



Preparing Educators as Leaders

Mission of the University

The University of Kansas is a major comprehensive research and teaching institution that serves as a center for learning, scholarship, and creative endeavor. The University of Kansas is the only Kansas Regents university to hold membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU), a select group of 62 public and private research universities that represents excellence in graduate and professional education and the highest achievements in research internationally.

Instruction. The university is committed to offering the highest quality undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs, comparable to the best education obtainable anywhere in the nation. As the AAU research university of the state, the University of Kansas offers a broad array of advanced graduate study programs and fulfills its mission through faculty, academic and research programs of international distinction, and outstanding libraries, teaching museums, and information technology. These resources enrich the undergraduate experience and are essential for graduate-level education and for research.

Research. The university attains high levels of research productivity and recognizes that faculty are part of a network of scholars and academicians that shape a discipline as well as teach it. Research and teaching, as practiced at the University of Kansas, are mutually reinforcing with scholarly inquiry underlying and informing the educational experience at undergraduate, professional, and graduate levels.

Service. The university first serves Kansas, then the nation and the world through research, teaching, and the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. The university provides service to the state of Kansas through its state- and federally-funded research centers. KU's academic programs, arts facilities, and public programs provide cultural enrichment opportunities for the larger community. Educational, research, and service programs are offered throughout the state, including the main campus in Lawrence, the KU health-related degree programs and services in Kansas City and Wichita, as well as the Regents Center at the Edwards Campus and other sites in the Kansas City metropolitan area, Topeka, Parsons, Hutchinson.

International Dimension. The university is dedicated to preparing its students for lives of learning and for the challenges educated citizens will encounter in an increasingly complex and diverse global community. More than 100 programs of international study and cooperative research are available for KU students and faculty at sites throughout the world. These programs, along with the university goal of preparing global citizens, have recently ranked KU as one of the top 6 in the nation among research extensive universities for the proportion of undergraduate students studying abroad (2004 Open Doors Report). The university offers teaching and research that draw upon and contribute to the most advanced developments throughout the United States and the rest of the world. At the same time, KU's extensive international ties support economic development in Kansas.

Values. The university is committed to excellence. It fosters a multicultural environment in which the dignity and rights of the individual are respected. Intellectual diversity, integrity, and disciplined inquiry in the search for knowledge are of paramount importance.



Mission of the Unit

Founded in 1909, the University of Kansas School of Education educates future teachers, administrators, counselors, psychologists, and health and sport professionals. As stated in the School Code:

Within the University, the School of Education serves Kansas, the nation, and the world by (1) preparing individuals to be leaders and practitioners in education and related human service fields, (2) expanding and deepening understanding of education as a fundamental human endeavor, and (3) helping society define and respond to its educational responsibilities and challenges.

The components of preparing educators as leaders that frame this mission for our initial and advanced programs are Research and Best Practice, Content Knowledge, and Professionalism. These interlocking themes build our Conceptual Framework. Within the framework, our programs combine a strong liberal arts and sciences education tradition with field-based pedagogical experiences that together foster thoughtful inquiry about schools, classrooms, labs, studios, all student learners, and the enterprise of schooling.

Our unit-wide perspective on the educational process views the learner as active in the development of constructing meaningful knowledge and ensures that systems of education are analyzed. At the completion of their initial programs, our candidates: know *what* they are teaching, know *how* they should teach it, and understand *whom* they are teaching, and possess the *skills* to teach effectively. Our candidates are well prepared to establish enriching learning environments; they know how to continually assess student understandings, attitudes and abilities and make instructional decisions about which opportunities might improve student learning. While recognizing that competence in such matters as content, human growth and development, health, curriculum, assessment, psychology, and cognitive science are essential components in the preparation of competent teachers, we place research and best practice, content and pedagogical knowledge and professionalism at the core of our program.

At the advanced level, our candidates move beyond essential entry-level professional practice knowledge, skill and competency to more advanced and focused graduate degree and certification programs. The advanced knowledge, skill and competency acquired by candidates in these programs prepares them not only to be stronger educators (classroom teachers), but also provides them with the advanced and specialized background to allow them to be leaders in their respective educational settings and positions. As (prospective) leaders, candidates will be in strategic positions that will allow them to provide guidance and direction to students and faculty with whom they work, to the educational and professional venues in which they serve, and to the communities in which they live. To this end our programs expect all students to acquire knowledge and understanding of basic educational research methods and proficiency at reading, using and adapting the research literature to their work with individuals (students, faculty, and parents) and the systems and institutions within which they will work.

It is our goal to provide our candidates through our graduate degree and certification programs with the advanced knowledge and skills to be model educators who assume leadership positions in their schools, districts, profession, and community—and by so doing enhance the education of students and the lives of those students and their families.



Core Values

Our programs, initial and advanced, pursue excellence in the preparation of candidates who are capable of serving as leaders in their schools and community. The following statements illustrate our core values.

- 1. We are committed to excellence through self-study and periodic review.**
 - The quality of an educational program is related to its commitment to excellence through self-study and periodic systematic review. Data collected on our candidates and faculty outcomes help assure that goals and objectives are met and that these are consistent with: a) the school's mission and goals; b) local, state, regional and national needs for educators; c) state and national standards for professional practice; and d) the evolving body of scientific and professional knowledge that serves as the basis for educational practices.
- 2. We value multiple perspectives.**
 - The best assessment/measurement of educational outcomes is systematic, multifaceted, and includes multiple perspectives.
- 3. We foster a sequential, cumulative preparation for life-long learning.**
 - The successful preparation of educators as leaders—whether at the initial or advanced level—is accomplished through a curriculum that is sequential, cumulative, graded in complexity, and designed to prepare the candidates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes for life-long learning.
- 4. We uphold professional & ethical standards of conduct.**
 - The professional development of educators as leaders must foster, demonstrate, and require the highest level of ethical standards and conduct.
- 5. We treat others with dignity, courtesy and respect.**
 - Students are the focal point of teaching and the learning process. Students (our own as well as those whom our candidates will teach in schools) must be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. We expect all candidates to acquire an understanding and respect for individual diversity and an appreciation and acceptance for an ever-increasing diverse society.
- 6. We connect research and best practice.**
 - The application of research to practice and the connection between empirical studies and best practices is fundamental in preparing educators as leaders.



The Conceptual Framework: Preparing Educators as Leaders

At both the initial and the advanced levels, we believe that teaching is an honorable, dynamic, and vitally important profession. Preparing children and youth for life in a society that is distinguished by constant change, increased diversity, and difficult challenges requires educators who can serve as leaders in their profession -- individuals who will be role models in their schools and communities. With regard to our initial and advanced teacher licensure programs, professional and state standards provide the structure for the knowledge and competencies we expect candidates to demonstrate. Though the standards for each program organize the professional knowledge base into slightly different strands or domains, common themes emerge.

The diagram above represents the Unit's conceptual framework. The circle at the diagram's center symbolizes the primary focus of our program's mission and vision – preparing educators as leaders. The middle circle illustrates our understanding that program enhancement is guided by a cyclical process including performance, assessment, evaluation and enhancement. The outer circle in the diagram identifies the three themes that constitute our understanding of preparing educators as leaders – research and best practice, content and pedagogical knowledge and professionalism. The diagram is designed to emphasize that these themes are articulated throughout all of the unit's activities, and that they comprise a whole. Accordingly, the unit's conceptual framework outlines *what* intellectual commitments we share, *how* we strive to address those commitments and how we ensure success and continued improvement through performance, assessment, evaluation and enhancement.

The Unit defines our efforts around three interlocking themes: (1) begin with what is known from research (on the best practices); (2) develop and teach this research-based content knowledge to candidates who then can apply this knowledge; and (3) ensure that all our candidates uphold and demonstrate the highest level of professionalism. The interconnectedness of these themes serves as a framework for preparing educational leaders.

The Three Themes

The Unit has identified and has continued to build its programs based upon: 1) research and best practice; 2) content and pedagogical knowledge; and 3) professionalism. These three interlocking themes are paramount to the framework that permeates our academic programs of study. In the following section, we briefly articulate the importance of these themes with research that aligns and supports our assumptions, values and beliefs for preparing educators as leaders.

Theme One: Research and Best Practice

The Unit believes that knowledge and application of both formal and informal research lead to effective, informed practices. Continuous review and incorporation of empirically-derived, successful methodology enhances (teaching) practices and leads to successful learner outcomes and informed decision making. Informed by research and theory, professionals are “ultimately about practice” (Shulman, 1998). Professionals translate their knowledge into skills and strategies that enable them to effectively serve their constituencies.

Effective leaders establish productive learning environments. They continually evaluate student understandings, attitudes, and abilities to inform instructional decisions. High-quality programs prize inquiry; they establish supportive learning environments where candidates build personal and professional relationships, are invited to explore, are encouraged to take risks and to question as part of their decision-making processes.



Arthur Levine (2006) recommended schools of education primarily focus on classroom practice, and that research institutions are perhaps best positioned to train the majority of teachers through research to inform practice. As Barr and Tagg (1995) conclude in their research, “programs that prepare professionals for changing education contexts must carefully and creatively construct learning situations for education candidates, providing them with varied opportunities to observe and reflect on how to best meet the needs of their future students.” One key of effective educational practice, therefore, is to know, through discovery, inquiry, and investigation, when to employ a particular instructional strategy or to provide a particular learning opportunity.

To prepare candidates for successful utilization of research and best practice principles, the Unit provides an integrated base of content knowledge and best practice. Research conducted by Darling-Hammond (2001) supports that “a good teacher education program, first of all, is coherent. That is, it has an idea about what good teaching is and then it organizes all of its course work, all of the clinical experiences, around that vision.” Darling-Hammond's (2006) article, *Constructing 21st Century Education*, suggested that clinical experience remains key to improving teacher education programs, noting that three components are critical to improving clinical experiences: (1) strict alignment and coherence between higher education coursework and clinical experiences in classrooms, (2) extensive and thoroughly supervised clinical experiences, and (3) close, proactive relationships; between higher education institutions and schools to promote successful clinical partnerships. In the AACTE policy brief (2010), *The Clinical Preparation of Teachers*, it was stressed that a strong clinical preparation is a key factor in their future students' success. As recommended in this report, the Unit is committed to strengthening school university partnerships in several ways including the expansion of the collaboration with professional development schools to placing candidates in diverse settings. We believe collaboration with partner schools is critical as well as providing candidates with strong clinical teachers and university supervisors. To accomplish this end, we engage candidates in school-embedded clinical work throughout their teacher preparation program, culminating in a year-long practicum and student teaching experience.

The transfer of theory and content knowledge into practice is crucial. Utilization of field-based research is most likely to occur when candidates understand the process fundamentally and engage in practice of the process. In the Unit, knowledge refers to both specific subject content area and pedagogy. The ability to combine the two in practice is a key component of our professional education courses, many of which include field-based experiences. Field-based experiences are pre-service opportunities for students to transfer knowledge into practice. Fleener (1998) found that teacher candidates who receive more field experience remain in teaching longer. Field placement experiences permit teacher candidates to assess student learning, to meet individual student needs, to understand the need to be resourceful and flexible, and to make appropriate adjustments in their teaching strategies and methods. Candidates are required to share their reflections with faculty, exchange ideas with them, and examine their effectiveness. The Unit shares a belief in and a commitment to the value of knowledge acquired through field-based experiences.

Darling-Hammond (2005) supports, through review of related research, the position that the single most important determinate of what students learn is what their teachers know. Candidates gain this knowledge of research and best practice through coursework, field experiences and capstone projects covering the process from hypothesis and methodology development to aggregation and interpretation of data to application of results in the appropriate environment. In addition, our faculty consistently model effective instruction by using the latest research, up-to-date content knowledge and when appropriate, demonstrate/or provide opportunities to observe best practices. Student-centered approaches to teaching and learning, a variety of educational technologies, and multiple approaches to assessment, among others, are important for



candidates to experience as learners. This integrated practice supports candidates in future incorporation and implementation of research in their field to apply performance-based best practice.

The unit is committed to preparing educators to educate all students. Darling-Hammond (2010) highlights the importance of preparing teacher candidates to be sensitive to cultural differences. Schools in the United States must close the achievement gap between majority and minority groups. Darling-Hammond suggested that this “opportunity gap” has for low-income students, students of color, and English language learners prevented access to qualified teachers, classrooms, and curricula. With changing demographics in schools, teachers must be prepared to function in linguistically diverse classrooms (Spezzini & Austin, 2011), to develop an awareness of their own and their students' cultural roots, and to view materials with a social constructivist eye (Muschell & Roberts, 2011).

Theme Two: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

In the Unit, knowledge refers to both specific subject content (e.g. biology) and pedagogy. We believe it is essential that all candidates master both types of knowledge.

Professional organizations such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and the National Association of State Boards of Education all identify as their first criterion the importance of content knowledge. NCATE asserts that candidates must know the content of their field. INTASC Standards expect that the teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches; and the NASBE (National Association of State Boards of Education Study Group, 2000) believes that good teachers know their subject well. Our candidates in initial programs possess a deep understanding of the subject matter they will teach. They acquire this depth of understanding in coursework taken in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Candidates in the elementary program complete nearly 80 credit hours of general education requirements in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Middle and secondary majors are required to study the depth and breadth of their content area. For example, secondary biology majors are responsible for 53 credit hours of coursework through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; secondary math majors are responsible for 46 credit hours¹.

Borko and Putnam (2000) describe pedagogical knowledge as including (a) the educator's overarching concept of purpose and that nature of the content; (b) knowledge of potential understandings and misunderstandings; (c) knowledge of content, curriculum and materials; and (d) knowledge of strategies and representations for practice. Knowledge of pedagogy in our initial programs is acquired over a multi-year sequence of professional education courses with field-based experiences. At all levels, our candidates acquire an in-depth understanding of the evolving body of professional knowledge in their field. The Unit shares a belief in and a commitment to the value of knowledge acquired through field-based experiences.

In a policy brief, Blanton, Pugach, and Florian (2011) found that teachers do not feel adequately prepared to be accountable for the achievement of learners who have disabilities, who are English language learners, or who are from the lowest socioeconomic levels. The unit embraces this challenge by preparing educators that believe that all students, including students with disabilities, belong in general education classrooms and are capable learners who are entitled to high-quality instruction and access to challenging content that prepares them for college and careers.

At the advanced level, candidates prepare for new roles or develop additional expertise in their respective discipline. As candidates prepare for new roles, such as school psychologist or school principal, they acquire specialized knowledge and skills and dispositions specific to their new professional responsibilities. Candidates who seek to develop additional expertise as classroom teachers complete advanced programs that allow them to gain additional subject matter content knowledge and



more in-depth knowledge of curriculum instruction, and assessment that is both of a foundational nature as well as discipline-specific. Candidates in all advanced programs focus their study on acquiring the essential content knowledge that represents the evolving nature of their fields with the most current research that is aligned with practice.

Theme Three: Professionalism

Our programs advocate the goal of initiating our candidates into a community of professionals who can be recognized from our core beliefs and standards of practice. As such, our candidates know what it means to be a professional and exhibit these qualities as members of the educational community.

The Unit candidates are engaged in professional learning that expects a commitment to ethical and caring practice in which continued learning and professional development are paramount. As such, while the initial focus of many beginning teachers often is limited to their own classrooms, our candidates are prepared to expand their horizons to the schools and communities they will serve, as well as to their professional associations at the state and national education levels.

Candidates are prepared to understand the complexities of knowledge and best practice, curriculum and their relationship to all students as professionals in practice. The Unit candidates must demonstrate successfully this commitment through course content, demonstrations, projects and field based experiences to the caring for all students from various backgrounds and experiences. Candidates must demonstrate in their preparation the ability to evaluate and implement the curriculum, instruction, and caring appropriate to all students.

As cited by Ambrose (2002), Sternberg (1999) and Yan (1999) teacher candidates who confront their inherent conflicts and seek to find resolutions embodying synthesis of opposing views deepen the level of their professional growth. Our candidates learn the importance of a strong commitment in working with professional colleagues about issues of professional practice, engagement with families and communities. Part of being a professional is being committed to self-directed growth, being passionate about learning, and honoring the complexity of the education profession.

Becoming a professional educator requires a commitment to the profession. Consequently, novice educators and practitioners preparing for other professional roles, such as those we serve and prepare in the Unit, are at the beginning of a life-long path toward professionalism.

KU School of Education Proficiencies for Conceptual Framework

The core values and three themes of the Unit's conceptual framework are delineated in greater detail in the Unit's proficiencies for educator preparation. The proficiencies represent the knowledge, skills, and dispositions developed by the candidates who complete the initial and advanced programs. In table 1, these knowledge, skills, and dispositions are organized according to the three themes of Research and Best Practice, Content and Pedagogical Knowledge, and Dispositions. These proficiencies guide course design and assessment for the continuous improvement of the educator preparation programs.



The School of Education's Conceptual Framework

Theme One: Research and Best Practice

Knowledge	Skills	Dispositions
Understands education research and makes connections between research and recommendations for best practices for teaching and learning.	Aligns educational system, program, and teaching with education research and recommendations for best practices.	Shows dedication to and an understanding of the importance of using research-based best practice in the teaching and learning process.
Understands research and best practices for supporting the learning of all students.	Applies best practices in supporting learning of all students. Applies education research and best practices in teaching and educational leadership	Values the importance of student achievement.

Table 1: KU SOE Proficiencies for Conceptual Framework

Theme Two: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

Knowledge	Skills	Dispositions
Content. Uses the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of each discipline he or she teaches and can create opportunities that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for all students. (KSDE Standard 1)	Focuses curriculum and instruction on core concepts and skills worthy for all students to know.	Establishes high standards and expectations for all learners.
Learners and Learning. Understands how individuals learn and develop intellectually, socially, and personally and provides learning opportunities that support this development. (KSDE Standard 2)	Aligns teaching with the developmental level and abilities of students.	



The School of Education's Conceptual Framework

Theme Two: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

Knowledge	Skills	Dispositions
<p>Learning Environment. Creates environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation. (KSDE Standard 5)</p>	<p>Establishes a positive learning environment to empower a community of learners.</p>	
<p>Diversity. Provides different approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are equitable, that are based on developmental levels, and that are adapted to diverse learners, including those with exceptionalities. (KSDE Standard 3)</p>	<p>Employs multiple instructional approaches to support the learning of all students with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and abilities. Accommodates the individual learning needs of students.</p>	<p>Shows respect for individual differences.</p>
<p>Curriculum. Demonstrates the ability to integrate across and within content fields to enrich the curriculum, develop reading and thinking skills, and facilitate all students' abilities to understand relationships. (KSDE Standard 11)</p>	<p>Integrates content from all disciplines throughout curriculum and instruction.</p>	<p>Values positive and proactive approaches to students and teaching practices.</p>
<p>Instruction. Uses a variety of appropriate instructional strategies to develop various kinds of students' learning including critical thinking, problem solving, and reading. (KSDE Standard 4)</p>	<p>Plans courses, units, and lessons that motivate and engage students in active learning.</p>	<p>Desires to analyze a variety of teaching practices to initiate innovative practice, if appropriate, and to evaluate teaching practice.</p>
<p>Instruction. Plans effective instruction based upon knowledge of all students, community, subject matter, curriculum outcomes, and current methods of reading. (KSDE Standard 7)</p>	<p>Identifies, evaluates, adapts, and sequences instructional resources to construct a coherent curriculum aligned with State Standards. Uses formal and informal assessment to</p>	



The School of Education's Conceptual Framework

Theme Two: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

Knowledge	Skills	Dispositions
<p>Communication. Uses a variety of effective verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom. (KSDE Standard 6)</p>	<p>measure the progress of individual student learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction.</p>	
<p>Assessment. Understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continual intellectual, social and other aspects of personal development of all learners. (KSDE Standard 8)</p>	<p>Uses formal and informal assessment to measure the progress of individual student learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction.</p>	
<p>Technology. Understands the role of technology in society and demonstrates skills using instructional tools and technology to gather, analyze, present information, enhance instructional practices, facilitate professional productivity and communication, and help all students to use technology effectively. (KSDE Standard 12)</p>	<p>Infuse appropriate and effective use of technology into teaching and learning.</p>	

Theme Three: Professionalism

Knowledge	Skills	Dispositions
<p>Is a reflective practitioner who uses an understanding of historical, philosophical, and social foundations of education to guide educational practices. (KSDE Standard 13)</p>	<p>Employs ethical and legal standards in teaching and leadership.</p>	<p>Shows commitment to professionalism and ethical standards.</p>



The School of Education's Conceptual Framework

Theme Three: Professionalism

Knowledge	Skills	Dispositions
Is a reflective practitioner who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally (KSDE Standard 9)	Contributes to the profession through professional organizations and learning communities.	Is committed to collaboration with other professionals to improve the overall learning of students.
Fosters collegial relationships with school personnel, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support all students' learning and well being. (KSDE Standard 10)	Advocates for education with all stakeholders in the community.	
Is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his or her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community). (KSDE Standard 9)	Reflects on educational practice to improve teaching and leadership.	Views the teacher as an educational leader.
Is a reflective practitioner who participates in the school improvement process (Kansas Quality Performance Accreditation [QPA]) (KSDE Standard 9)	Engages in school improvement.	

Summary

From the beginning of their academic programs of study, the Unit fosters our candidates' preparation and understanding with the most current research and best practices, and ensures content knowledge acquisition appropriate to their professional aspirations, while developing a high regard for professionalism as they progress through our programs.

By preparing educators as leaders in their future careers and by continually working to create programs designed to further enhance all levels of education, we believe these future educators will be positioned to bring about long-term, fundamental change. Our candidates learn to anticipate and plan for the future, construct and apply a coherent, integrated understanding of teaching and learning, engage in collaborative problem-solving and critical inquiry, strive to enable all students to reach their potential, and continually assess and improve their practice for the benefit of all students.



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