

Components of the Early Childhood Program

The Early Childhood program focuses on four components of each conceptual framework principle.

UNDERSTANDING FOR TEACHING THE COGNITIVE/PERFORMANCE DOMAINS

The domains of understanding elaborated below should be thought of as interrelated dimensions of a whole; not linear or discrete and separate entities and not a sequence. Together they constitute what is meant by the term understanding in "Understanding for Teaching".

Understanding: To understand something (an idea, a concept, a theory or explanation an event or series of events whether observed, participated in, or received by accounts of others) is essentially to be able to make sense of it. Sense or meaning-making is represented or manifested in the following demonstrable actions or performances:

- to be able to identify the essential attributes or critical characteristics of categorical concepts and to be able to distinguish these from non-critical characteristics;
- to be able to distinguish conceptual attributes from exemplars and to be able to explain how the former manifest the latter;
- to be able to differentiate exemplars and non-exemplars of categorical concepts and to be able to explain the differentiation in the formal language of the discipline or field of study in which the concepts reside;
- to be able to explain relationships between or among categorical concepts thus demonstrating the capacity to formulate theories and generalizations that are grounded in analytical observation and conceptual understanding;
- to be able to make descriptive, correlational, and causative inferences about events, propositions, theories and prescriptions;
- to employ the formal modes of inquiry, and language of pertinent fields of study and disciplines in making sense of the dynamics of the classroom and school contexts;
- to be able to articulate the limitations of theoretical frameworks, to differentiate opposing theoretical frameworks, to recognize the theoretical framework within which approaches, strategies, and protocols for practice reside.

Application: This domain represents the individual's ability to utilize that which has been comprehended in the preparation and execution of instructional and learning episodes. It requires the deliberate, intentional application of understandings to the practical and highly complex work of:

- organizing a classroom to assure the safety and trust needed for students to take appropriate risks toward learning;

- constructing curriculum and assessments that are appropriate to the students, the field of study, and the targeted learning achievement; interacting with students in ways that cultivate their learning to high standards, perseverance, curiosity, and confidence;
- creating and executing instructional episodes that deliberately reflect and can be explained in terms of accurately comprehended conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

Analysis & Evaluation: This domain represents the ability to monitor and evaluate students' performances in order to determine how well each student is progressing toward achievement. This domain also encompasses evaluation of instruction, curriculum, strategies, activities and types of performances in which students engage to demonstrate achievement. In this domain the following capabilities should be evident:

- to be able to create assessment tasks that align well with the intended learning outcomes;
- to critically evaluate the extent to which commercially produced assessments align with curriculum, focus of instruction, student learning targets;
- to be able to establish performance standards and clearly articulate them to students;
- to be able to critically review student work in terms of established performance standards and in terms of what the performance reveals about supporting skills, understandings, and dispositions;
- to know how to review assessments, and performances to inform subsequent instructional and learning experiences;
- to use the assessment of student performance as an opportunity to assess one's own teaching performance and inform subsequent adjustments.

Reflection/Refinement: This domain relates to one's ability to introspectively consider the complexity of teaching: individual students and a group of learners, purposes, curriculum, learning, strategies, climate, practice, inquiry, performances, assessment, evaluation, meaning and knowing. It is a practice that informs, if not illuminates, deeper meaning and better informed judgments in the other domains. It makes time for insight and thus the cultivation of wise practitioners, leading them to questions related to:

- how can I improve my own knowledge, skill, strategies, listening and seeing to better support the efforts of my students to learn;
- how can I sustain a productive level of quality in my teaching and students' learning;
- how can I share with colleagues to our mutual professional benefit;
- what risks must I take to continue to learn and improve professionally?

Assessment in the Early Childhood Education Program:

There are many parts to the assessment of early childhood preservice teachers:

Electronic Portfolio:

Each student will create an electronic portfolio during the course of the Early Childhood Education Program. The portfolio should contain evidence of the student's proficiency in the ten conceptual framework principles and his/her progress toward achieving these proficiencies. The portfolio will be assessed at the end of the student's program. (appendix A)

Impacting Student Learning (ISL):

Each program's ISL structure includes basic components for the ISL process. Pre-service teachers examine who the students are as learners, developing student profiles which examine the K-12 students' developmental characteristics, backgrounds and experiences, school and community contexts, learning styles, and needs. The educator prep students then design and implement lessons based on content standards and standards for best teaching practices. They also plan and implement means to assess student learning. Evaluation of, reflection on and refinement of their own planning and teaching occurs based on the K-12 students' demonstrated achievement and profiles as learners. This takes place with a variety of configurations of students, across multiple content areas, during the duration of each program.

The structure for embedding the ISL component within the coursework and field experience of the Early Childhood Education Program allows for students to build the ISL component's complexity over the semesters. Pre-service teachers begin their ISL work with a tutorial approach working with one student in the first semester for the duration of 5 weeks. The pre-service teachers develop a profile of the student as a learner and evaluate student learning after the tutoring period based on the learner profile. During the second semester the pre-service teacher develops a profile for 5 –7 students and evaluates how his/her whole class instruction over a period of 5 days impacts these students as learners. The third semester involves the development of a whole class profile. The pre-service teacher engages in whole class and individual tutorial instruction over a period of 7- 10 days and then reflects on the impact of his/her instruction on the class as a whole. Subject matter areas are aligned with each of these experiences, with the instructional focus being on Math during the first semester, Science the second, and Social Studies and Reading the third. The fourth semester Apprenticeship experience involves developing student profiles, planning and implementing lessons and analyzing the impact on student learning over a three week unit with a flexible content focus. Each semester's content area emphasis reflects the content area focus of the coursework accompanying and supporting the lab experience. The overall focus of each experience is for the pre-service teacher to reflect upon his/her teaching, how it impacted the students involved, and why, in order to make decisions and refinements for future teaching and learning experiences.

Lab Evaluation:

At the end of the lab experience, the lab teacher will complete two evaluation forms on their lab student. An evaluation on the student's performance and professional behaviors should be completed and reviewed with the lab student (see appendices D, E, F).

Intervention Plans:

Students are expected to behave in a professional manner in the classroom and lab settings. Students are also expected to make continual progress towards becoming a teacher.

When problems arise, an intervention meeting is conducted. Interventions can be initiated by the university faculty, lab teachers, building coordinators, or building administrators. This ensures progress towards addressing areas of concern. The failure to make needed changes as identified on the intervention summary may necessitate the student's withdrawal from the program.

Counseling related to other options for those who are not successful may occur. Throughout the process, all parties work together to cultivate the preservice teacher's success and meet the needs of the elementary school students they are teaching (see appendices G, H).

Apprentice Evaluation:

Apprentice teachers are evaluated at mid-term and at the end of the year. The mid term evaluation and year end evaluation are completed by the apprentice teacher and master teacher together. There should be no more than two scores below the proficient level. (see appendix I).

Coursework:

The coursework in the Early Childhood Program is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills to be an effective beginning teacher. The courses and lab expectations build as the student progresses through the program culminating in the Apprenticeship semester (see appendices J, K)

During each of the first three semesters students participate in a five-week field experience. Usually the first five weeks of the semester students are in classes. The next week students visit their lab schools for initial planning. Students then return to campus for three weeks of instruction. The next four weeks are primarily used for lab time. The remaining two weeks of the semester students return to classes on campus.

NOTE: Cell phones are not allowed in class nor should they be taken to your field experience schools. No children may be brought to classes at the University or to your field experience placements.

