



College of Education Professional Practice: Reflective, Collaborative, Transformative

Introduction

The conceptual framework of the College of Education (COE) at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) is a statement of the fundamental principles that guide our work. The College with its numerous programs, initiatives, community outreach efforts, and alumni relations is inspired by and grounded in the ideas and beliefs articulated below. The document is dynamic, as reflected in the continuing shared work that produces periodic modifications and revisions. The conceptual framework is relevant because it is based on time-honored principles, as well as on current research conducted in today's schools and communities. NEIU and the COE continually strive to not only teach these essential principles, but to live them in our daily practice with candidates and between faculty. We see our entire college as a learning community.

NEIU is an urban, public, master's comprehensive university located in Chicago. The unit prepares teachers, leaders, and other school and community personnel to work in both the city and suburbs that form the greater Chicago metropolitan area. This work is conducted in microcosm of diversity. NEIU has been designated by *U.S. News and World Report* as the most diverse university in the Midwest (*U.S. News & World Report, 2007*). NEIU is also the only four-year university in the Midwest designated by

the federal government as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Our COE candidates, a diverse group themselves, learn to collaborate with others who may differ in abilities, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, native language, economic class, prior experiences and world views. We see this diversity as a great strength that opens up the learning experiences of our faculty and candidates, and allows collaborative democracy to permeate our community.

As such, COE candidates work in a diversity of school and community environments. This fact demands that COE professionals tap into a deep and wide reservoir of expertise as educators and community leaders. Because there is a critical need for transformation in our local communities, we have an urban mission. We do not want to lose sight of that strong mission; at the same time we know that all schools in all communities have their particular opportunities and challenges and all children in every community need reflective, collaborative, and transformative educators.

The COE fosters professionals who hold subject and discipline expertise and who continually hone their skills and craft through practice that is reflective, collaborative, and transformative. Through our professional programs, our work with the College of Arts and Sciences, and our initiatives in schools and communities, we strive to nurture and expand these practices in those with whom we work. Our goal is to be ever thoughtful, purposeful, and intentional as we partner with others to create a transformed and better world. Maxine Greene (1995) has written of teaching for “social imagination.” This is the “capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools” (p. 5). It is in this spirit and hope that we undertake our work with candidates each day and create programs that are truly transformative experiences.

For the past decade, the phrase that characterized the College's conceptual framework was "Reflective Professionals Building Learning Communities." The ideas summarized in that phrase are not lost in this latest iteration of the COE conceptual framework. From 2006-2009, we discussed and revised this conceptual framework, affirming the principles of reflection, professionalism, and learning in communities in our debates and discussions. But, we felt a need to expand our organizing concepts by emphasizing a purpose, and thus, transformative practice has been added. Throughout this document, while one type of practice may be highlighted, the three are inextricably linked. Individually, each of these ideas are vital and forceful, but joined together they become a dynamic whole. Our commitment to diversity and technology are woven throughout each of the three elements and are embedded in our candidate proficiencies.

The COE prepares teachers, administrators, counselors, and reading specialists for schools. In addition, we provide significant professional development in schools. To avoid cumbersome terminology, the term "educator" will be used as an umbrella term to refer to all school-related personnel prepared by the unit. It should be further noted that the COE also prepares professionals for work outside of schools: family, community, and rehabilitation counselors; human resource professionals; community health and exercise science professionals; and community leaders who specialize in inner-city contexts through our various programs. With all schools being situated within a larger community, the COE sees itself as preparing professionals who see community and school transformation as a symbiotic relationship.

Vision and Mission of the Institution and Unit

Our institution has been preparing educators for Illinois schools since 1867 when it was founded as Cook County Normal School. In this sense, the historical roots of NEIU and the COE began as a single entity. Since 1867, the institution has moved locations and changed names several times. In 1910 it became Chicago Teachers College and in 1967 became Northeastern Illinois State College. Finally, in 1971, the institution became Northeastern Illinois University. Today, NEIU is a public comprehensive university serving more than 11,000 full and part-time students in Cook and Lake Counties. At one time, the College of Education was responsible for the preparation of thousands of classroom teachers in the Chicago Public Schools alone. Because of its long history as an education college, NEIU's identity and reputation is strongly associated with our College.

Prior to 2007, four concepts described the mission and vision of NEIU: access, excellence, diversity, and community. In 2007, a new president was selected to lead the university. The new president kept faith with these four concepts which aptly describe the ideals of NEIU's faculty and staff. She did, however, lead an inclusive process to revisit and revise the mission, vision, and values of the University and to develop a strategic plan. The entire university community, with strong involvement by COE faculty and staff, participated in creating these renewed statements of what we at NEIU and the COE stand for. These new documents incorporate and add to the University's traditions and beliefs (NEIU Strategic Plan, 2009).

Mission and Vision

The NEIU mission statement states: *Northeastern Illinois University, as a public comprehensive university with locations throughout Chicago, provides an exceptional environment for learning, teaching, and scholarship. We prepare a diverse community of students for leadership and service in our region and in a dynamic multicultural world.*

The NEIU vision statement states: *Northeastern Illinois University will be a leader among metropolitan universities, known for its dedication to its urban mission, for the quality of its programs, for the success of its graduates, and for the diversity of its learning environment.*

The combined mission and vision statement of the COE states:

The faculty and staff of the College of Education of Northeastern Illinois University are dedicated to excellence and innovation in education. Serving the Chicago metropolitan area, we seek to make our teaching, research, and service efforts responsive to the needs and aspirations of a diverse student body and community. The College of Education as a fundamental component of a comprehensive public urban university, dedicates itself to becoming nationally recognized:

1. *In developing professionals who will teach, train, consult, and counsel; in becoming leaders who facilitate learning, scholarship and creativity throughout life;*
2. *In developing, applying and disseminating research that results in new knowledge, improved practice and greater levels of achievement by instructors, learners, families, communities and organizations; and*
3. *By strengthening a commitment to serve schools, communities, business, industry and the professions.*

To accomplish our mission, we pursue collaborative and systematic strategies which will continue to improve our teaching, learning, research, and service. We seek to utilize our location in the Chicago metropolitan area as a base upon which we will build and support teams and alliances within the university, and in all appropriate areas outside the university. The College of Education takes an all-university approach, requiring its candidates to have a well-rounded general education in the liberal arts, thorough graining in professional education courses, and extensive school-community clinical experiences.

These general statements reflect the compatibility between the University and the COE and affirm the desire of the COE to take its essential place within the University structure in order to further the goals of both. Several themes emerge from both sets of statements. First, our location in Chicago creates vast opportunities and responsibilities. Second, diversity is our signature characteristic. Third, we strive to be known and recognized on our merit. Fourth, within the University, we are dedicated to the hallmarks of the academic life: teaching and learning, scholarship and creativity, and service. Fifth, we seek to provide an education for our candidates that results in patterns of lifelong learning, productivity, community service, and professional fulfillment.

Philosophy, purposes, goals/institutional standards of the unit

When NEIU revised its values, it retained the traditional lived values: Access, Excellence, Diversity, and Community and added two new values: Integrity and Empowerment through Learning. The revised NEIU statement of values is commensurate with the values of the COE and reflects the COE's philosophy and purposes. These values are also aligned with our COE guiding belief that professional practice in education should be reflective, collaborative, and personally and socially transformative. The statement of values and the unit tenets of professional practice represent the nexus of theory and practice. The new leadership of NEIU also launched a Strategic Plan Initiative that merges the mission, vision, values, and goals of the University and its Colleges (Northeastern Illinois University, Strategic Plan, 2009). The COE was an integral part of the entire process that resulted in six strategic goals. These goals have been aligned with the unit strategic goals that were formulated in 2006.

Philosophy and purposes

The values that guide the University and the COE are not merely ideals written in our official documents. They are truly lived.

Two of the values, *Access to Opportunity* and *Excellence* are inextricably linked. These are further defined:

Access to Opportunity - NEIU values access to opportunity; we value a welcoming environment that provides appropriate support as well as encourages mutual responsibility for and commitment to learning.

Excellence - In our pursuit of and commitment to excellence, we value the highest quality of learning and teaching, scholarship, and service. We value opportunities and experiences that support personal and professional development for all members of our community. In all that we say and do, we are committed to the process and products of excellence.

NEIU and the COE both offer *access to opportunity* to diverse students. While we are not an open enrollment university, our admission standards are moderately selective. Our diverse students include English Language Learners (ELL's), members of immigrant families from all continents, many who live in immigrant neighborhoods that surround our main campus; students enter NEIU having graduated from low-performing schools; parents; veterans, and other returning adult students. Many of our candidates are the first family member to attend college. Our first-rate faculty does not accept mediocrity, and therefore, opportunity and excellence are hallmarks of our work. We strive to offer support and cultivate student norms that result in equitable outcomes for all.

For the COE, the purpose of our philosophy of professional practice makes sense when we face the tension between opportunity and excellence. We constantly reflect on our teaching, advising, and other support systems as we analyze "time to degree"

and graduation rates within our College. We collaborate with the many student supports available at NEIU and in the community. We lead and collaborate with programs that facilitate the pipeline between K-12 education and NEIU. It is our purpose to transform the lives of our students through the benefits of a professional college degree and to further transform the lives of others who will be influenced by our graduates.

Technology is considered to be a tool that can shrink the gap between access and excellence. The Internet has made the quantity and quality of knowledge accessible to students at a level that is exponentially greater than ever before. It has provided a platform for the realistic development of 21st Century Skills. The COE recognizes these skills, as enumerated in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills: creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and communication and collaboration (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009). The New Commission on Skills in the American Workforce, advocate the vital necessity of these skills and attitudes. They write, “The best employers the world over will be looking for the most competent, most creative, most innovative people on the face of the earth” (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2008, p. xviii). COE candidates are taught to mediate the technology present in K-12 students’ lives in order to develop desirable dispositions and attain the skills they need to succeed personally and professionally in the 21st century.

Two of our remaining traditional values are also inextricably linked: *Diversity* and *Community*. They are further defined:

Diversity - *NEIU values the inclusion of a broad spectrum of students, staff, and faculty in the life of the University. We celebrate and foster global perspectives. We encourage the open and respectful expression of ideas and differences in thoughts, experiences, and opinions.*

Community - *As a commuter institution, NEIU has a special obligation to provide an environment that is supportive, nurturing, and participatory. Such an environment is characterized by civility, fostering humanity and engagement, and creates a sense of community through inclusion, mutual respect, and empowerment. NEIU values our metropolitan setting as a laboratory for learning, and we foster partnerships for learning, research, and service throughout this dynamic region to promote the public good.*

Unit faculty wrote and adopted (2006-2009) more than simple diversity proficiencies. We felt it was important to provide a context for such proficiencies. The following commitment to diversity was generated through reflection, rooted in collaboration, and designed to be transformative.

IMPACT STATEMENT

We expect all candidates to have knowledge of and respect for what is culturally significant, socially just, and equitable for individuals and for diverse groups. Candidates use this knowledge and model this respect to enrich the educational experiences of their students.

DIVERSITY DEFINED

NEIU COE fully accepts and embraces NCATE's definition of diversity as "differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, languages, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area." Moreover, the COE also acknowledges that diversity extends beyond this definition to include cultural as well as individual physical differences.

DIVERSITY PROFICIENCIES

1. The candidate recognizes the various differences between people and students/clients from diverse communities and utilizes these differences as resources for teaching and learning.
2. The candidate is aware and addresses local, national, and global events, and promotes agency for social justice and equity.
3. The candidate can identify, design, and implement instructional and/or clinical, and technological strategies that are appropriate to the diverse needs of students/clients.
4. The candidate develops an effective and respectful learning community in the classroom, school environment, or clinical setting that leverages cooperative partnerships and community resources.
5. The candidate effectively utilizes concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups for continual improvement to make schools or clinical settings responsive to the needs of diverse students and/or clients.
6. The candidate continually assesses and improves her/his instructional strategies and classroom or school environment to promote success for all learners/clients.

The COE believes in reflective practice to question our own openness, biases, prejudices, and preconceptions. How can we understand a variety of others and teach them effectively? How can we seize the ample opportunities to understand others and achieve more knowledge of the human experience? How can we make our own teaching and learning a more just and humane experience?

Our final two NEIU values are *Integrity* and *Empowerment through Learning*. They are further defined:

Integrity - *NEIU is accountable to those we serve and to those from whom we receive support. We are committed to honesty, respect, and transparency in our words and in our actions. In that regard, we work to be good stewards of the resources we are entrusted to use. This includes human, physical, fiscal, and environmental resources.*

Empowerment through Learning - *NEIU is dedicated to creating a culture that provides life-long learning opportunities for all members of the University community. We are especially committed to transforming students' lives by engaging them in an educational experience that empowers them to graduate with the skills and knowledge to become effective leaders and citizens in their personal and professional lives.*

The COE strives for integrity. The financial recession in our nation and state has stretched the resources we need to conduct our work. Our responses and reactions to scarcity demand the careful evaluation of our priorities and values. Just as with classroom teachers in our K-12 schools, economic realities present us with the challenge to remain true our mission with a finite amount of resources.

The COE believes that transformative practice is what produces *Empowerment through Learning*. One example of this is our Grow Your Own (GYO) initiative. We are collaborative partners in five GYO projects which transform teacher aides from low-income neighborhoods into certified teachers who will return to work in their home schools. Another example is our Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Higher Education (GEAR UP) project. The Chicago Teachers Center (CTC) manages the largest GEAR

UP project in the nation; a collaboration between five universities and other groups in the Chicago area that move students in low-income neighborhoods from grade school to high school to college.

Technology also presents new challenges for educators who value integrity. Most candidates are “technology natives,” while some of our COE professors might be labeled “technology immigrants” (Prensky, 2006). The Internet is forcing all scholars to examine innovative teaching and learning modes as well as concepts such as “intellectual property”, plagiarism, and attribution. These issues pose challenges for all of us who prepare school and community professionals.

Goals/Institutional Standards of the Unit

The NEIU Strategic Planning Initiative (2008) formulated six strategic goals. The COE also has a set of strategic priorities, formulated in 2006 at a unit retreat and reviewed annually. We have associated the two sets of goals, both of which we positively subscribe to and affirm, with each other to synchronize our work. The NEIU goals are located on the chart below in their entirety. The COE goals, generated through a collaborative process initiated during a college-wide retreat in 2006, appear in abbreviated form on the chart below. They are:

One: Technology - Faculty, staff, and candidates are competent and current in technology knowledge and skills for their chosen professional roles.

Two: Diversity - Faculty, staff, and candidates will respect and affirm each other, the diverse populations represented in the NEIU community and in the communities that we serve. The COE commits to develop candidates who demonstrate respect and affirmation of diversity in their professional roles.

Three: Faculty and Staff Development - The COE will recruit, develop, and retain faculty and staff who are highly qualified for their COE roles.

Four: Candidate Success - COE candidates are highly prepared in a timely manner to assume their professional roles.

Five: Curriculum Development - All programs will reflect current research and best practices in the field, providing innovative ways to connect theory to practice.

Six: Partnerships - The COE will develop informal and formal high-quality, mutually beneficial partnerships that enhance the educational experience for faculty, staff, and candidates.

Seven: Resources and Communication - There will be effective and timely communication throughout the COE. Faculty, staff, and candidates will work to garner increased resources for the COE.

Eight: NCATE 2012 - The COE will meet all standards at the initial and advanced level at the next NCATE visit.

Alignment of NEIU & COE Strategic Goals

NEIU Goal	COE Goals
<u>Student Success</u> - Ensure student success from recruitment through graduation by creating a culture in which all members of the University community are engaged in attracting, educating, and graduation students who achieve the objectives for baccalaureate and graduate degrees.	Candidate Success, Partnerships, Faculty & Staff Development, Curriculum Development, Diversity, Resources & Communication, NCATE 2012 (4,6,3,5,2,7,8)
<u>Academic Excellence & Innovation</u> - Develop an environment that supports curricular and pedagogical innovation aligned with the mission of the institution, the standards of the disciplines, student needs, and career and civic opportunities in a global society.	Curriculum Development, Technology, Diversity, Candidate Success, Partnerships, Resources & Communication, NCATE 2012 (5,1,2,4,6,7,8)
<u>Urban Leadership</u> - Work collaboratively with educational, social service, governmental, and business institutions in Chicago and the region to build upon NEIU's tradition of community involvement.	Partnerships, Diversity, Candidate Success, Resources & Communication, Faculty & Staff Development, Curriculum Development, NCATE 2012 (6,2,4,7,3,5,8)
<u>Exemplary Faculty & Staff</u> - Invest in faculty and staff to make NEIU a world-class metropolitan university and an employer of choice.	Faculty & Staff Development, Technology, Resources & Communication, Curriculum Development, NCATE 2012 (3,1,7,5,8)
<u>Enhanced University Operations</u> - Provide a supportive learning, teaching and working environment by improving operating productivity, physical infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.	Technology, Resources & Communication, NCATE 2012 (1,7,8)
<u>Fiscal Strength</u> - Enhance the University's financial position by reducing reliance on state and general funds and student tuition, diversifying revenue sources, and strengthening institutional relationships with federal, state, and local governments, and private sponsors.	Partnerships, Resources & Communication, Technology, NCATE 2012 (6,7,1,8)

Knowledge bases, including theories, research, the wisdom of practice, and educational policies that drive the work of the unit

The COE, in the past few years, has amplified its theoretical base, “Reflective Professionals Building Learning Communities,” to include a new dimension, transformation. We continue to believe in reflection as the key way that we continually refine and improve our work, as well as align it with current realities. We continue to believe in the importance of the culture of learning. Groups of faculty, staff, candidates, students, and others are only as strong as their shared academic culture. But, we began to feel that reflection and learning communities were not enough. What is the purpose of reflection and building learning communities? We hope that it is transformation --- of candidates, K-12 students, ourselves, and society. This is why we have developed our new guiding phrase, one that describes the practice that results from our beliefs, theories, and knowledge bases:

Professional Practice: Reflective, Collaborative, Transformative

Reflective Practice

Life is a series of collisions with the future; it is not the sum of what we have been, but what we yearn to be.

-- José Ortega y Gasset

Dewey (1938) defined a reflective professional as one who is “active, persistent, and careful” (1910, p.6), someone who engages in *reflective action*, rather than one who acts in what he considered to be a routine manner. Routine practice is guided by unexamined tradition or imitation. Reflective action is behavior “that involved the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any

belief or practice in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads" (Grant & Zeicher, 1984, p.4). Dewey enumerated three characteristics of reflective professionals: open-mindedness, responsibility, and whole-heartedness. COE professionals who engage in critical reflection do so with these characteristics in mind, continuously examining practice in order to gain a deeper understanding of their work (Schön, 1983; Schön, 1991; Sergiovanni, 2001; Simpson, Jackson, & Aycock, 2005). COE professionals engage in the process of reflective practice with the goal of improving personal practices and the conditions under which those practices occur: using multiple forms of data to inform professional decisions, developing an understanding of the complexity of the work being undertaken, encouraging the use of multiple forms of data collection and a deep analysis of the data produced and its implications, and affecting change at the systems level.

In this regard, as COE professionals work together and share their practices, a community of practice is established and strengthened. The outcomes of reflective practice are examined not only in relation to the individuals with whom our candidates work, but also with reference to the larger communities in which they are situated (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 1985; Giroux, 1997; Greene, 1995; Greene, Ayers, & Miller, 1997). Our preparation of professionals for work in a variety of settings means we understand reflective practice to apply to contexts within and beyond schools and classrooms.

The NEIU College of Education embraces the social reconstructionist tradition, which "stresses reflection about the social and political context of schooling and the assessment of classroom actions for their ability to enhance equity, justice, and more humane conditions in our schools and society" (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p.52). In advocating for teaching for social responsibility, Sheldon

Berman (1997) writes that we must educate individuals who accept a “personal investment in the well-being of people and the planet” (p. 15).

Reflection must be underpinned by strong critical and creative thinking skills which have become, over the past half-century, organizing principles for effective educators (Bloom, 1956; Costa, 2001; Gardner, 1983; Gardner, 2007; Pinker, 2007; Presseisen, 2008; Sternberg & Zhang, 2001; Sternberg & Subotnik, 2006). Our faculty seeks to utilize a “double-loop learning” process (Argyris & Schon, 1978); examining our own practices, beliefs, and values and using self-study to make informed decisions about interventions and their effectiveness. This builds on Lipman’s (1991) idea that we must select and model practical and authentic methods in order for our candidates to become better thinkers themselves, people who can engage in self-reflection as well as reflection about their world.

At the application level, many widespread educational practices are founded on the concept of reflection. Teaching portfolios are widely used in teacher preparation, professional development, and the National Board Professional Teaching certification process (Clift et al., 1990; Mack-Kirschner, 2003; Zubizarreta, 2004) . The quality and effectiveness of action research, and participatory action research which involves multiple loops of evaluation, are dependent on reflection (Armstrong & Moore, 2004; Burnaford, Fischer, & Hobson, 2001; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; McIntyre, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Reflection distinguishes service learning from volunteering (Eyler & Giles, 1999). And, through reflection, frameworks for teaching developed by Danielson (2007), Murrell (2001), Wiggins & McTighe (2005), and others transcend superficiality.

As a faculty, we strive to develop a community of reflective practitioners (Wallin-McLaughlin, 1991) in order to examine our own practices, to model self-reflection as a critical pedagogical process for our candidates, and to collaboratively join in work with our candidates and colleagues for the betterment of our programs. We are committed to the ongoing development and nurturance of reflective learning communities that promote these elements as a fundamental characteristic of the teaching profession.

Collaborative Practice

Truth springs from argument amongst friends

-- David Hume

We strive to graduate candidates who know how to work with and for others, who are leaders in bringing diverse constituencies together in search of authentic and inclusive ways to solve problems in schools and communities. Collaborative practice, in its multifaceted forms, enables the COE to prepare its candidates for work in the real, and often complicated, world of schools and communities. We realize that education in the COE must be connected to other entities within the university, external institutions, and local and global community. Furthermore, it must be conducted in the context of relationships and partnerships particularly characterized by three of our university values; access, excellence, integrity, diversity, and community. We acknowledge that without the consent and participation of various constituencies and stakeholders, reform and change is not possible.

Cultural learning generally originates at a social level. As Lev Vygotsky noted in his “general genetic law of cultural development,”

Any function in the child’s cultural development appears twice, or on two planes, First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volitions. . . .[I]t goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships (1981, p.146) .

Social relationships and the school culture that relates to social relationships are integral to teaching, learning, and student success or failure. Judith Rich Harris explored the relative influence on child development of family and peer culture in her landmark work, *The Nurture Assumption* (2009). Any efforts at educational reform must acknowledge the importance of student culture as a fertile or hostile basis for authentic education.

At the classroom level, COE candidates appreciate the social framework by working together on assignments and projects using best practices including participatory action research, inquiry-based teaching, service learning, project-based learning, and collaborative projects (Danielson, 2007; Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2009; Kelshaw, Lazarus, & Minier, 2009; Neumann, 2008; Tomal, 2003; Voices of Youth in Chicago Education, 2008). In addition to this, emerging technology has enhanced the collaborative nature of classroom learning. The Internet is not only a place to access reference material, invaluable as it is for that, but Web 2.0 tools and applications allow candidates to use the Internet interactively. Candidates connect with reference material, a network of individuals, and their professors through class management systems, e-portfolio and assessment systems, blogs, RSS feeds,

wikis, social networks and much more that is being developed as this is being written (Carliner & Shank, 2008; Crane, 2007; Thomas, 2009). Technology today hands our students the power to reach across oceans and move from transforming local communities, to transforming global communities.

The COE believes that future educators and other emerging professionals benefit greatly from a variety of collaborative, out-of-classroom experiences which connect the university with the real world of schools. These experiences include clinical-based courses, student teaching, internships, practica, and field research. We place candidates in a variety of diverse local and international settings, and believe that both successful and less-than-successful environments provide learning experiences. The varying quality of collaboration and community in schools and other settings provide a framework for analysis and study (Sergiovanni, 2005). COE candidates study the families and adults represented by the students in schools. Murrell (2000, 2006) provides valuable insight into community in urban settings. We recognize that the concept of community is not always coherent, but rather, results from collaboration among a variety of groups. This applies to both neighborhood schools and selective enrollment schools where the structures and composition of families represented are diverse.

Concepts of school leadership which focus on change, confirm the value of collaborative practice. Effective leaders lead to change and empower teachers, families, and, especially, students. Effective leaders consider the implications of systems thinking on this endeavor. The body of work that has been devoted to analyzing systemic change (Fullan, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008; Hargreaves, 2001; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2009; Wheatley, 2006) provides a context for our belief that collaboration is a

condition for transformation. Effective school leadership is grounded in Bolman and Deal's (2001, 2008) four frames: the structural frame, the human resource frame, the political frame, and the symbolic frame. These frames enable us to analyze and understand schools and move toward collaboration that recognizes the opportunities and perils highlighted in each.

Collaboration promotes full access to and use of resources and leverages talent to supports our work. The COE is a leader in the Chicago educational landscape in partnering with other institutions of higher learning, as well as with community-based organizations (CBO), and businesses. The COE has a strong tradition of working through these community partnerships. The Chicago Teachers' Center (CTC), an outreach arm of the COE, was founded more than thirty years ago when ten such centers were initiated in Chicago through a grant. Today CTC, the only center of the ten that has operated continuously since the original grant, serves P-12 students in more than 100 schools in Chicago and its suburbs. These settings provide a living laboratory for faculty, staff, and candidate collaboration with P-12 partners and families in teaching, research and service.

COE professors share their personal knowledge of schools and communities (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Meiners, 2007; Schultz, 2005; Schultz, 2008; Schwarzbaum, 20XX). Collaborative practice accomplishes several goals. Within the life of higher education, it provides a model of what schools could be and illustrates a goal for school reform. Outside of the College, collaborative practice allows individuals to experience the real world of schools and to provide arenas for productive reform efforts.

Transformative Practice

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

-- Paulo Freire

Historically, the concept of developing educators who promote democratic and transformative classroom practice has been largely influenced by the scholarship of John Dewey (1916) and Paulo Freire (1970). Dewey conceptualized democracy as a way of defining a culture, a way of living together, and a way of communicating. John Dewey (1939) argued that the most important form of democracy is as a *way of life*. He wrote:

The heart and final guarantee of democracy is in free gatherings of neighbors on the street corner to discuss back and forth what is read in uncensored news of the day, and in gatherings of friends in the living rooms of houses and apartments to converse freely with one another.

These words capture the spirit and practice in the College of Education: Nurturing democracy by living democracy; advocating personal and social transformation by creating an intellectual, creative, and transformative culture. High school English teacher

Phyllis Muldoon (1990) captures this essence wonderfully when she calls her inquiry-based classroom a “brawl of ideas” (p. 34). As Maxine Greene (1988) writes, “A teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own” (p. 14). Greene’s words capture the symbiosis of inquiry and democracy, two ideas that are central to our work with our candidates, and are essential dispositions we want them to own as a vital part of their personal and professional lives.

In a democratic society, education must embrace the personal interest of those involved while at the same time encourage transformative social change. Similarly, Freire defined transformative pedagogy as a practice of reconciling power dynamics while encouraging students, teachers, and communities to read their worlds in critical, constructive, and creative ways that promote agency of self and group. Transformative professionals must possess a deep understanding of power: the way it works through individuals and systems in formal and informal structures, its relationship to social justice, its role in schools and communities, and its relationship to privilege. Highlighting qualities of participation, freedom, interest, and social relationships, these democratic principles push for transformative practices and must be a consistent theme within the schools and communities. Recognizing schools and other community institutions as political entities – and the inherent political and moral dimensions of curriculum and standards -- is vital to this transformative endeavor (Apple, 1997; Fine, 1987; Kliebard, 1987; Noddings, 2002, 2006; Schor, 1992; Simon, 2001).

There is a growing body of work by scholars who envision a new form of multicultural education. These scholars, including Banks (1995); Delpit, (2006); Gay, (2000, 2003); Grant & Gillette (2006); Ladson-Billings (1994); Sleeter (1991, 2005), have

examined the existing power structure and relationships in school and society and asked how all Americans can best be educated. COE candidates examine the canon, skills, and dispositions commonly taught in schools. They compare the disparities and differences between schools for different socioeconomic groups (Kozol; 1992, 2006). For example, by examining Jean Anyon's (1980, 1981) seminal work on the social stratification of curriculum by economic class, our candidates understand the political nature of knowledge and the influence every teacher has on what gets taught – and what does *not* get taught – inside classrooms. Critically empowered educators cultivate a critically empowered citizenry – and that in turn creates a more just, caring and democratic society.

The exponential increase in access to information provides our candidates with the means to expand their knowledge beyond that which is prescribed by traditional textbooks. Our candidates understand that all students need the skills outlined in the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006). These skills include learning and innovation skills; information, media, and technology skills; and life and career skills. Our candidates develop the dispositions to view American education and classrooms in a critical way, recognizing what is worth preserving and recognizing what needs to be transformed. Most importantly, our candidates learn the dispositions necessary to teach and transform students, moving them towards a bright future, one where they have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to achieve their goals and the commitment to make a positive impact on society.

Our candidates develop the ability to analyze, through reading, the works of scholars who have, themselves, viewed education with a critical eye including Giroux (1973), Greene (1995, 1997), Eisner (2002), and Noddings (2007). By encouraging engagement in

an experience that instills responsibility for both individual and group action and interaction, our College develops professionals who see the potential of teaching and learning as a means to avoid schools becoming a dehumanizing institution that depends on authoritarian structures. In this respect, the schools our candidates experience during their preparation program can present models and non-models. Candidates experience schools, even schools that are intentionally being reformed, where democracy is not evident. When this is the case, we strive to develop candidates who will be aware of the discrepancies between models. Through this inquiry, our work can bring to life the words of Maxine Greene (1988): “My focal interest is in human freedom, in the capacity to surpass the given and look at things as if they can be otherwise” (p. 3).

We also direct them to see school systems for what they are—systems, and to ask questions about the racial and ethnic composition of selective enrollment schools, advanced programs, and special education, for example. Developing reflective and collaborative practitioners who seek to transcend typical societal norms, promote transformative learning environments for their constituents, and understand the need for their involvement at all levels of decision-making is paramount. As decisions cannot be made solely at an administrative (or outside prescriptive) level, we work to develop graduates who see the broader community as not only capable but responsible for promoting equity, justice, and fairness for all regardless of race, class, ethnicity, gender identity, language, sexual orientation, or ability.

Our programs strive to develop practitioners who question their own knowledge, biases, and assumptions as they work to participate actively in the governing processes inherent to teaching and learning structures as well as in their own professional

practices. Furthermore, our graduates should have a willingness to search for the common good as they plan, design, and seek out curricula and practice that is relevant, meaningful, and worthwhile in their workplaces. Through such a framework, purposeful action, transformation, agency, and liberating processes are practiced, promoted, and achieved.

COE professionals need to embrace the responsibility to promote democratic, just, and participatory ways of living (as well as teaching and learning) that is inclusive of all groups. Graduates of our programs are encouraged to make school and community environments places that teach thinking processes, promote agency, and create spaces for problem-posing rather than ones that reinforce the status quo and lead to replicate current structural inequalities. In this way, we promote learning environments that can become representative of miniature communities, inviting candidates to be active members of society who understand the importance of active citizenship, democratic participation, and change agency. Many have advocated these ideas, and the central role of schools to cultivate them. John Dewey (1939) calls it “creative democracy,” Frances Moore Lappe (2005) calls it “living democracy,” and Benjamin Barber (1988) calls it “strong democracy.” Inherent in all of these notions is the hope of a citizenry to take an active, critical, and caring role in creating a better world, from the local to the global. Taken together, they form a vision for life and culture and the academic experience within the College of Education and the larger university community.

Education always occurs within a social context. Our graduates understand that classrooms become places that instill in children and adolescents ways of becoming part of the social order. Because of this reality, our graduates become critical examiners of what is taught and how it is taught both implicitly and explicitly in schools and communities. Our coursework encourages all students

to understand, practice, and engage with the complexity of democratic interaction. COE faculty, staff, administrators, and our school and community partners work to develop and create opportunities for transformative and democratic ways of acting. To create democratic learning environments that foster social action and candidate agency, we promote structures and processes that allow for this ideal to emerge from within the College itself. Candidates become active participants in curriculum designing, decision-making, and planning in every facet of community. Our candidates see themselves as curriculum *creators*, rather than curriculum deliverers. Our students understand that “curriculum” is not merely what we teach, but the holistic classroom experience, and the knowledge created in those dynamic social spaces. By creating sociocultural learning experiences in our own classrooms, we are advocating our candidates to take these practices and make them come to life in their own classrooms and communities.

We believe that school, community agencies, and other venues where our candidates’ work ought to be places that allow freedom of and for discovery for all people. Graduates of our programs experience planning together, and have opportunities for discussion in coursework and clinical experiences. Through these shared experiences, our candidates see ways that schools can avoid making decisions that dehumanize or that are democratic, reform-based, or transformative only in name but not in a spirit that supports a climate for all stakeholders to make determinations about what affects them. We attempt to provide our graduates with opportunities to see, and learn to assure, that all members of a community can cooperate and collaborate to emphasize structural equity, embrace differences, and dialogue across diverging beliefs. We attempt to foster an apprenticeship in transformative practice where schools and community sites are incubators for ongoing and future participatory, justice-oriented, and change-based endeavors.

We in the COE make every effort to make manifest our conceptual framework through our work with our candidates, in keeping with the truism: What is at the heart of things is also at the surface of things, and what is at the surface of things is also at the heart of things.

Candidate proficiencies related to expected knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions, including proficiencies associated with diversity and technology, that are aligned with the expectations in professional, state, and institutional standards

The COE determined that the twelve candidate proficiencies that it had been working with were not serving the needs of the unit. While some of the proficiencies reflected the expected knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions that we and our related professional organizations hold, some of them were too course-based to be useful. In all, we reached consensus that our proficiencies should be revised. Our new statements are fewer and less cumbersome. They reflect current reality, future projections, and state our expectations more clearly. They encompass enormous challenges in a modicum of words. The six statements below express our expected candidate proficiencies. The COE professional:

1. Reflects upon students, schools, communities, pedagogy and practice.
2. Demonstrates the professional competencies and confidence to act upon the insights gained from one's learning.
3. Recognizes, understands and values differences among and between people and cultures in a global society.
4. Fosters change in self, students, schools and communities.
5. Recognizes, acknowledges and responds to the emerging needs and challenges of a changing world.

6. Actively participates in one's professional growth in order to be a stronger advocate for positive professional and/or community change.

Alignment of NEIU & COE Proficiency Standards w/Professional, State, and Institutional Standards

Table I: COE Proficiency Standards (COEPS) and Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS)

COE Proficiency Standard	Illinois Professional Learning Standards	INTASC Standards	PRAXIS Standards
The COE Professional:			
One: Reflects upon students, schools, communities, pedagogy and practice.	<p>#4 Planning for Instruction The teacher understands instructional planning and designs instruction based upon knowledge of the discipline, students, the community, and curriculum goals.</p> <p>#5 Learning Environment The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.</p> <p>6 Instructional Delivery The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students'</p>	<p>Principle #2: The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.</p> <p>Principle #4: The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.</p> <p>Principle #5: The teacher uses an</p>	<p>Becoming familiar with relevant aspects of students' background knowledge and experiences</p> <p>Articulating clear learning goals for the lesson that are appropriate to the students</p> <p>Creating or selecting teaching methods, learning activities, and instructional materials or other resources that are appropriate to the students and that are aligned with the goals of the lesson</p> <p>Creating or selecting evaluation strategies that are appropriate for the students and that are aligned</p>

	<p>development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.</p> <p>#8 Assessment The teacher understands various formal and informal assessment strategies and uses them to support the continuous development of all students.</p>	<p>understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.</p> <p>Principle #7: The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.</p>	<p>with the goals of the lesson Establishing and maintaining consistent standards of classroom behavior Making learning goals and instructional procedures clear to students Making content comprehensible to students Using instructional time effectively</p>
Two: Demonstrates the professional competencies and confidence to act upon the insights gained from one's learning.	<p>#1 Content Knowledge The teacher understands the central concepts, methods of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) and creates learning experiences that make the content meaningful to all students.</p> <p>#2 Human Development and Learning The teacher understands how individuals grow, develop, and learn and provides learning opportunities that support the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students.</p> <p>#7 Communication The teacher uses knowledge of</p>	<p>Principle #1: The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.</p> <p>Principle #6: The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication</p>	<p>Demonstrating an understanding of the connections between the content that was learned previously, the current content, and the content that remains to be learned in the future Monitoring students' understanding of content through a variety of means, providing feedback to students to assist learning, and adjusting learning activities as the situation demands Reflecting on the extent to which the learning goals were</p>

	<p>effective written, verbal, nonverbal, and visual communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.</p>	<p>techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.</p> <p>Principle #8: The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner.</p>	<p>met</p> <p>Demonstrating a sense of efficacy</p> <p>Communicating with parents or guardians about student learning</p>
Three: Recognizes, understands, and values differences among and between people and cultures in a global society.	<p>#3 Diversity</p> <p>The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.</p>	<p>Principle #3: The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.</p>	<p>Creating a climate that promotes fairness</p>
Four: Fosters change in self, students, schools, and communities.			<p>Establishing and maintaining rapport with students</p> <p>Communicating challenging learning expectations to each student</p> <p>Encouraging students to extend their thinking</p>

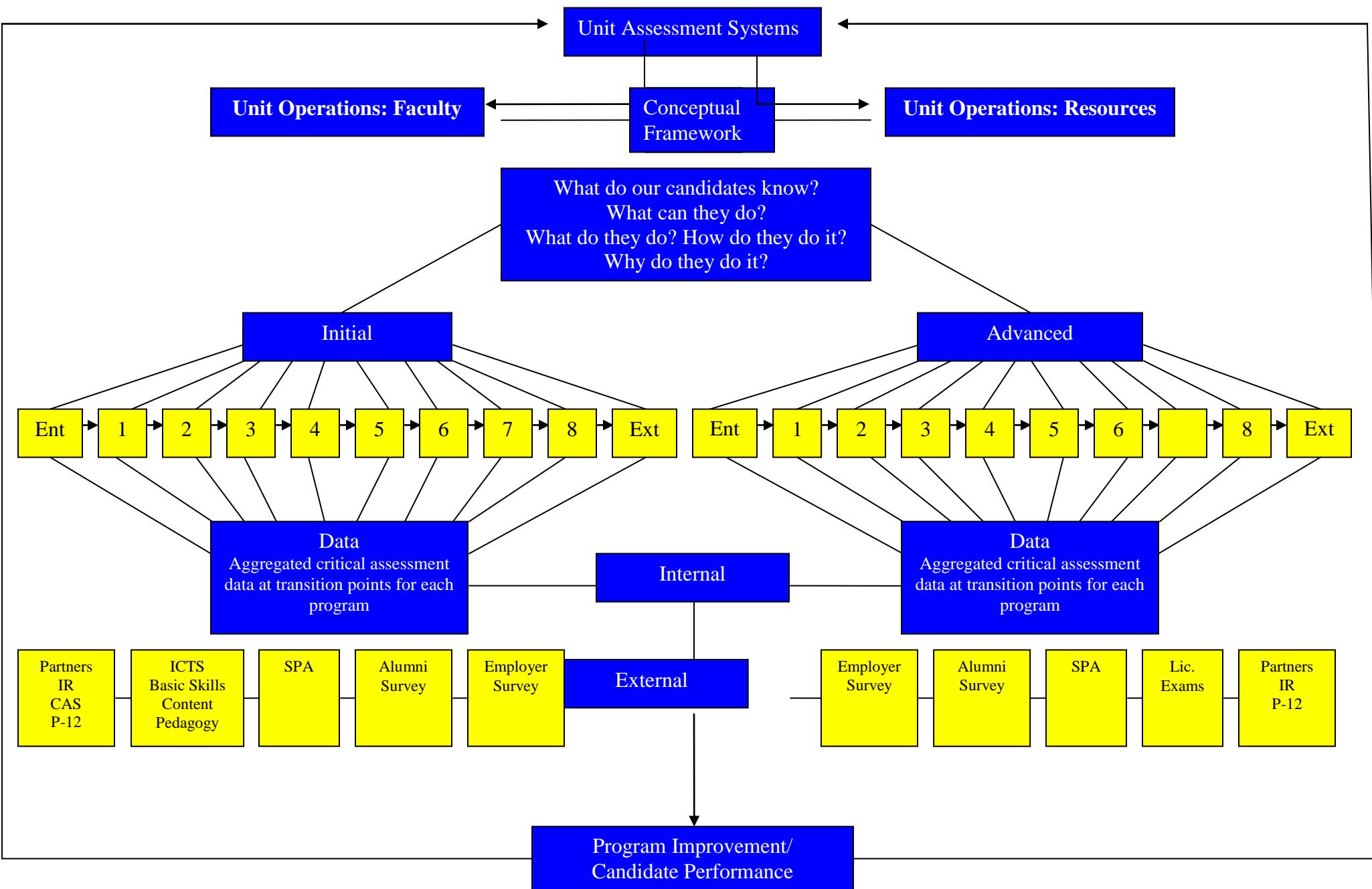
Five: Recognizes, acknowledges and responds to the emerging needs and challenges of a changing world.	<p>#9 Collaborative Relationships</p> <p>The teacher understands the role of the community in education and develops and maintains collaborative relationships with colleagues, parents/guardians, and the community to support student learning and well-being.</p>	<p>Principle #10: The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.</p>	Making the physical environment as safe and conducive to learning as possible
Six: Actively participates in one's professional growth in order to be a stronger advocate for positive professional and/or community change.	<p>#10 Reflection and Professional Growth</p> <p>The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates how choices and actions affect students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community and actively seeks opportunities to grow professionally.</p>	<p>Principle #9: The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.</p>	Building professional relationships with colleagues to share teaching insights and to coordinate learning activities for students

Summarized description of the unit's assessment system

The COE's assessment system is guided by the unit's conceptual framework—The COE Professional: Reflective, Collaborative, And Transformative. The Unit Assessment System rests on two sets of unit operations, faculty and resources. It is characterized by a reliance on data. There are specific required data sets for initial and advanced programs. They reflect both internal and external assessments and are collected at strategic points as each candidate progresses through our programs. The data sets are clear, consistent, collected regularly and based on both required and supplemental criteria. Data results are consistently codified, shared, and analyzed by our collective community that represents a broad range of expertise.

The Unit Assessment System is used to alert us to successes, failures, anomalies, and disconnects between the real world of schools and society and the practices of our College. While we value tradition, we eagerly search for empirical knowledge that will guide us as we struggle to change, and transform ourselves and our respected programs.

The chart below summarizes our Unit Assessment System.



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