

Conceptual Framework: Miami University School of Education and Allied Professions

Miami University is a state-assisted university in Ohio. The central campus is located in Oxford just 35 miles north of Cincinnati and 45 miles southwest of Dayton. Preservation of nature throughout the campus and community coupled with architectural continuity – modified Georgian design – explains why Miami is regarded as one of the most beautiful campuses in the Midwest.

Approximately 15,000 undergraduates and 1,800 graduate students are enrolled at the Oxford campus. About 225 of the undergraduates attend one or two semesters at the John E. Dolibois European Center in Differdange, Luxembourg. Two branch campuses in nearby cities, Hamilton and Middletown, each enroll more than 2,600 additional students.

Mission of Miami University

A state-assisted university, Miami's mission is to preserve, add to, evaluate, and transmit the accumulated knowledge of the centuries; to develop critical thinking, extend the frontiers of knowledge and serve society; and to provide an environment conducive to effective and inspired teaching and learning, promote professional development of faculty, and encourage scholarly research and creativity of faculty and students.

Miami's primary concern is its students. This concern is reflected in a broad array of efforts to develop the potential of each student. The university endeavors to individualize the educational experience. It provides personal and professional guidance; and offers opportunities for students to achieve understanding and appreciation not only of their own culture but of the cultures of others as well. Selected undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs of quality are offered with the expectation of students achieving a high level of competence and developing a personal value system.

Miami is committed to the idea of liberal education for undergraduate students. The Miami Plan for Liberal Education, the most recent manifestation of this commitment to liberal education, was adopted in 1988, with implementation beginning in 1992. It is consciously constructed to secure a continuous curricular framework that carries through each year of all baccalaureate programs. Even as the university prepares many students for professional careers in the areas of law, medicine, education, and business, it ensures that all students have grounding in the humanities, social, and natural sciences. Students learn through this new curriculum to better understand the problems and possibilities of the contemporary world. This liberal education approach is predicted on the principles of:

- Thinking critically;
- Understanding contexts;
- Engaging with other learners; and
- Reflecting and acting upon the issues raised.

In all areas, Miami University's mission involves synthesizing liberal and professional education. It is the liberal underpinnings to our professional programs that is a hallmark of a degree from Miami University. This synthesis results in a unique blend of strengths in our programs for the education of educators.

Closely tied to Miami's mission is a high quality faculty and staff. The university is committed to maintaining faculty strength as a prerequisite for success in its most creative programs. Miami recruits from the best universities throughout the nation. Its student-faculty ratio of 16:1 is excellent. Faculty members at Miami recognize the inseparability of teaching and scholarship while acknowledging teaching as their primary occupation. Significantly, an overwhelming proportion of Miami University's faculty members, including the most senior and distinguished among them, are involved with undergraduate instruction, including introductory courses.

Vision of the School of Education and Allied Professions

- Our students (candidates) are our first priority.
- We are stewards of our public responsibility for human development, working collaboratively with our students, schools, families, and community, health and social service agencies to create knowledge and strategies to improve our complex global society.
- We are a collegial community of learners, committed to the goals of Miami University, specifically focused on the development of leaders for education, families, health and social service agencies and local communities.
- We strive to be exemplars of practices that are democratic, nurturing, moral, ethical and respectful.
- We are responsive to our past and responsible for our collective futures.

Mission of the School of Education and Allied Professions

The EAP community of collaborative practitioners (the Unit), while committed to fulfilling Miami University's mission, endeavors to prepare **caring, competent, and transformative educators**. Knowledge, skills, and dispositions will be infused to promote the highest quality teacher education & allied professions' programs, professional development opportunities for educators, and exemplary graduate degree programs.

As a unit, we adopted 14 Principles Guiding the Development of Curricula for Educators, and Health/Social Service Professionals in 1994. These principles were based on 2 years of work of various committees and several Faculty and Partner School Retreats, the draft standards for

teacher licensure in Ohio, standards of professional societies, NCATE standards, and the original 16 Statements of Professional Development that undergirded the development of professional education programs in 1987. The 14 principles include: addressing the knowledge base, praxis, coherence, inquiry, decision-making, learner focus, equity, diversity, family and community, collaboration, lifelong-learning in an educative community, enculturation and global awareness. These 14 principles set the foundation for our five institutional standards that are at the heart of our conceptual framework and our philosophical beliefs that describe our definition of a **caring, competent, and transformative educator**.

What does it mean to be a **caring, competent, and transformative educator**? This educator is one who holds the unique responsibility of preparing young people for their responsibilities in a democracy. The educator's role and relationships with students are ever changing and evolving - transforming-

A **caring** educator is one who understands the perspective of others. A **caring** relationship is one in which teachers can convey loving support to students by listening to students and validating their feelings, and by demonstrating kindness, compassion, and respect (Higgins, 1994; Meier, 1995).

A **competent** educator is one knowledgeable within the content area(s) in which he/she teaches. "Without the essential base of subject matter knowledge, teachers are simply unable to produce effective instruction" (Lee, 1995, p. 424; Hashweh, 1987).

A **transformative** educator is one who is engaged within critical reflection on present practices informed by theoretical knowledge (Cambron-McCabe & Foster, 1994). The educator becomes a transformative agent in schools and communities. This involves reflecting upon practice and creating learning environments – both in the classroom and community – which promote trust, justice, and hope.

A **caring, competent, and transformative educator** has the preparation and disposition to prepare the student for "political and social responsibility as a citizen" and for "maximum individual development, for full participation in the human conversation. (Goodlad, 1996). Hence, a person completing Miami's programs in the School of Education and Allied Professions should be one who: is well grounded in general studies (Miami Plan) or graduate core courses and content knowledge; appreciates and understands diverse learners, mentors, peers, and learning processes; demonstrates sensitivities to learning contexts and environments; engages in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of varied instructional strategies; demonstrates professional commitments and dispositions. The meaning of the five institutional standards will now be delineated in greater detail:

Standard 1 - Is Well-Grounded in General Studies and Content Knowledge means:

- ◆ Evidences depth of academic knowledge and skills
- ◆ Demonstrates an understanding of the connections between content previously learned, current content, and the disposition to integrate future content
- ◆ Makes content knowledge comprehensible to students
- ◆ Demonstrates strong written and oral communication skills (e.g. correct grammar, legible writing, clear speech)

Standard 2 - Appreciates and Understands Diverse Learners, Mentors, Peers, and Learning Processes means:

- ◆ Shows a sensitivity to cultural and individual differences
- ◆ Demonstrates an appreciation and understanding of exceptionalities
- ◆ Utilizes multiple instructional strategies that are appropriate to students' needs
- ◆ Demonstrates familiarity with relevant aspects of students' background knowledge and experiences and varies instruction based on students' interests, aspirations, personal and cultural dispositions, and needs

Standard 3 - Demonstrates Sensitivities to Learning Contexts and Environments means:

- ◆ Creates a climate that promotes fairness
- ◆ Establishes and maintains rapport with students
- ◆ Communicates challenging learning expectations to each student
- ◆ Establishes and maintains consistent standards of classroom behavior
- ◆ Makes the physical environment safe and conducive to learning
- ◆ Facilitates students' integration of understanding, competence, confidence, and emerging self efficacy

Standard 4 - Demonstrates Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation by Utilizing Varied Instructional Strategies means:

Planning

- ◆ Articulates clear learning goals for the lesson that are appropriate for the students
- ◆ Creates or selects teaching methods, learning activities, and instructional materials, technological resources that are appropriate for the students and are aligned with the goals of the lesson

Implementation

- ◆ Clearly communicates challenging learning expectations and procedures to the students
- ◆ Encourages students to extend their thinking
- ◆ Monitors students' understanding of content through a variety of means, providing feedback to students to assist learning and adjusting activities as the situation merits
- ◆ Uses instructional time effectively

Evaluation

- ◆ Creates or selects evaluation strategies that are appropriate for the students and that are aligned with the goals of the lesson
- ◆ Demonstrates a sense of efficacy by modifying instruction in response to student feedback and performance
- ◆ Monitors and assesses learning in using a variety of means (e.g. observation, questioning techniques, tests, demonstrations, etc.)

**Standard 5 - Demonstrates Professional Commitments and Dispositions
means:**

- ◆ Participates in professional and school-sponsored activities
- ◆ Observes school policies and procedures
- ◆ Demonstrates proper conduct as a professional (well groomed, properly dressed, courteous, punctual, etc.)
- ◆ Meets all requirements for professional development within the specific licensure program
- ◆ Reflects on the extent to which learning goals were met
- ◆ Builds professional relationships with colleagues to share learning insights and to coordinate learning activities for students in relation to both the public and private purposes of education
- ◆ Communicates with parents, guardians, and other colleagues about student learning

The conceptual framework of the School of Education and Allied Professions (SEAP) at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio places **caring, competent, transformative** education at the heart of all that we do. We believe that success for all students – be they university teacher candidates, school personnel candidates, or the students they are being prepared to teach and lead – should be the central and fundamental goal of education.

The faculty and staff of SEAP are themselves **caring, competent** and **transformative** teacher **educators**. They model the aforementioned standards within their work and teaching. They are true professionals dedicated to the preparation of educators for our nation's schools and agencies.

Our vision is aligned with both national and state standards for Ohio for the preparation of educators. It is a shared vision that has been collaboratively developed over a number of years through the efforts of both university and school faculty as well as community members.

As stated in our vision, our candidates are our first priority. We are committed to the preparation of **caring, competent, transformative educators** who will impact student learning in schools of today and tomorrow.

References

Cambron-McCabe, N. & Foster, W (1994). A paradigm shift: Implications for the preparation of school leaders. In Mulkee, T., Cambron-McCabe, N., & Anderson, B. Democratic leadership: The change context of administrative preparation. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing.

Educational Testing Service (1994). Teacher Performance Assessments: Assessment Criteria. NJ: ETS.

Hashweh, M.Z. (1987). Effects of subject-matter knowledge in the teaching of biology and physics. Teaching and Teacher Education, 3 (2), 109-120.

Higgins, G. (1994). Resilient adults: Overcoming a cruel past. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Goodlad, J. (1996). *Democracy, Education, and Community*. In R. Soder (Ed.) Democracy, Education, and the Schools. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. p 112.

Lee, O. (1995). Subject matter knowledge, classroom management, and instructional practices in middle school science classrooms. Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 32 (4), 423-440.

Meier, D. (1995). The power of their ideas: Lessons for American from a small school in Harlem. Boston: Beacon Press.

Noddings, N. (1984). Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education. Berkeley: University of California Press.