



The Professional Education Unit of West Chester University

Conceptual Framework

West Chester University's Professional Education Unit's conceptual organizing theme, ***Teaching and Learning in Context***, not only reflects an integrated set of overarching principles and values that give shape to the structures and processes of our programs but also places all professional education programs within the larger context of the West Chester University Mission of providing "high-quality undergraduate education programs." The theme highlights the professional education programs' holistic philosophy that sees educational encounters as always more than the sum of their most visible parts: teacher, candidate, K-12 student, curriculum, and classroom. The professional education unit believes that the reflective practitioner understands and values learning and teaching in context – including internal, cultural, social, and environmental factors – and is able to function effectively on behalf of all students.

In line with the University's focus on teaching, the Professional Education Unit facilitates the reflection process for prospective pre-professional candidates and provides for their education, preparation, and continuing development as reflective practitioners. It aligns performance indicators with professional, state, and institutional standards to ensure that preparation and capabilities are current and at expected levels. Further as a reflection of the University's vision of becoming noted for undergraduate programs that actively engage candidates in connecting the life of the mind to the world in which they live and work, the professional education programs hold as a mission, the preparation of reflective educational professionals who facilitate the development and learning of all students.

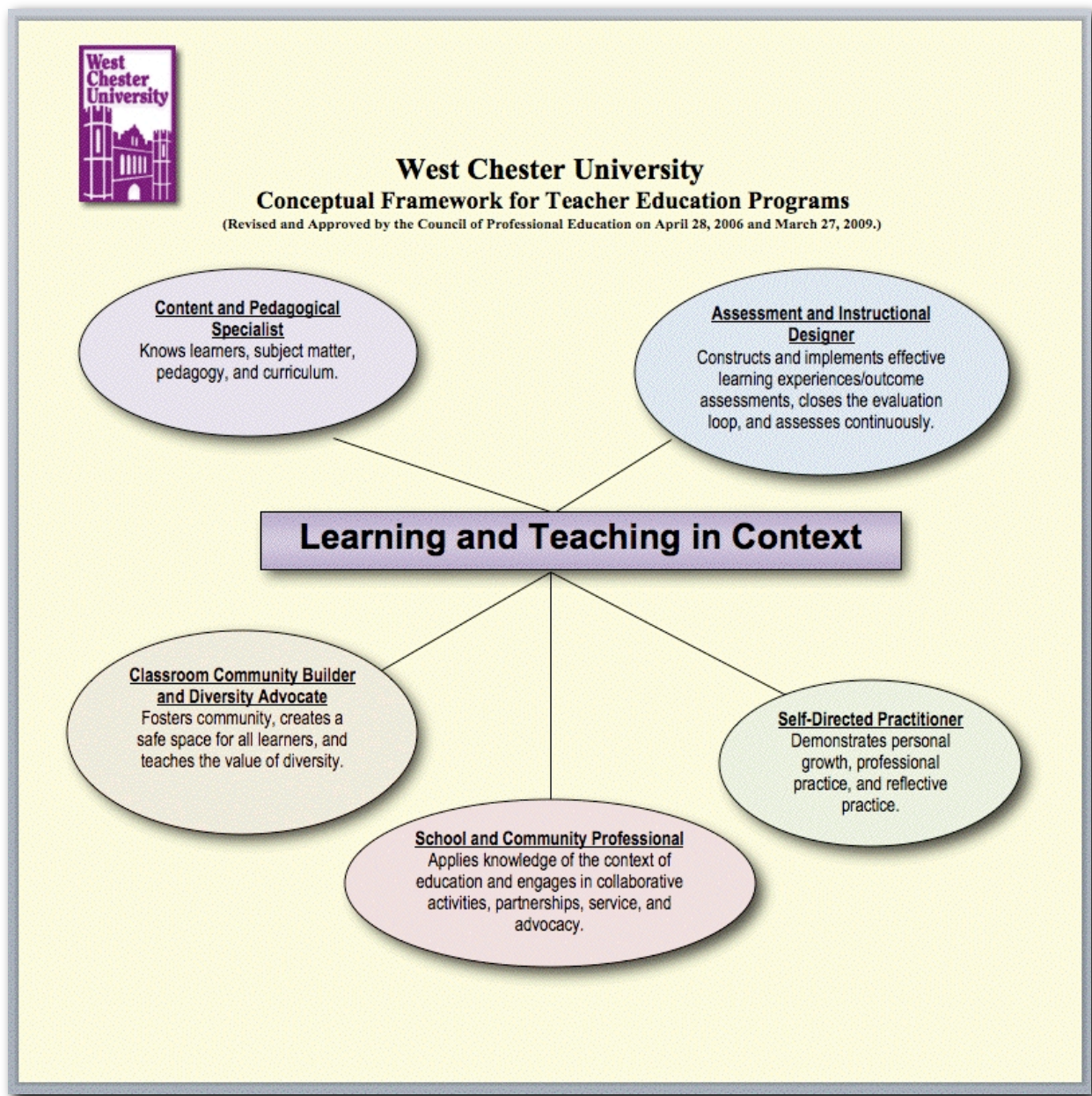
These elements of mission and vision provide the context within which Professional Education Programs have been developed, monitored, assessed, and modified. Simply expressed, the West Chester University conceptual framework states that each professional education program will prepare teachers and other school professionals who:

- **Know** learners, subject matter, pedagogy and curriculum
- **Construct** effective learning experiences, continuous assessment processes that close the evaluation loop
- **Value** diversity and community in the classroom through practice
- **Apply** knowledge of the context of education and engage in collaborative activities partnerships, service and advocacy
- **Direct** personal growth and professional practice and reflective practice

The Professional Education Unit's conceptual framework is intended to be a living document, one that will serve professional education as it continues to meet the needs of our candidates and those whom they will someday serve. As such, the conceptual framework (including the five articulated principles, unit outcomes and performance indicators) serve as the basis of program and candidate development and assessment.

West Chester University's Conceptual Framework for Teacher Education Programs is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. West Chester University Conceptual Framework for Teacher Education Programs



Shared Values

The process employed in the creation of the West Chester University conceptual framework was one involving the collaborative efforts of faculty, administration, K-12 school personnel including co-operating teachers, candidates, and alumni. The collaborative nature of the processes employed ensured not only a richness in perspective but also a broad base of understanding and ownership across and among all constituents. Evidence of this collaboration can be found by reviewing the documents of the work group appointed by the Dean, the minutes of the meetings of the Chairs and Coordinators and the Teacher Education Council, and the department commentary on the conceptual framework.

The theme serves as the reminder to candidates and faculty of the vision of a desired future which we share and one explicated in three inter-related sub-contexts: 1) the “It” or the Content, Learner and Skill context; 2) the “We” or the Cultural – Social context, and 3) the “I” or Personal Context.

Recognizing that all of these sub-contexts are legitimate and important domains within the work of professional education, The Unit vision/theme honors all three in its over-arching understanding of “Context” and thereby connects immediately and directly to what actually drives candidates and members of our Unit. The sub-contexts and the corresponding Knowledge Base and Unit Outcomes are listed below.

1. Content-Learner-Skill Context (It): Our vision of a desired future includes professionals motivated by love of, dedication to, or excellence in a particular discipline or subject, of particular content-pedagogical knowledge and skill, or knowledge of human development; those who place special emphasis on mastering content knowledge and pedagogical skill and envision a future in which love of learning, excitement about ideas, academic rigor, and scholarly excellence are defining features of professional education.

Subject and Pedagogical Specialist

- Knows learners, subject matter, pedagogy and curriculum.

Assessment and Instructional Designer

- Constructs effective learning experiences/outcomes assessment, closes the evaluation loop and assesses continually.

2. Cultural-Social Context (We): Our vision of a desired future includes professionals motivated by dispositions to serve others, especially young people, to contribute to the common good, to help solve a pressing social problem, to better understand cultural and social factors affecting learning; those who are concerned about children, diversity, students with special needs, democracy, social change, public education and the environment, and who envision a future in which the Unit is known for its efforts to dispose candidates to these goals.

Diversity Advocate and Classroom Community Builder

- Values diversity and community in the classroom through practice.

School and Community Professional

- Applies knowledge of the context of education and engages in collaborative activities, partnerships, service, and advocacy.

3. Personal Context (I): Our vision of a desired future includes professionals motivated by a sense of personal growth, professional development, and reflection, and about the characteristics exhibited by those who have discerned that teaching is in fact their calling, passion, enthusiasm, care, dedication, life-long learning; those who envision a future in which the Unit is known for its dedication to personal growth, reflective practice, and lifelong professional development.

Self-Directed Practitioner

- Directs personal growth, professional practice and reflective practice.

Our desired future is thus one in which the Unit strives to honor all the sub-contexts as always at work in education, and in turn prepare candidates who evidence them in terms of our Knowledge Base and Unit Outcomes. The desired outcome of truly exceptional teachers and school professionals – who understand and appreciate the full significance of Teaching and Learning in Context – becomes the common purpose that spans the motivations of any individual Unit member.