

AUGUSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A Understanding for Teaching, Teaching for Understanding@

The conceptual framework of the College of Education at Augusta State University was developed within the context of an intensive examination and critique of educator preparation programs at the national, state, and university-system levels. The overall conclusions derived from this review can be summarized as: educator preparation programs were out of touch with the realities of today's public schools and were, therefore, preparing teachers with inadequate skills for service in classrooms; preparation programs were not attracting the highest quality students, therefore, individuals being certified as teachers were inadequate in intelligence and skill; and none of these problems could be resolved without a massive restructuring of both educator preparation programs and the public schools. This criticism came as other pieces of evaluative data were presented which indicated that today's educators were the best prepared in the history of the public schooling process. Regardless of these contradictions, educator preparation needed to be examined in general and specifically at Augusta State University.

Beginning with the proposition that the preparation of educators is the most critical of all professions because without teachers there are no other professions, the College of Education at Augusta State University began an analysis of the belief system which constituted the framework for all of its activities. The result of this analysis was a series of philosophical statements which outlined this belief system. These are:

- *The preparation of educators must be a shared responsibility between campus colleagues, public school practitioners, and involved community agencies
- *The preparation of educators is the most critical of all professions---Without educators there are no other professions
- *A respect for the dignity of all persons should be a constant in the teaching and learning process
- *All children can learn and have the right to an opportunity to do so
- *The professional educator is the key element in the learning process of children
- *High quality students become stronger educator preparation candidates and thus more effective classroom teachers, counselors, and administrators
- *To be effective, the student must have strong preparation in the subject area they will teach
- *Preparation in the subject area(s) to be taught must be accompanied by the skill and dispositions to translate knowledge into meaning experiences for diverse learners

*Educators must be prepared in authentic settings with diverse populations of learners

*Self assessment and analysis form the basis for collaboration with colleagues and the development of a desire to be a lifelong learner

*The purpose of graduate study is to extend and redirect the knowledge base of educators to produce new sets of knowledge, skills, and dispositions

It was clear that the development and clarification of these belief statements, while assisting in the understanding of the mission and activities of the College of Education, did little to provide a practical guide for the actual development and implementation of educator preparation programs.

Following an extensive review of the research literature, descriptions of best practice activities, and numerous discussions with Arts and Sciences colleagues, and public schools professionals, a set of descriptors was developed to describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions desired in candidates at the end of the initial preparation process at Augusta State University. These descriptions were closely tied to the previously developed philosophy statements. After a further refinement, it was discovered that these descriptors closely followed the beginning teacher standards established by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). These were developed to determine knowledge, skills, and dispositions educators who aspired to meet the advanced National Board for Professional Teaching Standards should possess at the beginning of their careers as educators. It was determined that these INTASC standards directly related to the philosophy statements and provided a set of principles to guide the practical development, implementation, and decision making within the educator preparation programs. As designed, these standards describe what a beginning teacher should know and what he/she should be able to do with this knowledge in authentic settings with a diverse population of learners. Utilizing these INTASC standards as the basic set of expectations, an educator preparation candidate successfully completing a program at Augusta State University will be expected to demonstrate that they:

1. understand the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) and be able to create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for learners.
2. understand how students learn and develop and be able to provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.
3. understand how students differ in their approaches to learning and be able to create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
4. understand and use a variety of instructional strategies to encourage the learner's development of critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
5. use an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
6. use knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and information technology techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
7. plan instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, the learners, the community, and curriculum goals.

8. understand and use authentic assessment to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.
9. be a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and actively seeks the opportunity to grow professionally.
10. foster relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support the learning and well-being of all students.

The philosophy statements and the ten conceptual framework principles they undergird form the basis for all activities and decision making in the various educator preparation programs. These principles reflect the belief that at the point an individual is recommended for and awarded a certificate for service in the public schools that he/she should demonstrate the requisite skills, knowledge, and dispositions of a fully licensed professional. Thus, it is incumbent on programs preparing educators to ensure that their graduates adequately meet this high standard as they begin their careers. As the new preparation programs have been developed (implemented fall semester, 1998), faculty have incorporated these principles into the learning outcomes of courses and field experiences. In addition, faculty have and are formulating comprehensive assessment measures and exercises, that will be included in each student's comprehensive portfolio, which will allow the opportunity to demonstrate understandings and competencies in authentic settings with children under the guidance of a master teacher (educator). As expressed in the College of Education's theme, "Understanding for Teaching---Teaching for Understanding," each of the educator preparation programs, utilizing the conceptual framework principles as a guideline, actualizes the philosophy statements by creating individuals who possess the understanding to be successful educators and the skills and dispositions to create environments for learners to understand the content and concepts being taught.