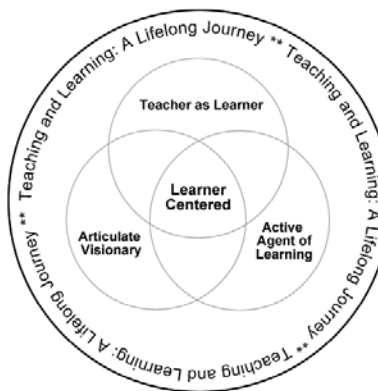


UND Teacher Education: Conceptual Framework

The structural complexity of the teacher education unit is pulled together by a common conceptual framework of teacher preparation that is supported by the missions of the university, the colleges and the departments. Our conceptual framework is continually evolving as it is influenced by our study of teacher preparation. We view our program as holistic and dynamic. While supported by the framework that is provided by the INTASC Principles, we would not identify any single course or learning experience exclusively with one of these principles. However, the principles do guide the three themes that are woven throughout our teacher education programs:

- teacher as learner
- teacher as active agent of learning
- teacher as articulate visionary



Foundations of the Conceptual Framework

Teacher Education at the University of North Dakota is supported by a Teacher Education Unit which includes faculty from three different colleges (Arts and Sciences, Education and Human Development, and Business and Public Administration) and from nineteen different departments (Teaching and Learning, Educational Leadership, Educational Foundations and Research, Counseling, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Music, Physical Education, English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Geography, Math, Visual Arts, Languages, Industrial Technology, Communication and Information Systems, and Business Education). The College of Education and Human Development strives to fulfill, and is the organizing unit for, the University of North Dakota's mission in the areas of education and human services.

The mission of the Teacher Education Unit in the College of Education and Human Development is to support the preparation of educators and other school personnel. Through teaching, research, and service, faculty focus their work on the development of practicing professionals concerned with "fostering healthy human development and learning across the lifespan, beginning in early childhood" (Organization and By-Laws College of Education and Human Development, p. 1).

Teacher education at the University of North Dakota operates from a philosophy of progressivism that supports constructivist approaches to facilitate the development of educators. Our progressive orientation is guided by Dewey's view of education, voiced in *Democracy and Education* (1966), and *The Education of John Dewey* (Martin, 2002), as being one of "reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases the ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (Dewey, p. 76). These two aspects, the making of meaning and the added power of subsequent direction and control, support our goal that to be a "student of learning...[is] to establish and maintain a reflective capacity and to become articulate about one's intentions" (Perrone, 1991, p. 85).

Reflection involves thinking about many things, but in a democratic society, it is essential that educators at all levels continually explore the idea and meaning of democracy. Teachers need to examine social, political and economic institutions, and consider ways to "meet the changes that are

going on in the development of new needs on the part of human beings and new resources for satisfying these needs" (Dewey, 1958, p. 47). Our teacher education program fosters learning environments that invite collaboration and cooperation among learners and provide many opportunities for a rich exchange in which learners are asked to be reflective about moral, social, political, and technical issues (Fine, 1995; Roland Martin, 1994) as well as "the instrumental issues that are imbedded in everyday thinking and practice" (Richardson, 1990, p. 14). Reflection requires active thinking and putting knowledge to use. It is not simply a superficial treatment, but is a way of thinking that implies "a more conscious examination of alternative positions and courses of action" (Valli, 1990, p. 42).

Consequently, progressivism rather than conservatism, transformation rather than transmission, and reconstruction rather than replication guide, and define the goals of the basic teacher education programs at the University of North Dakota. Faculty work to enable the development of teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to "create a public" based on this philosophical foundation (Postman, 1996, p. 18). The development of human potential is met by working toward the linked goals of a democratic society: opportunity and excellence for all (Rippa, 1997). "Education as the practice of freedom affirms healthy self-esteem in students as it promotes their capacity to be aware and live consciously. It teaches them to reflect and act in ways that further self-actualization rather than conformity to the status quo" (Hooks, 2003, p. 72). Within this context, teacher education candidates are asked to continually examine what kind of public do we want to create?

Specifically, our teacher education program works to enable the development of teachers who:

- are committed to the continuing process of learning with an emphasis on learning to teach;
- take an active role in promoting the learning of all students;
- can envision alternative solutions to the challenges posed in schools;
- embrace diversity and support pluralistic views; and
- thoughtfully examine the role of technology and apply it effectively in our programs so as to enhance and advance the teaching process.

Constructivist practices provide a seamless match with a progressive philosophy in curriculum and instruction, in assessment, and in the research that faculty undertake. We believe, with Dewey (1938) and others (Gardner, 1991; Lambert, 1995; Mansilla & Gardner, 1998; Perkins, 1998) that learning is active and that it is constructed from experience and reflection on the experience. The lifelong process of learning "involves reaching out of the mind. It involves organic assimilation from within" (Dewey, 1902). Similarly to the pedagogy outlined by Perkins (1998), the faculty attempts to help candidates build on their previous understandings and to extend new understandings. Faculty also help candidates examine and challenge their previous understandings, or assumptions regarding the broad array of educational concerns and issues. As well, they engage candidates in increasing and incremental performance-based understandings and provide timely assessment.

Like Perkins (1998), we view understanding performances as not solely aligned with discovery learning, but as issuing from many instructional modes. Didactic instruction, at times, is logical and appropriate. Other times, it is more worthwhile to engage learners in problem-solving or cooperative learning. Faculty members place importance on candidates' performance-based understandings that combine theory and practice whatever the method of instruction. Teaching for understanding has dual benefits; i.e., the learner both demonstrates *and* advances his or her knowledge (Perkins, 1998).

Constructivist beliefs also inform the evaluation processes. Participation in continuous assessment with candidates offers faculty members numerous opportunities for formative and summative evaluation of our candidates and programs. Our assessment plan is tied to our conceptual framework and reflects the continuous processes of reflection on and renewal of our programs through a triangulation of self-study, evaluation of our candidates, and feedback from the field.

Constructivism informs our research. Through individual and collaborative work, faculty engage in naturalistic forms of inquiry, describing experiences of teachers and learners at points where

connections are made. More traditional research informs our practice in regards to state and national trends including No Child Left Behind (2001), learning situations of students in North Dakota, and summative results of various programs or instructional endeavors.

Explanation of the Conceptual Framework

Initial Programs

A Venn Diagram, provides a graphic representation of our conceptual framework. Three themes emerge: teacher as a learner, teacher as active agent of learning, and teacher as articulate visionary. Central to these three themes is the learner – who is defined as the candidate, the students they teach, or the faculty who are supporting the development of teachers. The following narrative describes the three themes of our model, how they are integrated into our program, and their links to our assessment plan.

Teacher as Learner

The initial theme, teacher as learner, addresses our goal of developing teachers who are committed to the continuing process of learning about many things, especially about learning to teach. An all-encompassing goal is to recognize the impact of diversity on our ways of learning. This theme is first addressed in the general education and specialty areas of our programs and continues as an emphasis throughout the professional coursework by studying how one can learn to teach.

The theme supports our work of preparing teachers who see learning as a lifelong process and understand that knowledge is constructed when meaningful connections are made through and among their experiences (Lambert, 1995). The habit of searching for connections of personal experience to education is cultivated in the introductory courses of each program as candidates are asked to reflect on their own experiences as learners and the implications of those experiences for their growth as teachers. Through reflection on their experiences as learners, candidates are helped to establish connections among the role the student plays in learning, the environments in which learning occurs, and the knowledge bases that help teachers support learning (Wang & Palincsar, 1989).

While recognizing the value of a strong identity as a learner for becoming a teacher, we feel that an equally important aspect of our role as faculty is to enable "unlearning" (Barnes, 1989, p.16; Ball 1988). We try to provide experiences that will help future teachers overcome what Lortie (1975) and Gardner (2000) referred to as "the apprenticeship of observation" in which the "intuitive and imitative rather than the explicit and analytical" govern a pedagogy of "continuity rather than change" (Lortie, pp. 61-67). This continuity or conservatism of teaching might hinder candidates in curricular knowledge, instructional strategies, and in identifying with students who learn differently from themselves. We try to help candidates broaden limited or stereotyped concepts of such terms as "school," "teach," "curriculum," "individualization" and "testing," by offering experiences that provoke dissonance and questions. Thus, while initially accepting the premise that the curriculum of our teacher education must come, to a large extent, from the personal experiences of the learner(s), we promote a knowledge base that informs the experiences offered to candidates who declare their intention of becoming teachers.

In that teachers need to broadly and deeply educate students who know how to continue their own learning, the University of North Dakota's programs in teacher education are dedicated to the processes and benefits of lifelong learning. They provide support for the construction of multiple domains of knowledge which may be broadly defined as knowledge of content, knowledge of the learner, and knowledge of pedagogy, referred to as "powerful teaching" by Darling-Hammond (2006, p. 300).

Knowledge of content is supported mainly through the general education foundation required of all students. The experience of a liberal arts education enables the teacher to participate in the "great conversation" of thinkers that transcends time and place (Schulman, 1989). Moreover, a study of the

general education components of our programs and specialty areas enable pre-service teachers to experience a depth of exploration and the ways of thinking in one or more disciplines. Content knowledge is further expanded and enriched through discipline-specific knowledge of the declared majors. For example, elementary and early childhood candidates take content specific courses in the areas of language arts, reading and sciences. We welcome Anderson's (1989) concept of teacher content knowledge as an ecosystem from which organizing principles may be drawn in response to changing life situations, for, ultimately, each person constructs his or her own meanings. Content knowledge is not enough, however, as indicated through the work of Darling-Hammond (1999, 2006), and Berliner (2000).

Teacher education candidates need to study child and adolescent development in order to understand how students learn. This knowledge is also supported in complimentary courses that require the candidates to expand and apply that knowledge through practical application. (Gardner, 2000; Zeichner, 2006; Levine, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006)

The third type of knowledge that supports the learning of the teacher is pedagogical. Methods courses specific to the declared area of study are accompanied by field experiences that support the candidates in making practical decisions focused on the theories presented. Opportunities to apply a range of strategies are presented through a variety of field experiences that are hierarchical in nature.

A critical element in continuing our own learning is recognizing and supporting the development of the dispositions of the profession. NCATE 2000 clearly articulated the nature and role of dispositions in the preparation of educators. As David Berliner (2000) writes: "Professional have developed standards of behavior that are important for them to uphold, seeking to honor the wisdom they have acquired and to protect the public from incompetence" (p. 362). Our programs have developed processes and procedures for identifying dispositions; perhaps more importantly, our programs are dedicated to supporting the development of professional dispositions in our candidates. From the moment of application for admission to our programs through their student teaching experience, candidates are informed and guided in the development of professional dispositions. Information on candidate dispositions is solicited from faculty not only in the professional development courses, but also from faculty in related disciplines and in the public school environments.

One disposition that is necessary for teachers is the need to be self-aware and confident in their learning. Believing as we do that learning builds on experience and experiential reflection, we encourage candidates to critically examine their own and others' learning processes and styles, and compare them both informally and through the lens of developmental psychology (Wang & Peverly, 1986; Gardner, 2000, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Thoughtful communication is also essential to teaching. Courses in our programs require that students convey and reflect on their experiences in a variety of ways. So that pre-service teachers may gain experience and fluency in speaking, listening, and writing, they are offered a variety of opportunities for verbal expression in our programs (i.e., synthesis papers, Socratic dialogues, small and large group discussion, and creative projects).

Although many teachers work in isolation, teacher growth is fostered in interaction and interdependent collaboration (Little, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Levine, 2006; Zeichner, 2006). Thus we often ask our candidates to work in groups and to engage in cooperative learning so that they may become comfortable and skilled at developing supportive networks (Brown & Palincsar, 1990). Aware of the power of our modeling, we try to be a community of scholars through our curriculum development, teaching and collaborative work. Currently, we are extending our sense of collegiality more explicitly to our faculty partners in the schools through our school/university partnerships. Our own faculty participates in cooperative scholarly activities such as sustained faculty writing groups.

In order for candidates to become increasingly knowledgeable and skilled teachers, the Interstate New Teacher and Support Consortium (INTASC) Principles were adopted in March 2001 to guide our curricular decisions and to help candidates in our initial programs understand our goals. Several

program areas require that candidates demonstrate knowledge, skills, and competencies as described by the INTASC Principles. The theme "teacher as learner" aligns with all the INTASC Principles, and the Department of Teaching and Learning program standards.

Teacher as Active Agent of Learning

The second theme, teacher as active agent of learning, focuses on developing teachers who are able to take an active role in promoting the learning of all students (Zeichner, 2000; Berliner, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2006). As described in the first theme, in order to support the learning of others, teacher candidates must master content knowledge, have full knowledge of the learner and a robust understanding of pedagogical knowledge (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000; 1999; Berliner, 2000). The context of learning and all of the elements that impact that context must be considered.

As an active agent of learning, the candidate must be critically engaged in considering and acting upon the ideals of a democratic society. Faculty plan so that candidates attend to how economic, political, social and moral issues affect decisions regarding school finance, personal relations, home and school relations, and community relations (Levine, 2006). Faculty also focus on candidates' appreciation and authentic regard for diversity within the society.

Learning is most able to occur in an environment that is rich in resources, and organized to promote thoughtful interaction. Creation of a learning environment requires that the teacher explore the material resources available both inside and outside the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2006). It is equally important that the teacher study factors and patterns that promote a learning community with all that implies about a moral atmosphere in which people act with integrity and commitment (Clark, 1990; Berliner, 2000).

As Vygotsky (1993) indicated, understanding is socially constructed and mediated, and needs for social interaction and approbation are met in cooperative and collaborative arrangements (Glasser, 1986). Creation of a climate for learning calls for recognition of interpersonal connections among students as well as those among teachers. A collective perspective is held across the school with structures for caring and support for democratic learning evident (Darling-Hammond, 2006). And finally, connections to family and community are recognized as being critical and are integral parts of the curriculum. (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Levine, 2006).

While collaboration and group effort are highly valued, the worth of the individual is also upheld as evident within the democratic ideals of opportunity and excellence for all. As such, teaching requires an understanding of and sensitivity to students' individual needs and their differences. "... [A] teacher proactively plans varied approaches to what students need to learn, how they will learn it, and/or how they can express what they have learned in order to increase the likelihood that each student will learn as much as he or she can as efficiently as possible" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 151). This planning incorporates knowledge of child and adolescent development and of the significance of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, culture, class, and disability for each student's education. The diverse nature of our society demands a school context where teachers and students together can create new societies of learning. Individual characteristics of learners are carefully considered as attention is paid to development, and diversity is appreciated (Lantieri, 2001; Gardner, 2000).

The University of North Dakota teacher education programs promote the development of teachers who consider and act on these ideals. This is evident in our programs through traditional classroom experiences, school partnerships, and field experiences, which compel attention to diversity, authentic learning opportunities, and performance-based assessment (Wiggins, 1998). On-campus work, coupled with field placements both in our community and in schools at significant distances from our campus, provide candidates with opportunities to experience the rich, variable, and complex contexts of education. Teacher education faculty carefully design courses and select resources that develop teacher knowledge and skills while emphasizing reflection on and articulation of the purposes and goals of education (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Moreover, professional development relationships and

more informal school partnerships are nurtured in order to provide candidates with the broadest possible range of experiences.

Teacher candidates are guided through the processes of respecting diversity and culturally diverse qualities of learning. They are asked to recognize and appreciate the rich fabric of our society even when diversity in our predominantly mono-cultural area might not be immediately evident. Candidates, through readings and discussion in on-campus courses and during field-based experiences, come to see individual differences along lines of gender, religion, learning interests, styles, and aptitudes, for example. Moreover, in those situations where economics and race make diversity more visible, candidates need to be aware of and responsive to difference, but may also need help to see commonalities among the diversity.

Reflection on our work, our teaching, and our lives is critical if we are to truly become active agents of learning. It facilitates the development of quality processes of assessment, evaluation of student learning as well as our own, and supports the teaching of others.

Teaching demands that student learning be continuously assessed at multiple levels using a variety of methods (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Wiggins, 1998). Formal and informal processes must be used to gather as much information as possible about the student and the learning context (Gardner, 2000). Teacher education candidates are exposed to a range of assessment techniques both in theory and practice throughout their programs. Traditional paper-pencil activities are but one way evaluation data is gathered. As Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, and Ford Slack (1995), Gardner (2000), and Wiggins (1998), have pointed out, authentic assessment can evoke meaning making in students, and support the constructivist perspectives on learning.

Our program fosters evaluation practices which: (1) raise meaningful questions; (2) are integrated as much as possible with the ongoing experiences of candidates; and (3) advance learning rather than becoming an end in themselves (Haney, 1985; Hanhan, 1988; King & Franklin, 1989; Zidon, 1996; Wiggins, 1998). As our assessment plan indicates, authentic assessment plays a critical role in the assessment of the teacher education candidates in the program at the University of North Dakota. Through experiencing these diverse assessment activities on a personal level, teacher education candidates are provided with a foundation on which to develop their personal assessment strategies for teaching. The field experiences provide multiple opportunities to apply theory to practice as candidates evaluate their teaching effectiveness and their students' learning in classroom settings. While the methods courses for each discipline are certainly a prime learning place for these strategies to be constructed, assessment is emphasized throughout the programs. As Darling-Hammond (1997, 2006) has pointed out, we know the characteristics of schools restructured for success. They are places where students and teachers are actively involved in in-depth learning that is evaluated through authentic assessment.

Our beliefs in constructivism and student performances of understanding support the notion of providing the learner with opportunities in an environment that supports the creating of connections between and among the experiences and attitudes of the learner. As a result, what we can do is to create environments that support the constructivist process of learning. This means that the reciprocal nature of learning is recognized and the constructivist premises described by Lambert et al. (1995) are woven into our programs. We support nurturing, trusting environments in which old assumptions and myths about learning are abandoned while we focus on the construction of meaning, and provide alternative ways of assessing and evaluating knowledge and understanding. These basic premises describe the parameters that guide our program and support the teaching and learning that occurs among all involved. This theme is developed most strongly in the methods and materials courses and clinical experiences 9 (student teaching) of our programs, and aligns most closely with INTASC Principles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 and related Department of Teaching and Learning program standards.

Teacher as Articulate Visionary

The third theme, teacher as articulate visionary, permeates all professional coursework. It is through this theme that we develop professional educators who can examine and analyze the dilemmas posed in schools, envision and articulate alternative solutions, and demonstrate the dispositions required of advocates for quality educational programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Development of schools that are healthy environments for learning and teaching requires educators to think critically about educational and societal issues. While reserving prolonged exploration of the roots of educational issues for advanced students, we believe that persons preparing to be teachers must recognize some of the complexity of the context in which educators work. Additionally, we believe that it is vital for candidates to acquire a vision of broad educational goals, and a teacher identity which can help them steer a course through this complexity (Goodlad, 1984). Toward that end, faculty engage candidates in reading, in reflecting upon, and discussing these foundational aspects of education.

The reflective process, one of the hallmarks of constructivist education, serves as a vehicle for transforming experiences and creating new information. In Lambert et al. (1995), *The Constructivist Learner*, Schon (1983) is cited as maintaining that self-reflection is "central to clarifying one's understandings and making applications to learners of any age" (p 22). Through reflection, candidates can see more clearly the path that must be taken to continuously improve instruction and facilitate learning. Reflective journals, papers and projects are applied throughout the programs to encourage teacher education candidates to be actively involved in the reflective process.

Teachers need to be able to offer students thoughtful academic and social experiences that broaden and challenge them. In the interaction of experience and education where the candidates become astute observers, flexible thinkers, and thoughtful decision makers, the teacher's work is to provide opportunities for engagement that will promote growth and thought (Levine, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner, 2006). The ability to do this calls on the teacher's grasp of content, on the teacher's ability to relate it to the past experience of students, and on the teacher's perception of meaningful and appropriate experiences that will extend students' knowledge and understanding (Gardner, 2000). Teachers need always to be thinking about what is possible and responding interactively to bring students toward the possible. It is important to recognize that we see curriculum development as an interactive, visionary process that contrasts sharply with the static march through imposed content seen in some classrooms (Eisner, 1985; Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Teachers also need to be able to seek, plan and implement creative and humane solutions, and ones that are inclusive and respect diverse communities. They need to clearly articulate those visions and collaborate with others to make them realities. This theme supports teachers as they develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to assume strong leadership roles in our communities and to create schools for today and the future (Darling-Hammond, 1995; 1997). This theme is aligned with INTASC Principles 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 and related Department of Teaching and Learning program standards.

Advanced Programs and Programs for Other Professionals

Advanced programs and programs for other professionals continue these themes in ways that promote deeper inquiry about educational issues from the perspective of one or more professional specializations. Masters programs are offered by the departments in the areas of School Counseling, Early Childhood Education, Educational Leadership, Education - General Studies, Elementary Education, Speech-Language Pathology, and Reading Education, and Special Education. Doctoral programs are offered in the areas of Teaching and Learning and Educational Leadership. The Specialist Diploma in Education Leadership is also offered.

These programs also reflect a view of learning that centers on the learner (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Learning is the active construction of meaning from personal experience. It requires reflection and dialogue with others whose meanings may differ. The creative and critical capacities brought by the learner to the learning process influence its development. Graduate programs seek to admit active and passionate learners who are committed to continual growth. Advanced program candidates are

expected to be self-directed learners who already have experience in education in formal or informal settings. Viewing knowledge as holistic, interconnected, and never fully defined, we seek individual definitions of programs of study, while trying simultaneously to offer programs that meet certification/licensure or accreditation standards in various fields. Several of our programs do not lead to certification/licensure or endorsement; and offer the candidate considerable flexibility (M.S. Early Childhood Education, M.S. General Studies, M.Ed. in Elementary Education, and Ph.D. or Ed.D. in Teaching and Learning). Other programs include sequences of courses that may lead to additional certification or endorsement and are much more highly structured. These include the degrees in Educational Leadership, the M.S. or M.Ed. in Reading Education, the M.S. or M.Ed. in Special Education, the M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology, the M.A. in Counseling (School Emphasis). Even in structured programs, however, we strive for dialogue among various education specialties and for expansion of each candidate's repertoire of approaches to learning.

Advanced programs in the Department of Teaching and Learning use the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as a framework for candidate performance. Programs for other school professionals generally make use of the standards of their professions to guide candidate learning and performance (Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), American Speech and hearing Association (ASHA). For our doctoral level programs goals specific to our college are used as the guide. In both cases, our advanced programs are based on the notion of critical inquiry, which begins when an educator encounters a dilemma or problem. These inquiries occur quite frequently in the graduate classroom, as teachers and administrators discover differences in their approaches to the same problem, pose problem situations, or discover discrepancy between their own practice and what may be suggested by another (DeBono, 1999; Berliner, 2000; Levine, 2006).

In application of critical theory, the candidate begins by describing his or her present practice or patterns of resolving the problem that has arisen. Then the candidate explores alternatives that are desirable or possible. Once the alternatives have been laid out, their consequences are explored with particular attention to their consequences for learners. As the process proceeds, the candidate is encouraged to explore the socio-biological, historical, or organizational roots of his/her present practice and of the possible alternative, and to identify reasons for the discrepancies between them (DeBono, 2007; Mills, 2007). Along the way, the candidate also must think about what knowledge or skills would be required to enable change.

Assessment

The unit assessment system is linked to the three themes that are woven throughout our basic and advanced programs. Each supports the continuing development of quality programs that prepare teachers who are learners, active agents of learning, and articulate visionaries. The themes also support the core standards of INTASC and NBPTS which provide the framework for our programs leading to certification and/or endorsement, the performance outcomes of the professional disciplines and the missions of the institution and college. In addition, our programs are aligned with the standards established by our state and the Educational Standards and Practices Board (ESPB). It is in light of these themes and standards that we evaluate our programs.

Assessment in our initial programs has been revised since the last NCATE visit. The assessment of candidates takes place at five transition points. At "Program Entry" the admissions' process allows us to admit individuals who are qualified to become candidates in the teacher education program. During the "Professional Sequence" our assessments provide evidence to determine whether each candidate is prepared to perform student teaching responsibilities. The "Professional Performance Semester" involves student teaching and on-going assessment of candidates tracks their ability to develop and apply their professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions. At "Program Completion" candidates graduate only if they have met all program and major expectations and standards including the successful completion of a capstone experience which includes the preparation and presentation of a portfolio (beginning in the fall of 2008). At the final transition point "Post-completion", program graduates and principals complete surveys that provide information used for program assessment. All performance data is collected electronically and analyzed by an Assessment Committee that prepares

a summary. The summary and accompanying data charts are reviewed by faculty during an annual retreat. At this time, faculty determine program strengths and needs and develop action plans for changes as warranted.

The assessment of candidates in our advanced programs has also undergone major revision and will take place at four transition points. Prior to 2007, candidates' progress was assessed at three points. At program admission, by meeting entry criteria candidates demonstrated that they had the potential to engage in graduate study. During their program, candidates were assessed through grades. A 3.00 GPA (and no grade lower than a "C") provided evidence that they were meeting graduate academic standards (as set by the graduate school). At program completion, candidate assessment demanded the successful submission of the independent study, a scholarly investigation of a topic or issue in their field of study.

In fall 2004, graduate directors were convened to collaborate on a new assessment plan. With the exception of special education which responds to the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) requirements, the plan was first implemented for all advanced programs in the summer of 2007. Candidates are assessed on tasks and performances using rubrics aligned with the unit's conceptual framework and national standards (NBPTS). At "Program Entry", candidates must meet graduate school requirements and successfully complete the program review process. During the "Professional Sequence", candidates must meet or exceed expectations on tasks which assess knowledge, instruction and assessment; maintain a 3.0 GPA; and demonstrate knowledge of how to conduct research (Research Assessment #1). The Professional Performance Semester(s) require candidates to successfully complete two assessments that demonstrate their readiness to proceed to program completion. The first is an assessment of knowledge, skills, and dispositions in an authentic setting (Internship/Practicum Assessment for Advanced Programs). The second is the acceptance of the topic proposal for the independent study by the graduate school. At "Program Completion" candidates must provide evidence of successfully completing the independent study. Faculty assess a candidates' performance using a rubric. The final transition point, "Post Completion" is under development and involves the creation of completer and administrator surveys similar to those used in the initial programs. Candidate data are routinely analyzed to determine whether candidates in advanced programs are being prepared for their fields. Graduate Directors organize the data and meet annually with the graduate faculty to determine program strengths and needs and develop action plans to improve program quality.

Assessment of candidates in programs for other professionals varies across the departments in which the programs are offered. Candidates in the Speech-Language pathology program in the Department of Communication and Sciences Disorders are assessed as required by the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA), the program's accrediting body. Candidates in School Counseling and Educational Leadership meet the assessment requirements of the North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board's program re-approval process.

Learning is a lifelong journey and our focus is on teaching and learning in school settings. Such learning occurs best, when educators recognize that knowledge is holistic, interconnected, and never fully defined. Each of our programs affirm this premise and each reflects views of learning and teaching that have potential for contributing to a more just and humane society.

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