

## **Educating for the Possibilities – For Every Child: Excerpts from the School of Education’s Conceptual Framework**

The Conceptual Framework guides the curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the School of Education at Trinity University. It informs the School of Education’s approach to teacher, counselor, and administrator preparation.

### **Preamble:**

The vision in the Trinity School of Education is that as educators we are also reformers. We see the possibilities in all facets of what we do as professionals (i.e. advocates, researchers, life-long learners) who educate and serve as co-constructors with our candidates entering the field. Based on Markus and Nurius’s Theory of Possible Selves (1986), we believe that it is essential that we educate our candidates about the endless possibilities for realizing the future potential of children, even though the faculty recognize the realities of the challenges our candidates will face. As reflective practitioners, faculty counter these challenges by preparing candidates to become visionaries of the possibilities...

Candidates in the School of Education will “educate for the possibilities.” They will have an integrated knowledge base and theoretical foundation that encompass an understanding of the impact of diversity on learning, growth, and development. They will embrace reflective practice and be able to educate every child by demonstrating the ability to address the educational and cultural contexts; the cognitive, emotional, physical, psychological and linguistic development; and the relevance of what is being taught for each child (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). As candidates work with students, they will continually ask and answer the following questions: For what child, for what time in a child’s life and for what purpose (Riccio, 2001)?

### **Mission and vision of the institution and the unit:**

The School of Education’s mission is grounded in the mission of the university. The University’s mission is stated below:

Trinity is a comprehensive institution offering a broad range of educational programs that prepare students across the lifespan for the intellectual, ethical and spiritual dimensions of contemporary work, civic and family life. Trinity's core mission values and characteristics emphasize: commitment to the education of women, foundation for learning in the liberal arts, the integration of liberal arts with professional preparation, and grounding in the mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur to educate people of all faiths in order to achieve the larger purposes of learning in the human search for meaning and fulfillment.

As indicated in the mission statement, Trinity is a multifaceted institution that seeks to develop the whole person. It integrates liberal arts and professional learning to prepare individuals for work, civic and family life. The mission of the School of Education grows out of this institutional mission. The School of Education's mission is to prepare educators who will have a positive impact on the social, emotional, and academic lives of each child that they encounter. Through our programs in teaching, administration, counseling, and social change, we seek to prepare professionals who will nurture and develop the whole child and see possibilities in each child. We envision the School on Education as a place of transformative pedagogy centered on the child. Our practice is grounded in the significance of the liberal arts, the belief that professional learning happens as theory and practice are merged, and the belief that learning plays a key role in each individual's "search for meaning and fulfillment."

### **Unit Goals:**

Based on our beliefs and our mission, the School of Education has developed six unit goals that drive the bulk of our work. The unit goals are to prepare teachers, counselors, administrators and others in the education community who:

1. Demonstrate the knowledge of their professional discipline;
2. Effectively apply their professional knowledge and skills in a variety of educational settings;
3. Practice reflection as an integrated part of their professional lives;
4. Demonstrate proficiency in technology and oral/written communication;
5. Understand diversity and demonstrate the ability to work effectively with diverse populations;  
and
6. Model ethical standards and professional dispositions.

### **Professional Dispositions:**

The faculty recognize that knowledge and skills, while necessary, are insufficient for the work of educators and counselors (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Consequently, faculty have identified a set of professional dispositions that are designed to guide candidates in their work. The professional dispositions that the unit has established include:

1. Fairness and the belief that all students can learn: Candidates believe in the infinite possibilities of all children
2. Diversity: Candidates value group and individual differences and use knowledge of these differences to support learning
3. Reflection: Candidates think critically about their professional decisions and make adjustments in future actions
4. Responsibility: Candidates demonstrate professional and ethical behaviors
5. Advocacy: Candidates recognize and seize opportunities to speak and act on behalf of the best interests of children and their families

Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S.L. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning in communities. *Review of research in education*, 24, 249-306.

Darling-Hammond, L., & J. Bransford (Eds.), (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass.

Marcus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954-969.