ATHENS STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

McCAIN HALL

Excellence

Commitment

Collaboration

Student Centered Learning

Disciplinary Knowledge

Professional Knowledge

Socially Responsible Citizen

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

PREPARATION OF THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Educating Communities

Cover Design by Sarah Heidtmann

MISSION STATEMENT

Athens State University, College of Education's (COE) mission is to prepare teacher candidates to be *reflective practitioners* who are knowledgeable, collaborative professionals. They will have a rich knowledge of content with an understanding of how people learn in various ways combined with the ability to apply that knowledge to assure student success. Excellence in our candidates is demonstrated by the candidates embracing a student-centered learning approach, having a deep and rich understanding of disciplines and content knowledge, developing professional and pedagogical knowledge that strives for each student's success, and engaging in a fully developed approach to social responsibility and leadership in the community. The ultimate goal is for each graduate of this program to be a reflective practitioner who has a multifaceted understanding of the art and science of teaching based on respected theory, demonstrates appropriate and in-depth use of the content of the discipline, uses action research in ongoing assessment and improvement of teaching and learning, and applies intentional best practices of pedagogy. Graduates of this program will be identified through their skillful commitment to the successful education of diverse learners in communities throughout Alabama, the United States, and the world.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION PROGRAM GOALS

The College of Education educates pre-service teachers who embrace student-centered learning, maintain a comprehensive knowledge of content knowledge, possess an excellent foundation of professional and pedagogical knowledge, and model social justice through social responsibility. Our graduates are able to do this through adherence to institutional, state, and national standards that support the conceptual framework (Alabama Quality Teaching Standards, Educate Alabama Standards, Interstate Teacher and Support Consortium [Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013] and the Conceptual Framework).

The COE's preparation of the reflective practitioner is based on a philosophy of education that has its foundation in Pragmatism. This is founded in the work of philosophers like George Sanders Pierce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910), and John Dewey (1859-1952) and researchers who are advancing those tenets such as Taatila & Raji, (2011), Freitas,

Ott, Popescu, Stanescu (2013), Sadvonik, Cookson, & Semel (2013). "Pragmatism is a philosophy that encourages people to find processes that work in order to achieve their desired end" (Sadvonik, Cookson, & Semel, 2013, p. 186). This pragmatic approach to education guides educators to be action-oriented, experientially grounded, and interested in contemporary issues and problem solving in current circumstances. Dewey considers pragmatism as a "dualism – the unification of theory and practice in principled action" (Schubert, 2006, pp. 78). For the College of Education, this means that educators are constantly evaluating and re-evaluating their practice in terms of student achievement and success.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION PROGRAM GOAL ONE: STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

To nurture meaningful learning, our candidates must understand the importance of a *student-centered philosophy to learning*. They must know how learners are diverse and grow and develop differently as well as embrace the learning that comes from experience (INTASC 1). They must recognize that patterns of learning and development vary individually in the context of culture and place and within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas (INTASC 1). Our candidates must be able to design and implement developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences that motivate diverse children and adolescents representing a range of abilities (INTASC 1). Our candidates use the understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards (INTASC 2). Our candidates are able to apply collaborative skills in order to: create environments that support individual and collaborative learning; and encourage social interactions, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation (INTASC 3). Student-centered learning puts the learner at the center of the learning and teaching process (McHemer, et. al, 2007; Boyer, 1990). This principle is inclusive of all pedagogical approaches that accept and embrace the diversity of the individual learner.

We maintain that while the student is the center or the focus of the learning process, the balanced interaction between the student and the teacher is paramount to the learning process. The teacher facilitates the learning by supporting the student's efforts to reach high standards with their choice of learning paths as well as helping the student analyze the

implications of those choices. Even though student-centered learning places the responsibility for learning on the student, the teacher is the designer and guide in that process. Inquiry, cooperation and collaboration are essential components. Student-centered learning focuses on cooperation and collaboration between peers and teachers. Such educators begin with the needs and interests of the learner (Sadovnik, Cookson, Jr. & Semel, 2013) and coordinate those needs with the social interaction available to that learner, always keeping the learning goals and high standards in mind.

Student learning has been researched by Piaget, Vygotsky, Gardner, Freire, and Dewey. Resulting theories, such as constructivism, multiple intelligences, and progressivism, developed and support the need for the learner to be active within their environments and in learning. There are several different versions of Constructivism, but all are based on the idea that learners must internally construct and reconstruct knowledge from their experiences in order to make sense of their environments (or worlds). Thus, from a constructivist view, individuals construct knowledge through action, the interpretation of that action, and adaptation rather than passively receiving content from others.

Howard Gardner's work with multiple intelligences is a key component of student-centered learning for Athens State University. His theory maintains that we have more than one way of processing and learning information. According to Gardner, our methods for making sense of our experiences can be independent of each other, which supports multiple intelligences or ways to learn as opposed to one general intelligence and one way of learning (Gardner, 1983,). Gardner advocates for an educational system that would meet individual needs as teachers use different methodologies and activities to reach all students, not just the ones who can "do school" or who excel in linguistic and logical intelligences, the dominate approaches used in most schools.

Freire's (1970) key proposition is that the most empowering learning begins with action and is shaped by reflection. This leads to further action, which is at the core of student-centered learning. He maintains that learning is a continuous process, which enhances the learner's ability to act in the world and to change it. Just as with others who advocate for the student as learner, Freire maintained that students must construct their own knowledge from

knowledge they already have. They use discussion and reflection in this construction process. For Freire, the concept of mutual humanization emphasized the needed relationship between teacher and student. This means that the teacher becomes the learner, just as the learner becomes the teacher. In order for the teacher to function as a learner, he/she must exhibit respect for the student, avoid teaching-authority dependence, and learn about and know the students' experiences.

A student-centered practitioner embraces progressive philosophy (Dewey, 1916). This considers the goal of education as not only to allow for students to learn from experience but also to prepare them for life-long learning and full participation in a democratic society (Dewey, 1916). The teacher is a facilitator who offers guidance, encouragement, and assistance to students in planning and implementing subject matter content. While striving for quality and high standards, the method of instruction focuses on inquiry-based learning through individualized study, problem solving, and applied projects (Dewey, 1916). The curriculum in a progressive classroom is an integrated core curriculum that often targets contemporary issues in society of interest to the students and works to develop solutions while teaching critical content.

Student-centered learning is a cultural, as well as a paradigm, shift in teaching and learning. It entails both a shift in what is taught and a shift from thinking about teacher performance to student learning. In order for this shift to occur, teachers must become scholars who read and research theories of how students learn, how students are motivated and then connect their understanding of their readings to their practice as reflective practitioners.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION PROGRAM GOAL TWO: DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE

Disciplinary knowledge represents the College of Education's commitment to assuring the learners, their families, professional educators, and other stake holders that our candidates are knowledgeable in their chosen fields and can impart that knowledge to help all students learn. Knowledge of the discipline includes a broad general foundation in the arts and sciences as well as depth of knowledge appropriate for expertise in a specific field. Knowledge of the discipline is essential for our candidates as they make appropriate pedagogical decisions for

diverse groups of learners, for using technological applications to support learning, and for tapping into both cognitive and emotional intelligences of the learner. Content knowledge within the discipline amounts to more than acceptable scores on an examination or knowing the content for the grade level the candidate hopes to teach. Disciplinary knowledge is not to be confused with pedagogical knowledge. Ball and Bass (2000) contend that Dewey held that subject matter was the embodiment of the mind, and the product of human curiosity, inquiry and the search for truth. Athens State University agrees and holds that disciplinary knowledge is vital for an effective teacher.

Just as with Dewey, Shulman maintained that knowing subject matter (e.g., disciplinary knowledge) was more than merely knowing the facts or knowing the content for the learners the teacher would teach. It involved what Shulman (1986) called "the structure of knowledge" (e.g., the theories, principles, and concepts of a particular discipline). He noted that teacher candidates (as well as all learners) need to understand subject matter "deeply and flexibly" in order to help students create useful cognitive maps, relate one idea to another, and address misconceptions. He also maintained that knowing subject matter helped teachers see how ideas connected across fields and in everyday life. This provided the foundation for pedagogical content knowledge.

Ball and Bass (2000) point out that the teacher's knowledge and understanding of subject matter is essential. It helps the teacher listen to what the learner is saying and then guide the student into deeper content understanding by linking the student's limited content to a broader understanding. Ball and Bass further point out that knowledge of the discipline, or subject matter, is more than knowing the content that the students are to learn at a given grade level or the curricular goals and standards. A limited knowledge is inherently not helpful as the teacher must know and deeply understand the knowledge of the core content of the discipline as well as be able to use it in their teaching (Usiskin, 2001).

Phillips (2005) stated, "Perhaps there is no individual with a greater impact on the secondary student's quest for literacy than the content area teacher" (p. 45). This can be said for the elementary student as well. In order to understand "profound knowledge and understanding of content," Ball and Bass explained that knowing and being sensitive to

knowledge of the discipline (e.g., in math knowing the domain, knowing the definitions used within the domain, comparing the definitions within the field, how to us the definitions and so on) allows the teacher to use the knowledge to consider plausible reasons why a learner might respond in a certain way and can use those responses to advance the learner's thinking.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION PROGRAM GOAL THREE: PROFESSIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

To *ensure excellence in professional knowledge,* our students use the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline that he/she teaches. Our candidates can create learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful to ensure students' mastery of the content (INTASC 4). Our candidates understand how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues (INTASC 5). To work effectively with students, our candidates must *embrace quality practices of pedagogy*. Our candidates understand and use multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor their learning process, and to guide their decision-making (INTASC 6). Our candidates plan instruction that supports students in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy (INTASC 7). Our candidates use the knowledge of the community and learners to plan lessons. A variety of instructional strategies used by our candidates encourage learners to develop a deep understanding of content areas and their connections to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways (INTASC 8).

Professional knowledge is necessary for effective teachers to be student-centered. The constructivist theories about cognitive development offer the underpinnings or the theoretical construct for student-centered learning. From the field of education, practical, constructivist teachers develop pedagogical approaches and learning environments that offer opportunities for innovation, inquiry, social interaction, coordination of points of view, and real-life—or authentic—learning. The approaches emphasize conceptual learning, higher-order thinking skills (e.g., application, analysis, synthesis) through the continuity of student activities and projects (e.g., use of original sources, manipulative materials) across disciplines (Brooks &

Brooks, 1999). "As the challenges facing the globe become increasingly complex, our frames of reference must be flexible, expansive, and adaptive" (Cookson, Jr., 2009, p. 10).

This frame of reference is found in the 21st Century model of curriculum reform (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2004). First, our graduates are able to use critical reflection to explore what works from multiple points of view. Second, this framework uses empirical reasoning through the use of the methods of science and research for solving problems. Next, the perspective of collective intelligence is viewed as the willingness to think collectively in solving problems. Lastly, meta-cognition is emphasized because this skill allows us to monitor our own learning and make changes to it. We believe schools must move beyond a focus on basic competency in core subjects to an understanding of academic content at a much higher level. Weaving 21st Century interdisciplinary themes in core subjects such as global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, and environmental literacy (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2004) will advance student learning to higher levels of achievement.

Our graduates will facilitate the learning of students to acquire 21st Century skills related to life, career, learning innovation, media, technology, and core subjects through 21st Century themes (Irvin, Meltzer, Mickler, Phillips, & Dean, 2009). The following list outlines the 21st Century Skills (Jacobs, 2010):

- *Core subjects*

- *Creativity and innovation*

- *Critical thinking and problem solving*

- *Communication and collaboration*

- *Information, media, and technology literacy*

- *Flexibility and adaptability*

- *Initiative and self-direction*

- *Social skills*

- *Productivity and accountability*

- *Leadership and responsibility*

We contend that the 21st Century framework is needed for not only the teaching of our pre-service teachers but also for skills that they will teach in the classroom to their own students. According to The George Lucas Educational Foundation's website Edutopia.org (2013) and based on the consistent process of change in society and schools—and the exponential expansion and complexity of knowledge--learning the basics (reading, writing, and arithmetic) is not enough for our students as well as the students they will teach (http://ww.edutopia.org/mission-vision). They will need to know how to find, use, and apply information in a variety of forms to solve local, community, social, and global problems as well as create innovative solutions.

PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Practical educators who are theory-based understand that their students need a chance to experiment, work with projects, engage in problem-based learning, and participate in opportunities to discover and explore, and then to refine their thinking based on their experimentation. Students flourish when they have learning environments that include multi-modal projects, are open-ended, and are learner-centered. Effective pedagogical practices have two focusing questions. First, what is the best way for a student, or students, to learn? Second, which teaching methods guide the students on their learning path? The College of Education has identified the following methods and approaches as representative of the kinds of pedagogy that its pre-service teachers will use in their teaching.

Inquiry-Based Learning is the central focus of 21st Century teaching and learning. The basis of inquiry learning is like the old proverb that holds to give a child a fish, he/she will eat for one day; teach a child to fish, he/she will eat forever. Instruction through inquiry-based learning allows the student to be involved in his/her own learning by guided research and the development of the skills needed to do the research along the way. It is a seeking of truth, understanding, and knowledge and is the natural process that all human beings engage in for learning. Examples of this type learning are the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), Alabama Science in Motion, (ASIM), and the many science and technology projects that are currently a part of schools, such as the *Robotics Competition* and *Odyssey of*

the Mind.   In a 21st Century classroom, all students are actively involved and engaged in learning through individual and team inquiry. According to Wolk (2013), inquiry-based learning means teachers and students are asking hard questions as a path to rigorous thinking. Inquiry-based learning includes, but is not limited to, the use of essential questions, critical questioning, project-based experiences, one-on-one conferencing, group conferencing, the use of huddle boards and combined huddles for comparison, group sharing, simulations, role-playing, model development, and discovery learning.

Contrary to popular belief, technology is not new to the classroom. For decades, educators have been embracing and **applying technological innovations**. The current call for "21st century learning" simply emboldens educators to expand current practices. The purpose of this technology initiative is not to replace existing best practices, but to enhance the learning environment and provide new and more effective ways to communicate, manage, assess and instruct. This purpose will be achieved through quality instructors who implement technology resources that complement the learning environment while continuing to focus on student engagement.

Student-centered instructional practices are integral to creating learning opportunities for all children. For example, **cooperative learning** is one of many ways to get students to become responsible for their own learning (Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, & Roy, 1984). This approach allows for social interaction, and enables students to share ideas and support each other. **Problem-based learning** suggests that when students apply the knowledge they gain over time (rather than just at exam time) they make more connections to real-life situations. Gardner's (1983) learning styles speak to this kind of "problem-based" learner. Multiple Intelligence (MI) Theory assumes that all students possess an array of at least eight intelligences or approaches to learning in different proportions and profiles that function in unique ways for each person. **Student self-regulated learning** contends that students not only construct knowledge for themselves but that they also monitor, motivate and provide a feedback process for themselves both during and after learning (Zimmerman, 2001).

Effective instruction meets the needs of diverse learners through differentiated instruction which breaks the curriculum into smaller chunks and allows the teacher to guide the

student using their interest and content level (Cramer & Nevin, 2007). **Differentiated instructional processes** include such practices as hands-on learning, cooperative learning groups, peer tutoring, and visual aids in the classroom. It also supports a variety of assignments for a class to reach the same learning goals and standards. Since this instructional process does not require all students to be doing the same assignments it is effective in English Speakers of Other Languages" (ESOL) techniques for reading and writing. Differentiated instruction is "…a process where educators vary the learning activities, content demands, modes of assessment, and the classroom environment to meet the needs and support the growth of each child" (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2007, p.9).   Educators are able to do this through a deep understanding of pedagogical practices that support learning.

Several approaches to support student learning are found in the **concept of learning preferences**. Teachers should think about students in terms of auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic modalities as well as other factors that affect learning such as noise and light, motivation, and task structure (Dunn & Dunn, 1978). Thinking style taxonomy classifies students as concrete-random, concrete-sequential, abstract-random, or abstract-sequential based upon how students perceive the world and how they order the world (Gregoric, 1984). The Theory of Mental Self-Government (Sternberg, 1997) emphasizes learning styles that are not abilities in themselves, but preferences in how people choose to use their abilities. Johnson (1996) explains that monitoring cooperative learning groups can provide formative assessment information about process, content mastery and student engagement as well as other facts about the students. Observing and assessing learners as they interact within groups can provide valuable data related to learning modalities, critical thinking skills, effectiveness of instruction, and comprehension. A student-centered approach to teaching incorporates the learning preferences of students into the daily practice of the teacher.

Effective learning environments use **instructional scaffolding** (Bruner, 1950) to aid the student in his/her construction of new knowledge. It is important to promote better learning by helping the learner achieve his/her learning goal through the use of instructional scaffolding. The use of scaffolding helps the learner to actively build and construct new knowledge. A scaffold is a temporary framework that is put up for support and access to meaning and taken

away as needed when the child secures control of success with a task. A construct that is critical for scaffolding instruction is Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The zone of proximal development is that field between what a learner can do by himself (expert stage) and what can be achieved with the support of a knowledgeable peer or instructor (pedagogical stage) (Ellis, Larkin, & Worthington, 2001).

Scaffolding of content can be achieved through the use of The **Explicit Instruction Model.** The model gradually releases responsibility for comprehension through activities such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing readings from the teacher to the students in steps that provide modeling, guided practice, and independent application (Raphael & Pearson, 1985). Explicit instruction involves four phases: teacher modeling and explanation of a strategy, guided practice during which teachers gradually give students more responsibility for task completion, independent practice accompanied by feedback, and application of the strategy in real reading situations (Pearson & Dole, 1987). Effective teachers can focus on the needs of learners by focusing on outcomes, teaching specific strategies to understand text, and using explicit instruction to achieve learning.

Strategic teaching embraces several pedagogical practices in a unique and effective way. Strategic teaching uses purposeful planning, literacy, and implementation as the vehicle in which to improve student learning. The need for implementing such a model is based on providing equal access to a good education and creating fair social conditions within school regardless of the physical, economic, or social environment in which students learn. Focusing on literacy skills for all students through effective instructional practices will provide opportunities for mobility for all students, thus eliminating school stratification and providing equity. Strategic teaching and learning encompasses certain mental processing techniques that improve comprehension (Derry, 1988). Strategy instruction affects all learners. In general, a strategy is a tool, plan, or method used for accomplishing a task and there are many strategies. For example, the National Reading Panel (2000) found efficacy for at least eight strategies to improve literacy; comprehension monitoring, cooperative learning, graphics organizers, story structure, question answering, question generating, summarization, and use of multiple strategies. It is important to teach children to be strategic, because it empowers them to: trust

their minds, realize that there are multiple ways to do things, acknowledge mistakes and rectify them, increase learning, increase self-esteem, increase responsibility, develop a personal study process, learn how to try, and be more engaged.

The **cross-curricula literacy approach** is inherent in the COE's Conceptual Framework. The Conceptual Framework emphasizes student-centered learning and socially responsive citizenship. This approach offers teachers and students the flexibility to connect the students' lives with the academic content that they are expected to master. It also encourages students and teachers to focus on integrating the values and knowledge of interest to the students with the content students learn in the academic setting. This approach creates opportunities for teachers to help students build on their interests and their prior knowledge, in particular by including culturally rich and diverse voices and authors. Additionally, the teachers can coordinate that interest and guide the learner to a fuller understanding and a broader set of factual and conceptual information. This integration and coordination of the students' lives with factual knowledge from the content areas creates deeper learning.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION PROGRAM GOAL FOUR: SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS

The College of Education maintains that our responsibility is to convey, model, and promote the highest standards of professional conduct and ethical behavior. Because of this, our conceptual framework focuses on being socially responsible citizens who are leaders and work for social justice. As reflective practitioners our graduates will use interpretive, normative, and critical perspectives in understanding the relationship between school and society as well as address emerging issues in education. They will exhibit social responsibility through facilitating opportunities to engage in teamwork and cooperation; to study civic liberties and participate in citizenship; to ponder ethical questions; and teach a democratic life (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2009). Our teacher candidates are committed to educating diverse communities and responding to experiences as *socially responsible citizens.* Candidates of the College of Education Teacher Education Program realize the importance of acting as positive change agents for the education and betterment of the human condition. Our candidates nurture all students that appear at the classroom door on any given day. They exhibit competence, compassion, social equality, and empathy when teaching children from diverse social,

economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Our candidates make ethical decisions based on a social justice perspective and respond to student needs through culturally responsive teaching.

For Athens State University COE, a social justice paradigm definition is linked to the work of Rawls. This means that each person possesses an inviolable right founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. This justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others (Rawls, 2001). Race and socio-economic gaps in achievement are a social justice issue and lead to long-term social and economic consequences. Discourses of cultural versus structural explanations concerning educational inequality and the achievement gap are based on race and socioeconomic status (Fram, Miller-Cribb & Van Horn, 2007). Education is a critical pathway to opportunity. This pathway is not equal for marginalized children, those that are poor, and/or those that are racially discriminated against. For the COE, efforts will be made to ensure that future teachers will ensure all students, including the marginalized, develop fully and practice authentic leadership and responsibility to ensure their success (Covey, 2009).

One aim of public education is to give children the **opportunity for social mobility** and to move farther ahead in life than their parents. This equality of opportunity also encompasses equal access to knowledge, addressing sources of inequity, and actually achieving equal opportunities (Muller & Schiller, 2005; Anyon, 1981). This social mobility is possible as students become more successful in their academic success, thus opening opportunities for full participation in society. These students would have the ability to take advantage of all that society has to offer. "Ideally, the equalization of the benefits of education for all groups should be a reflection of a movement towards a more equitable social system – one in which racial and ethnic diversity are valued and the access of all groups to political, economic, and social power is ensured" (Oakes, 2005, p. 204). Schools are the places where young people begin to learn how to negotiate these groups. As they become more successful in school, opportunities and success follow in society. Due to the vast differences in the conditions of schools from physical facilities to teachers to books to curriculum between urban and suburban schools (Kozol, 1991; McLaren, 2003), it is imperative that teachers are cognizant of the importance of a social justice paradigm.

Another goal of education is to **provide a social justice framework** within which students can learn (Kozol, 1991; hooks, 1994; Lipman, 2004). This framework consists of equity, agency, cultural relevance, and critical literacy. Equity in education means that all children should receive quality education that includes academic rigor and equitable distribution of resources and materials. Agency in education encompasses the support students have to develop the ability to act on and change personal conditions and social injustices. Educators should employ cultural relevance in school by using students' cultures to support academic success. Critical literacy provides students with the tools needed to examine knowledge and their overall experiences in relationship to social and historical contexts. Employing this social justice framework will even the playing field for marginalized populations of students.

Lastly, an **equal educational opportunity for all students** should be the goal for educational policy makers. Howe (1997) described the participatory ideal of obtaining equal educational opportunity as one that requires equal access to information, fair social conditions, and the ability to make choices linked to the learner's interest. Equal access to a quality education can be obtained through a fair distribution of resources, effective instruction, and strategic teaching and learning. Creating fair social conditions in school can begin with an understanding of the relationship between schooling and society. In order for students to be educated so that they can participate fully in society, they must experience success in school. This success hinges on the ability of educational institutions to consciously take action to address equal educational opportunity.

Our college of education will develop social justice educators that provide opportunities for learning through an emancipatory pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). They will engage students' personal knowledge and understandings, expose students to various possible realities and perspectives of society, empower students to make decisions, and enact those decisions through action (Moll, 1992). **Culturally responsive teaching**, as described by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), focuses on mediating the frequent mismatch between the home and school cultures. Understanding and rejecting stereotypes, and formulating generalizations about groups and then their educational assets can offer a practical introduction for planning instruction. Tomorrow's teachers will need to plan for diversity, which means using a variety of

classroom strategies and techniques to respond to different learning styles. Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students. The following characteristics describe a culturally responsive curriculum: **validation** of cultural heritages; **comprehension** of teaching the whole child through the use of "cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, p. 382) (e.g., embracing multicultural education); using a **multidimensional approach** to pedagogy; **empowering** learners through academic competence, self-efficacy, and initiative; and emancipating and liberating learners.

To further improve their practice, our candidates understand the importance of *exhibiting professional dispositions* in their work. Our candidates engage in ongoing professional learning and use evidence to continually evaluate their practices through reflective practice. Our candidates examine the effects of their choices and actions on learners, families, other professionals, and members of the community. Our candidates adapt practice to meet each student's need to reach excellence (INTASC 9). Our candidates will seek leadership roles and opportunities to seek responsibility for student learning, families, colleagues, community members, and other professionals to ensure learner growth and to advance the profession (INTASC 10). *Throughout a professional program, exemplary candidates for the teaching profession should: participate in positive interactions; show respect for self and others; assume responsibility; exhibit interest in the learner and the learning process; exhibit stewardship of diversity; advocate use of technology; and exhibit fairness and the belief that all students can learn* (Covey, 1990).

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION'S ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

The College of Education's assessment process is based on the current conceptual framework and has been implemented. It meets the standards for Alabama's State Department of Education's *Alabama Quality Teaching Standards, Educate Alabama*, INTASC, and the various professional organizations. It is a systematic assessment system with four benchmarks of candidate assessment as well as program and unit assessments. It monitors candidates'

knowledge, skills and dispositions as they progress through their programs. This is done through electronic portfolios, benchmarks, observations, and PRAXIS examinations.

The revised conceptual framework's assessment process will build from the current system but focus on data related to student-centered learning, knowledge of subject matter and professional knowledge. It will also add measures to assess teacher candidates' understanding of—and ability to function as—socially responsible professionals. The keys to this process are:

1) the assessment process will continue to be ongoing;

2) it will be an integral part of instruction;

3) ongoing modifications of assignments, courses, programs, and assessment systems will be utilized to help teacher candidates and improve the quality of the course and program;

4) the assessment process will be authentic;

5) it will be a collaborative, reflective process;

6) it will have a multidimensional component;

7) it must be developmentally and culturally appropriate;

8) it will identify student strengths and build from those;

9) it will be based on how students learn;

10) it will assess students' knowledge of subject matter as well as pedagogy; and

11) it will assess student engagement in socially responsible projects as well as students' attitudes (e.g., hidden bias test).

Because of the importance of the College of Education's teacher candidates being socially responsible and achieving levels of excellence, inter-rater reliability will become a component of the assessment process. Although the current assessment system will continue to be used, the addition of inter-rater reliability will offer an in-depth look at various assignments and teacher candidates. This component will be accomplished through the use of rubrics, holistic grading, statistical analyses of ratings of dispositions, and additional approaches (e.g., TEP portfolio assessments, use of the QEP rubric). The data gathered from this component will be shared with the department chair and program instructors. Another component of the assessment system will be to begin to implement the assessment process for the essential

questions from the 21st Century Learner. The data collected through this system will be used to develop action plans to improve the quality of learning and continue the effort toward excellence in preparation of reflective practitioners.

CONCLUSION

The College of Education is committed to providing a systemic and supportive environment that will enable future teachers to fully develop into competent, caring, knowledgeable and responsible reflective practitioners striving for each student's success.

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION'S DEFINITION OF THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Underpinning the COE mission and conceptual framework is a central tenant that excellent teachers are reflective practitioners. Preparation of the reflective teacher encourages critical thinking and reflection on classroom experiences to promote the capacity to learn from experiences related to students, learning, teaching, curriculum, and the education profession. Candidates reflect on their experiences through recalling, rationalizing, and reflecting on classroom experiences (Lee, 2005) as well as the content being taught. The College of Education bases its preparation of pre-service teachers on the following reflective practitioner components.   The four components are: making sense of one's experiences grounded in situations; systematic, disciplined, and rigorous critical thinking that allows time between thought and action; interaction with others; and a mindset that values personal and intellectual growth (Rogers, 2002).

Reflective thinking can be described as a state of doubt or hesitation that comes from searching to find a solution (Dewey, 1916). Preparing the reflective practitioner requires that they articulate; 1) what is known about the learner; 2) the content needed to facilitate learning; and 3) the ways to make learning that content accessible in order to successfully support the education of the students taught. Reflection plays a key role in the process of moving from a pre-service teacher to an experienced teacher. The ability to reflect critically on one's classroom practice is generally regarded as an essential part of any teacher's professional growth (Cavanagh & Prescott, 2010). Posner (2010) explains that reflection on an experience means "thinking about the experience, what the experience means, how it felt, where it might lead, and what to do about it" (p.21). Throughout their careers, reflective practitioners seek knowledge and expertise that lead to professional behaviors and dispositions, effective practices in work settings, and collaboration with others in meeting common goals (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

Experienced teachers are reflective practitioners because of the depth they obtain through technical description and the ensuing deliberate and critical reflection (Muir & Bawick, 2007). Technical description focuses on classroom events such as delivery and management. Deliberate reflection is the identification and explanation of the events through a critical lens.

Critical reflection considers the perspectives of others and alternative actions. Dewey (1916) maintains that reflective thinking moves one from the impulsive and routine activity to deliberate and intentional action. Thus, the reflective practitioner is actively persistent and continuously analyzes the beliefs and practices of pedagogy in relationship to the needs of learners (Posner, 2010). Teachers engage in reflective thinking by engaging in the following actions.

1. They critically examine assumptions about learning and schooling;
2. They act in deliberate and intentional ways;
3. They see problems from the student's point of view; and
4. They treat every student's condition of learning as unique.