deepen their own understanding of cultural and diverse learning issues and identify potential biases that might impact the learning environment. Teacher education programs should equip and provide opportunities for future teachers to develop and practice instruction skills, professional ethics, and professional responsibilities (Hussian & Mahmood, 2008). The education unit provides opportunities for candidates to become proficient and ethically responsible in communicating through the use of computers, Smart Boards, overhead projectors, video use, audio strategies, visual representations (bulletin boards, posters, etc.), writing, peer teaching of lessons, direct / indirect teaching models, grouping and discussion/questioning strategies. Candidates are expected to demonstrate awareness of safe, legal and ethical use of information and technology, and respect for others in the use of social media. Candidates are strongly encouraged to begin their professional development activities while still taking course work. The unit believes that the above can be summed up by the word professionalism. Professionalism of educations has become a national focus (Kaplan & Owings, 2011). Professionalism for educators does include knowledge, skills, ethics, and responsibilities (Johnson, Musial, Hall, Gollnick, & Dupuis, 2008). Many of our candidates join the Oklahoma Student Education Association (SOEA) as they are admitted into the program. This allows them

to see the value of professional membership and continual improvement throughout their teaching careers.

Section five represents classroom environments. The unit provides opportunities for the teacher candidate to grow in their understanding of learner decision-making, active engagement in learning, self-motivation, and independent and collaborative learning environments. These all are important elements of learning environments and instruction. In addition, “A critical component of instruction for all students is managing materials, organizing of task, monitoring the flow of activities, and rules of behavior” or summed up as classroom management (Johnson et al., 2008, p. 421). In the Elementary/Secondary Classroom Management classes (usually taken just prior to the candidate’s Internship), candidates learn skills in classroom management through discussion of case studies, peer teaching, role-playing, and the development of management plans. When they begin their teaching Internship, the candidates are required to use a variety of methods to engage learners in a positive learning environment and coordinates with the students and cooperating teacher to make appropriate adjustments. Assessment of candidate skills in managing an effective environment occurs during the classroom management course and through the supervision and evaluations submitted by cooperating and supervising teachers during internship.

The last column identifies the proficiency of collaboration. “Our current system of education tends to isolate teachers and treat teaching as a solo act” (CCSSO’s Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 2013, p. 5). The unit believes in the importance of collaboration and communication among teachers of all levels, and across all communities. “Just as collaboration among learners improves student learning, we know that collaboration among teachers improves practice” (CCSSO’s Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium,

2013, p. 5). The unit strives for collaboration among unit faculty members, other campus faculty, public school teachers, administrators and parents. Benefits of collaboration include improvements in student behavior and achievement and increased teacher satisfaction and adaptability (Kezar, 2005; Powell, n.d.; Kaplan & Owings, 2011). The unit stresses collaboration and communication for our teacher candidates via group projects, working with master teachers in field experiences, professional development opportunities, membership in student organizations, leadership in community projects, and committee participation with peers and university faculty. Both faculty members and teacher candidates are encouraged to take an initiative to grow and develop with colleagues through interactions that enhance practice and support student learning.

Mastery of these standards built upon general education, content knowledge, and instructional practice will lead successful candidates through the Gateway to the Future as Effective Teachers who are Competent, Caring, and Committed! OPSU education graduates possesses the knowledge, skills and dispositions that will enable them to teach anywhere as the need or desire arises.

Knowledge Base That Grounds the Conceptual Framework

The unit regards learning as a social, recursive process whereby learners actively engage with their universe, teachers, and peers. Acquiring the body of knowledge needed to teach in today's society requires time to process and reflect upon the information as well as the opportunity to interact with others. The unit program derives a knowledge base from scholarship, review of professional literature, collaboration, and primary field research enacted by individual members. The program focuses upon conceptual knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and reflective

knowledge to produce candidates who possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for successful teaching.

Conceptual Knowledge

To develop programs that ensure the utmost candidate knowledge, unit faculty members require a rigorous program of study. Candidates begin their education with a thorough study of the liberal arts and sciences. To meet the needs of today's public school students, departments of education must prepare teachers with deep content knowledge, an understanding of child development and learning, and a wide range of pedagogical repertoires (McDonald, Kuzemi, & Kavanagh, 2013; Kaplan & Owings, 2011). Upon entering the program, candidates begin the study of Instructional Practice theory and current educational research as they continue their upper-level courses in their subject areas that are aligned with national and/or state competencies. This combination aligns with the rhetoric on school/university partnerships to produce quality teachers and successful students (Baumfield & Butterworth, 2007). Hutchings and Shulman's (1999) theory of integrating pedagogy with the target subject matter, running throughout the program, not just supporting it from the base; helps candidates consider ways of teaching concepts even as they master them. Research promotes a model of learning in which constructivism plays a role and student construct meaning for themselves (Cobb & Steffe, 2011; Johnson et al., 2008). Building upon the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, constructivist theory is based on the premise that individuals must be socially engaged in learning, actively creating knowledge from their existing knowledge base, beliefs, and personal experiences. The programs of study in the unit build upon this framework.

The OPSU unit programs mirror the theories of Shulman, Piaget, Vygotsky, as well as of Dewey through aligning content to pedagogy, sequencing courses, integrating case studies, and

encouraging reflection of teaching. Evidence of this alignment appears in course syllabi and pre-requisites in the catalog. More importantly, it also appears in the candidates' portfolios in the form of lesson plans, which the candidates will utilize when teaching. The unit further aligns its program with national, state, Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs), and institutional guidelines, yet maintains its unique Panhandle flavor through small classes, most with a student to teacher ratio of ten to one and individual attention. Although candidates learn and will practice constructivist methods, many will begin teaching in schools resistant to change. Candidates must, therefore, move cautiously and understand the theories behind their practices.

The unit understands the need for candidates to develop concepts basic to their subject area and to pedagogy. The unit realizes the difficulties in requiring candidates to review scholarly philosophies and develop knowledge and skills. Typically, teacher education candidates are practitioners and focus on immediate techniques they believe they will face in the classroom and not upon thoughtful analysis of issues or on inquiry and reflection (Goodlad, 1990; Sellars, 2013). Theorists Hutchings and Shulman redefined scholarship of teaching as a condition in which “faculty frame and systematically investigate questions related to student learning through inquiry and investigation of our own student learning” (1993, p. 13). Candidates observe faculty members practicing the desired behaviors of reflection, collaboration, assessment, and accommodation of their own teaching practices. Unit members engage in discussions of teaching methods and frequently alter presentations in an attempt to improve teaching. Members reflect upon their own classrooms and teaching, collaborate with peers about methodology, and assess their successes and failures. At the end of every semester, upon review of candidate achievements, candidate evaluations of faculty, and personal assessment of individual courses,

faculty utilize department meetings, TEC meetings and informal gatherings to brainstorm for new ideas to improve classes and frequently implement changes.

Although OPSU is not a research institution, the unit promotes lifelong learning through the study of other research as well as personal classroom observation. Research can help teachers identify and conceptualize problems and activities related to teaching and learning (Johnson et al., 2008). Scholarly research can also provide a common language for teachers to discuss and analyze student learning as well as to “find solutions to problems they face on a day-to day basis” (Waugh & Gronlund, 2013, p. 224). Brain research has provided many insights to how students learn and finding solutions to how best teach students. By utilizing brain research, teachers can effectively use models of constructivist learning to engage students (Gulpinar, 2005). After studying this theory along with of theories of learning and engagement, candidate can apply their understanding by creating lessons geared to engage their students in meaningful lessons that motivate them.

Unit members believe knowledge includes a thorough understanding of and ability to use language; thus, all candidates begin their study with nine hours of communication courses. They further refine their communications skills in EDUC 2222 Communications Skills for Educators, a course designed especially for teacher candidates and their language needs in the classroom and with parents and other patrons. Candidates take additional, upper-level liberal arts and science classes, which are typically small having student to teacher ratios of ten to one, thus providing settings conducive to discussion. This practice of discussion provides opportunities for candidates to develop their communication skills. Professional classes guide candidates to create active learning environments for their students that focus on student’ lives and enable candidates

discussions for their students (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Johnson et al., 2008; Vygotsky, 1986; Bruner, 1966).

Instructional Practice Knowledge

Candidates must understand and be able to apply theories of learning based upon research. Most contemporary theories of learning derive from more traditional views, such as Piaget's theory of the stages of cognitive growth by which children develop from birth to adults (Piaget, 1928). As candidates understand the stages and begin to recognize them, they are able to apply specific teaching techniques recommended for each stage of development. More contemporary theories help candidates guide today's students to metacognition (Vacca et al., 2012).

The unit understands and supports the importance of Constructivist theories or discovery learning, popular since the 1960's (Bruner, 1966). Learners bring their own experiences to the creation of knowledge; they must learn to create their own questions and solve problems, not simply participate in teacher-directed classrooms, and our candidates must be able to create student-centered classrooms. Their students, faced with modern technology's flood of information, must select and interpret information (Vacca et al., 2012). Candidates experience inquiry learning throughout their programs due to the ease of creating discussion groups in smaller classes and the dedication of methods instructors to guide candidates (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Johnson et al., 2008).

Reflective Knowledge

Members of the unit understand the importance of reflective learning and strive to influence candidates to become reflective teachers. Reflective knowledge derives from individuals giving careful thought to the learning of new subjects before, during, and after contact. An important element of student learning derives from the careful consideration of the problem prior to study

and an equally careful analysis of the entire process immediately upon completion of the project. Reflective teachers deliberate on the types of knowledge and skills students in a democratic society need to learn, the kind of classroom atmosphere, and teaching techniques most likely to produce this learning. These reflective assessments will provide clear evidence that goals are being accomplished. Reflective teachers also engage in thoughtful observation and analysis of their own actions in the classroom before, during, and after interactions with their students to determine their own strengths and areas that need improvement.

As candidates progress in the program, they develop their reflective abilities and acquire an open-minded but questioning attitude about the theories and practices they learn. At the same time, they must learn to take responsibility for their decisions and actions and to use compelling evidence in support of them (Waugh & Gronlund, 2013; Johnson et al., 2008).

Candidate Attributes

The OPSU unit produces candidates who possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to succeed, primarily in the schools of the unique service area but adaptable to any community where today's mobile society may take them. The candidates become life-long learners within these educational communities. They are also able to reflect upon their teaching and make changes when needed to accommodate today's changing society with its changing needs. OPSU candidates demonstrate their reflective abilities as well as their ability to accommodate all students using a variety of assessment tools, the reflection/accommodation portion of their lesson plans, their teaching internship journals, and their success on professional teaching exams.

Candidate Knowledge

The graduate emerging from the OPSU unit should exhibit knowledge in

- General areas of liberal arts and sciences,

- Target subject area(s),
- Instructional Practice,
- The manner in which all students learn and develop,
- Types of diverse learners,
- Developing multiple assessment measures, and
- Sources and uses of technology.

Knowledge serves as the core of the conceptual framework. Candidates demonstrate proficiency in general education, target subject area(s), and professional education courses. They accommodate for diverse learners and learning styles in their instruction. The unit assures the success of its graduates through various assessments. Projects, field experiences, lesson plans, and teaching internships give the candidate knowledge of instructional practices, interaction with diverse learners, employment of multiple assessment methods, and the use of technology to enhance learner outcomes.

Skills (Proficiencies)

The unit believes that Oklahoma Panhandle State University teacher candidates should be skilled in the following areas:

- The use of technology for teaching and learning
- Design and use of effective instructional strategies that include all student populations
- Assessment designed to evaluate student learning and instructional effectiveness
- Utilize professional membership and continual improvement throughout their teaching careers
- Classroom environment and behavior management

- Methods and advantages in collaboration

These six proficiencies, combined with the knowledge and dispositions required of the OPSU candidate, create teachers who are knowledgeable in their discipline, technology, and instructional practices; empathetic to student needs, and dedicated to the concept of life-long learning, or in the words of our unit motto, “Teachers who are competent, caring, and committed”.

Candidates learn to use technology to support instruction and thus improve student learning (Vaugh & Gronlund, 2013; Vacca et al., 2012; Wagner, 2010). Technology is used to assess and engage students in instructional practices and communication. The education unit provides opportunities for candidates to communicate through the use of computers, overhead projectors, video use, audio strategies, visual representations (bulletin boards, posters, etc.), writing, peer teaching of lessons, field teaching experiences, direct / indirect teaching models, grouping and discussion/questioning strategies.

The design and use of effective teaching strategies that include all student populations is a key to being an effective instructor. Knowledge and use of various instructional strategies and methods combined with knowledge of diverse populations increases student achievement (CCSSO’s Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 2013; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Wagner, 2010; Wong, 2009). Candidates practice designing a variety of lessons, assignments and projects within their course work and field experiences. Diversity training is integrated throughout the candidates’ programs, from general education courses through teaching internship. EDUC 2233 Diversity in Education examines current issues and trends in educational practices through perspectives of history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and the politics of education. Visits to diverse classrooms are a vital part of the course. This course

includes specific field placement assignments and detailed record keeping of these field experiences assure candidates' understanding of diversity. Field experiences are designed to ensure candidates have opportunities to work with various grade levels, teachers, cultures, school sizes, religions, special needs, and economic levels.

Candidates through classes and lesson planning learn to develop and use assessments. Assessments are view as tools to evaluate student learning and instructional effectiveness (Waugh & Gronlund, 2013; CCSSO's Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 2013; Cooper & Kiger, 2011). Candidates learn to use authentic assessments to find out what student can and cannot do (Cooper & Kiger, 2011). "Successful teachers are reflective about their work, as shown in their ability to gather, analyze, and use data to improve their teaching" (Johnson et al., 2008, p. 37).

Candidates from the very start during Introduction to Education are taught the importance of utilizing professional memberships and continual improvement through their teaching careers. This professional organization provide an "opportunity to work with other well-educated and highly dedicated professionals" (Johnson et al., 2008, p. 469). " Continuing professional development is one of the ongoing activities of career teachers" (Johnson et al., 2008, p. 37). An Student Oklahoma Education Association Chapter does exist on campus at OPSU. Through this organization or other listed on the Education Home Page, candidates join a professional organization and can participate in professional development.

Studies of teacher, administrator, and teacher educator surveys indicate the importance of classroom management as a top skill of an effective teacher (Everston, Emmer, & Worsham, 2012; Kaplan & Owings, 2011; Wong, 2009; Scarpaci, 2007). The unit provides pedagogical training in the management of instructional groups, transitions, materials and supplies, and non-

instructional duties through various courses and field experiences. In classes, candidates learn skills in classroom management through discussion of case studies, peer teaching, role-playing, and the development of management plans prior to their teaching internships. When candidates begin their teaching internship assignments, the teaching interns apply their experiences and put these plans into operation. Assessment of candidate skills in classroom management occurs during the classroom management class on campus and through the supervising and cooperating teachers during their teaching internships.

The unit believes in the importance of collaboration among teachers of all levels, and communities. The unit strives for collaboration, not just among unit faculty members, but also with other campus faculty, public school teachers, and administrators; in the development of curriculum and pedagogy. Benefits of collaboration include improvements in student behavior and achievement and increased teacher satisfaction and adaptability (Kaplan & Owings, 2011; Kezar, 2005; Powell, n.d.). The unit stresses collaboration among peers using group projects, teacher experts in field experiences, professional development opportunities, membership in professional and community organizations, leadership in community projects, and committee participation with peers and university faculty. Candidates emerge from their studies, believing in the value of collaboration.

The uniqueness of the OPSU service area is both an asset and a liability that the unit has noted and addressed. The small class settings provide candidates with opportunities to engage learners in more intimate one-on-one learning situations. However, small schools do not always possess updated reference materials so the public schools and OPSU frequently utilize technology as a balance for size and distance.

In the 1980s, OPSU and area public schools connected by interactive television (ITV) classrooms to provide college-credit classes to qualifying high school juniors and seniors and to enable school districts to share qualified teachers. In spring of 2013, OPSU experienced a record high of student enrolled in ITV classes for concurrent enrollment. Computer education affords teachers of small rural areas opportunity for staying abreast of technology and all content areas. For example, at least three public school districts in the OPSU area provide laptop computers or Ipads for all of their students. Several summer workshops have been held by the School of Education and the School of Math, Science, and Nursing to provide training for area public school teachers in the use of technology in the classroom.

The unit believes the teacher candidates must be able to develop a variety of assessment tools in order to properly evaluate student success. Faculty members, therefore, provide candidates ample opportunities to study and use portfolio, performance, authentic, and traditional assessment techniques; measurement trends; traditional test building; rubric construction; grading systems; standardized test interpretation; assessment of populations with special needs; and the reflective process involving peers, self, and students (Waugh & Gronlund, 2013; Cooper & Kiger, 2011; Johnson et al., 2008). Candidates learn to incorporate the various assessment strategies into their lessons. Candidates also evaluate their courses and professors each semester. At the end of their teaching internship semester, all candidates and their cooperating teachers complete surveys that evaluate the program. In addition, follow-up surveys are sent to recent graduates. Changes in curriculum and course content are based on these findings.

Dispositions

The unit believes candidates should display the following dispositions:

- Good work habits

- A positive attitude and love of learning
- Confidence in their own knowledge and skills
- Honesty and trustworthiness
- Self-reliance and problem-solving behavior
- An appreciation and empathy for the worth and diversity of all humans
- An awareness of ethical, political, social, and environmental issues and obligations.

Unit members agree that dispositions required of teachers encompass a range of attributes that begin with those any employer expects of a successful employee. These include being on the job promptly, doing the work on time, in an exemplary manner, and displaying a friendly personality and cooperative attitude. Teacher candidates must possess an intimate understanding of the feelings, thoughts, and motives of others. They need a keen awareness that allows them to provide what support and develop capacity for others to succeed (Schwahn & Spady, 2010).

The unit believes all candidates should exhibit the above qualities to foster a positive learning environment for every student. To achieve this, they must be empathetic to the feelings, thoughts, and motives of their students. In addition to their positive attitude toward students, candidates must display a positive attitude toward colleagues, administrators, parents, and other members of the community. Assessment of candidate dispositions occurs throughout the program beginning with recommendations from faculty that candidates must have prior to admission to the program. Rubrics for teaching in education and subject-area classes and during teaching internship also evaluate candidates' dispositions.

Honesty and trustworthiness are attributes that should be present in individuals seeking to enter the teaching field, but newspaper headlines frequently suggest this is not the case. Through classes, interaction with candidates, both in and out of the classroom, and survey instruments, the

unit strives to ensure that the candidates will be honest and trustworthy teachers. Honesty and trust are key to the credibility of leaders such as teachers (Kouzes & Posner, 2011).

In order for candidates to be self-reliant and productive, they must love learning and knowledge. Love of learning is the key to being productive as a teacher and a leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). If candidates possess certain attributes, they will naturally be productive. Throughout the program, candidates learn to assess their own strengths and weaknesses through self-evaluation measures and collaboration with their peers.

In order to convey empathy toward their students, teachers must have confidence in their own knowledge and abilities. Without this confidence, they may be unable to create a comfortable classroom environment for their students. If teachers are unsure of their abilities, their own lack of confidence will be relayed to their students. The unit candidates display confidence in their teaching abilities.

John Dewey (1916) believed that all learning was a product of a learner's inquiry with the phenomenon studied (Dewey, 1916). "Constructivist theorists encourage the development of critical thinking and the understanding of big ideas rather than the mastery of factual information (Johnson et al., 2008, p. 331). The unit's conceptual framework is designed to produce problem-solving curriculum rather than a static, content-oriented one, which weakens student achievement. The unit's conceptual framework is designed to produce problem-solving candidates geared toward creating student-oriented classrooms where they will use multiple assessment tools to measure their students' success, and reflect upon the results to alter teaching when needed.

The unit produces candidates whose knowledge of diversity, ethics, and sensitive issues enables them to react professionally and with empathy. Candidates must take and achieve at least

a C in courses regarding diversity and specific educational issues. While all candidates will not have experienced every situation involving diversity or ethics, they understand the theory and are able to adapt it to every situation. “All students have the right to experience fair and empowering conditions in schools to be taught by effective and quality educators” (Spradlin, 2012, p. 3). The unit educates all candidates to teach diverse populations. Candidate knowledge is enhanced through a course in diversity that focuses first on the similarities among cultures and moves to the study of differences (Robles de Melendez & Beck, 2010).

After acceptance into the program, candidates begin their upper level education classes. As a course requirement, candidates then visit classrooms where they observe specific strategies for responding to the needs of learners from diverse cultures or with specific learning needs. After the visits, classes discuss the various strategies used. This combination helps produce the desired sensitivity and empathetic attitude candidate must model (Kathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). All candidates understand how to design activities to include recognition and appreciation for the diversity of students, for example, students with physical, learning, or emotional disabilities. Diversity in the instructional process has a positive impact on attitudes toward racial issues, opportunities to interact with those who are different, and an overall satisfaction with the educational experience. These benefits are especially important for our candidates, who may have had fewer opportunities for such interaction.

The unit believes that all OPSU Teacher Education candidates should possess an awareness of ethical, political, social, and environmental issues and obligations. According to the National Education Association’s Code of Ethics, educators should strive to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society (1975). The American Federation of Teachers’ Code of Ethics states that each educator should believe that “patriotism in its highest

form requires dedication to the principles of our democratic heritage” (1971). The NEA Code of Ethics also agrees in that “the quality of the services of the education profession directly influences the nation and its citizens,” and therefore, the unit believes all teacher education candidates must possess the qualities mentioned above.

Although the unit plan strives primarily to produce candidates who will teach in its unique service area, with its common values, we realize they must, nevertheless, incorporate contemporary world views into their teaching to prepare their students for the global world of the twenty-first century. To achieve this, they must be knowledgeable, lifelong learners, attuned to changes in society and the world through study, collaboration, and reflection, and ever alert to and concerned with their students’ needs.

Unit Philosophy

The philosophy of the unit draws from the mission, philosophy, and goals of the university. The development of the program in teacher education is based on beliefs about students, the environment, education, and professional teacher education.

- All individuals have the ability to learn.
- Individuals are products of a variety of cultures and diverse school settings.
- It is possible to assist most individuals to complete a degree in teacher education.
- The practical application of theoretical concepts in a school setting is the basis for excellence in teaching.
- Teacher educators are responsible for providing learning experiences that assist candidates in developing attitudes, values, knowledge and skills that form the basis of competent educational practice and leadership.
- Future teachers must be encouraged to think critically and communicate effectively.

- The intelligent use of current and developing technological devices is essential to the practice of teaching in the twenty-first century.

Although the unit believes that most individuals can complete a teaching degree, this should not be interpreted as meaning that we believe that most anyone can or should teach. For this reason, checkpoints exist within the program. Some of these checkpoints cannot be passed without demonstrating the appropriate skills and knowledge. Examples include GPA requirements, portfolio requirements, and OGET and OSAT requirements. The checkpoints represented by the assessment of dispositions are more fluid. While there are specific points at which dispositions are assessed and specific instruments used to assess dispositions, much of the assessment of dispositions occurs in a more informal manner within courses and through the interaction between candidates and faculty. Removal of a candidate due to undesirable dispositions does not always occur through a formal process. It often occurs through a less formal counseling between the candidate and faculty or advisors.

Unit Standards

John Dewey believed and others agree that education should develop a love of active doing and effective capacity. Education should prepare students for an intelligent choice of a calling in which they may be most serviceable to the community.

In addition to the ten InTASC standards that have been adopted by the state of Oklahoma, the following OPSU program standards indicate elements from the unit conceptual framework; *Gateway to the Future*.

- The teacher candidate will acquire a comprehensive academic foundation in the liberal arts as provided by the general education curriculum.

- The teacher candidate will master the content knowledge and research base of specialty areas.
- The teacher candidate will display mastery in instructional practices within professional studies
- The teacher candidate will participate in mentorship opportunities within field studies.
- The teacher candidate will integrate multiple technologies into lesson planning.
- Through lesson plans, the teacher candidate will display an understanding and appreciation of diversity in cultures, learning, and environments.

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