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**KENT STATE UNIVERSITY**

**PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

***Excellence in Education:***

***100 years of Inquiry, Learning, Reflection, and Action***

***(DRAFT REVISION with feedback from Clinical Experience Advisory Committee and faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of the Arts, Spring, 2013)***

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**Preamble**

This conceptual framework describes a shared mission and vision for the preparation of educators and other school professionals to work with P-12 learners in schools. It is guided by the history and traditions of Kent State University, an institution built over a century ago upon a commitment to expanding access to and improving public education through research, teaching, and our engagement with public schools in the region and beyond. The conceptual framework defines the vision, mission, philosophy, candidate proficiencies, and Unit Assessment System and knowledge bases. It articulates our professional commitments that serve to guide programs, curricula, candidate performance, faculty teaching, scholarship and service, assessment systems, support of all learners,[[1]](#footnote-1) and involvement with schools.

**Professional Education Mission**

The mission of our educator preparation program is to develop **education professionals**

* Who are committed to providing an equitable education that addresses the needs of all learners and who approach their work with a spirit of inquiry, reflection, passion, informed judgment and creativity, and
* Who will assume leadership for the shape of their profession and the quality of education in a rapidly changing and diverse democracy.

Our mission is aligned with the mission of Kent State University to “engage students in diverse learning environments that educate them to think critically and to expand their intellectual horizons while attaining the knowledge and skills necessary for responsible citizenship and productive careers.”

To achieve this mission, our professional education program provides opportunities for candidates and faculty:

* To deepen our understanding of the meaning of education in a diverse and democratic society,
* To develop informed professional judgments by engaging in inquiry that is based on knowledge of one’s discipline, multiple sources of data about learners, collaboration with families and other professionals, and professional commitment to serve all learners, and
* To develop meaningful partnerships with schools and agencies.

**Professional Education Vision**

It is the aim of the Kent State University professional education faculty to create premier national programs, ones recognized for:

* Outstanding scholarship that impacts theory and practice in respective fields of faculty study, and
* Innovative learning opportunities that support the development of knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and committed members of local and global education settings.

It is our intent, therefore, to graduate individuals 1) who demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions to respond to a complex and changing global environment, and 2) provide exemplary instruction that attends to all learners in educational endeavors. The unit and P-12 schools work in partnership with our candidates to provide a clinically-based preparation program that serves both the needs of P-12 learners and professional education candidates.

**Philosophy, Purposes/Goals and Institutional Standards**

The principles that guide our teacher preparation are inspired by the May 4th[[2]](#footnote-2) Memorial: *Inquire, Learn, Reflect[[3]](#footnote-3)*. And as a professional education program, to that we add *Act* as agents of change. Candidates inquire into content to gain in-depth knowledge through collaboration with content-area disciplines. Carefully designed clinical experiences are embedded within each program, which require candidates to inquire, learn, reflect, and act on this experience. A Core Professional Education sequence of four courses introduces candidates to the challenges of education in a democracy, responsiveness to the diversity of learners, the social contexts of learning and difference, and responsible use of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

**Summary of the Unit Assessment System**

The Unit Assessment System (UAS) supports Kent State University’s goal of preparing excellent educators and other school professionals.  Assessments are focused on examining the efficacy of candidates as reflective, creative, and committed practitioners.  Our UAS is aligned with our conceptual framework and we engage in a variety of methods to measure the in-depth content knowledge of our candidates, their understanding and use of learner-centered pedagogy, their capacity to engage in ethically and culturally reflective practices, and their professional collaboration skills.

Our UAS for initial licensure includes assessment of candidate progress (transitions); assessment of candidate performance (key assessments); assessment of program graduates (follow-up); and assessment of unit and program operations.  By utilizing both standardized and local tools, Kent State University is able to investigate candidate abilities using nationally-validated and institution-specific measures.  The data come from multiple stakeholders, both internal and external sources, and over multiple points in time. The advanced licensure programs also have methods for assessing disposition, teacher performance, and field experience, but those measures are customized by program area.

The Unit has a system in place by which data feed up from the candidate level to the program level, from the program level to the unit level, and from the unit level to the institutional level.  The UAS delineates how the use of data for decision-making filters down from the institutional level eventually to the candidate level, contributing to the improvement of candidate knowledge, skills, dispositions, and the impact on student learning.  The unit meets annually to review data for the continuous improvement of the unit and programs therein.

**Professional Commitments**

**In-Depth Content Knowledge**

The candidate:

* Knows and understands discipline-specific content and pedagogy
* Places knowledge in a broader context and integrates it with other content areas
* Seeks and uses creative, innovative, and content-appropriate, research-based teaching methods
* Knows key content of professional association standards and the Common Core
* Understands and uses academic language

**Learner-Centered Pedagogy**

The candidate:

* Understands the different ways in which students learn and uses knowledge of students and student thinking to inform teaching and learning
* Creates an engaging learning environment that helps students build on prior knowledge
* Facilitates inquiry-based learning and problem solving
* Uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making
* Uses technology in an ethical, critical, and creative manner as a means to acquire, provide, organize, and communicate knowledge

**Ethically and Culturally Reflective Practices**

The candidate:

* Exemplifies the highest ethical standards of the education profession
* Values the richness of human similarities and differences, and understands the implications of these differences in a socially stratified society and world
* Adapts assessments, pedagogy, and educational programs to meet individual needs
* Advocates for students and families in ways that are culturally sensitive and knowledgeable
* Reflects on teaching practice and its effectiveness with respect to larger social, cultural, and ethical complexities

**Professional Collaboration**

The candidate:

* Understands the role of other professional educators and ancillary personnel
* Demonstrates leadership for educating all children in collaboration with educators, agencies, families, and communities
* Uses knowledge, diverse cultural frames of reference, and alternative perspectives to think critically and solve problems
* Values and demonstrates commitment to on-going professional development

**Knowledge Base Underlying the Conceptual Framework**

With appreciation to the following faculty for their contribution to the knowledge base for the 2013 revision of the conceptual framework: Stephen Mitchell (In-Depth Content Knowledge); Andrew Wiley (Learner-Centered Pedagogy); Natasha Levinson (Ethical and Culturally Reflective Practice); Joanne Arhar and Martha Lash (Professional Collaboration).

**In-Depth Content Knowledge**

The Candidate

* Knows and understands discipline-specific content and pedagogy
* Places knowledge in a broader context and integrates it with other content areas
* Seeks and uses creative, innovative, and content-appropriate research-based teaching methods
* Knows key content of professional association standards and the Common Core
* Understands and uses academic language

 A key aspect of our conceptual framework is "In-Depth Content Knowledge." Alone, this term could be understood in a variety of ways but we choose to clarify it by adding the five descriptors listed above. These are the professional education competencies that we expect all candidates to have.

Knowledge of the content of a specific area, mathematics, music, or social studies for example, are clearly important foundations, but an understanding of one of these areas alone is not sufficient for a teacher to be able to help others understand the complexity of that content knowledge (Floden & Meniketti, 2005; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Shulman (1986, 1987) and colleagues (Grossman, 1990; Wilson, Shulman, & Richert, 1987) attempted to provide a framework to articulate this complexity and since then, researchers have worked to develop our understandings of this in various ways (e.g. Gess-Newsome & Lederman, 1999; Hill, Rowan & Ball, 2005; Ormrod & Cole, 1996).

As we consider the complexities of subject matter knowledge, one aspect that we find to be particularly important is the ability to understand a specific content area in the larger world. In social studies, for example, this is manifested in the National Council for the Social Studies (2008) position statement, “A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy,” through both the idea of integration and extending meaning. To make the content meaningful for students, a teacher should be able to help students see and make connections between the content under direct study and other aspects of the world around them. To help students better understand relationships within content, integrating content from other fields is critical. Similarly, students’ understandings of mathematics influences how they make sense of social studies’ intersections with mathematics. National standards for science and social studies explicitly honor integration by noting the relationship among science, technology, and society (NCSS, 2010; NSTA, 2013). We value and hope to prepare professional education candidates who are beginning to understand the deeper connections across the curriculum to better help their students become thoughtful citizens while learning their content deeply.

 Our commitment that each graduate “seeks out and uses creative, innovative, and content-appropriate teaching methods,” comes from a commitment to preparing future educators who are able to meet the needs of a variety of students in a multitude of contexts. If our professional education candidates are disposed toward actively searching for new and effective ways to help all students learn content, they will be more likely to be successful, thus our emphasis on Learner-Centered Pedagogy.

 At the current time teachers will be judged on how well their students learn appropriate content as defined by each Specialized Professional Association (SPA) and the Common Core State Standards (NGA/CCSSO, 2010). In all our teacher education programs we seek to incorporate a comprehensive understanding of SPA K-12 academic content standards and of the K-12 Common Core State Standards.

Finally, understanding and using academic language is an important skill for teacher candidates. According to the Secondary English-Language Arts Assessment Handbook for edTPA, “Academic language is oral and written language used for academic purposes. Academic language is the means by which students develop and express content understandings. Academic language represents the language of the discipline that students need to learn and use to participate and engage in meaningful ways in the content area. There are language demands that teachers need to consider as they plan to support student learning of content” (edTPA, 39).

**Learner-Centered Pedagogy**

**The Candidate**

* Understands the different ways in which students learn and uses knowledge of students to inform teaching and learning
* Creates an engaging learning environment that helps students build on prior knowledge
* Facilitates inquiry-based learning and problem solving
* Uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making
* Uses technology in an ethical, critical, and creative manner as a means to acquire, provide, organize, and communicate knowledge

Traditionally, teachers have been at the center of classroom instruction. Learner-centered pedagogy changes this viewpoint so that students are now at the heart of instruction, and it makes perfect sense that this should be so. With students at the center, learning—not teaching—becomes the focus of instruction. This is true across the full range of instructional models, from constructivism (Dewey, 1938) to those that emphasize more explicit and direct instruction (Rosenshine, 1979), as well as those that combine approaches and methods (e.g., Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2007).

 When students are at the center, instructional decisions are based on whether or not students learn. Teachers provide differentiated instruction that supports the achievement of all students—or at least many more—than when the teacher proposes one method of learning and expects all to be successful (Brimjoin, Marquissee, & Tomlinson, 2003).

 A learner-centered classroom focuses on preventing and solving problems rather than reactive discipline. A combination of positive approaches is used to help students foster awareness of themselves and others, and to improve their social and emotional competence (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). In a learner-centered classroom, student dignity and individuality are paramount.

 A learner-centered classroom focuses on students’ achievement. Key to enabling this is identifying and removing barriers caused by instructional methods and curriculum materials. Supported by brain research, the Universal Design for Learning framework (Rose & Meyer, 2002) proposes that educators strive for three kinds of flexibility: “to represent information in multiple formats and media, to provide multiple pathways for students’ action and expression, and to provide multiple ways to engage students’ interests and motivation” (p. 69).

A learner-centered classroom respects learners’ experience and interest in technology. Technology supports the needs of each individual including those with special needs. Because of that, technology enables each individual’s uniqueness to flourish. The International Society for Technology in Education’s (ISTE) Educational Technology Standards for Teachers indicates specifically that teachers need to address the needs of all learners by using learner-centered strategies which provide equitable access to appropriate digital tools and resources (ISTE, 2008). Teaching with technology per se is not a benefit to students. To integrate technology into the classroom successfully, a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered is necessary (Salinas, 2008). Teachers need to understand technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), which includes the knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of teaching methods, and knowledge of how technology improves instruction and relates to content and pedagogy.

 Therefore, learner-centered pedagogy values choice, responsibility, engagement, ownership, and collaboration.

**Choice**

Student choice energizes and nurtures achievement. Curricular standards are met through pursuing self-selected topics. Students in classrooms that honor choice experience what it feels like to be life-long learners, not just school-time learners. Offering students developmentally appropriate options honors the developmental nature of learning (Piaget, 1950); offering students options emphasizes learning as an act of culture and freedom (Freire, 1974).

 Allowing for choice honors students as thinkers, as human beings competent to make worthwhile decisions about their academic lives. Educators guide students’ choices to ensure that each student attains knowledge and skills that will maximize their independence -- their freedom to choose -- throughout their lives.

**Responsibility**

Students are expected and encouraged to take a lead role in their learning. Teachers act more like coaches than directors, helping students to actively engage their experiences in the classroom and beyond. Students have the chance to envision unanticipated futures for themselves because they have not been limited by someone else’s agenda. When students have the opportunity for self-determination and to follow their passions, responsibility is readily embraced.

 Responsibility leads to reflection on the effectiveness of learning. When students share with their teachers what they still need, teachers’ practices change; in turn, student options then change, allowing for further reflection which strengthens both student engagement and ownership.

Responsibility extends beyond cognitive choices to self-discipline as well. Self-awareness and compassion for others through social and emotional learning are key aspects of a learner-centered classroom (Zins & Elias, 2007). Every effective method is used to promote responsibility, caring, and the ability to respond ethically to complex issues.

**Engagement**

Engagement nurtures deep understandings; depth of knowledge is valued over breadth of knowledge. This is accomplished through a meaningful and relevant curriculum which respects students’ decisions and transforms classrooms into safe, compassionate learning communities (Osher et al., 2010). Acknowledgment of the social nature of learning nurtures achievement because students’ energies are focused on content, not overshadowed by other needs (Vygotsky, 1962).

 Students are purposely led to interact with new material and situations. Teachers help students see the relevance of pertinent information so that students can make the knowledge their own. Until students can interpret the data so that they see the connections, true learning does not occur.

 Learning engagement expects that students will ask questions and take risks in their learning when they are challenged by information that puzzles or confuses them. Engagement presupposes curiosity; learned-centered classrooms allow for students to follow their questions (Erb, 2001). A learner-centered classroom addresses the needs of students who do not respond adequately to constructivist approaches by providing them with more explicit instructional support (Engelmann, 1997).

**Ownership**

Voices of students are clearly heard in learner-centered pedagogy where their dignity is respected. As their “ideas, hopes, aspirations and lives [are taken] seriously” (Beane, 1997, p. 68), students begin to “own” their knowledge. They are free to learn, and once content is known, the possibilities for making future connections are endless—and priceless. Based on student needs and progress, various methods are selected and used to ensure that students master content. Content mastery is critical to creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning.

**Collaboration**

 The social nature of education is fully supported in a learner-centered classroom. In such a classroom, all participants—teacher and students—are co-constructors of knowledge. Teacher expertise is shared through scaffolding. As the more experienced persons, teachers share their knowledge with students; more experienced students share their expertise with less able peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Further, students often work together, synthesizing and creating a new product, representative of their new understandings (Bloom, 1984). This sense of community is built not only on the relationships among the adults and young people, but on the idea that they are mutually engaged in addressing shared questions and concerns. In these ways, young people have an opportunity to learn through experience the social knowledge that is part of the democratic way of life. (Beane, 1997, p. 65)

In partnership, these values—choice, responsibility, engagement, ownership, and collaboration—support a democratic classroom, where each voice is heard and considered. A democratic classroom models the world in which students will live as adults, a world where the knowledge generated in this information age will continue to increase at exponential rates. A democratic classroom is necessary, too, when global connections among world citizens occur at an ever-increasing pace. Learner-centered pedagogy makes this possible. Our candidates experience this approach in their coursework as they are expected to choose their areas of specialization, as they take responsibility for learning with and from others, for how they must engage in the content and with each other, how they take ownership for their choices and experiences, and how they work collaboratively with classmates and school personnel. Understanding content knowledge deeply and honoring students’ learning is fully supported by our emphasis on Ethical and Culturally Reflective Practices.

**Ethical and Culturally Reflective Practices**

The Candidate

* Exemplifies the highest ethical standards of the education profession
* Values the richness of human similarities and differences, and understands the implications of these differences in a socially stratified society and world
* Adapts assessments, pedagogy, and educational programs to meet individual needs
* Advocates for students and families in ways that are culturally sensitive and knowledgeable
* Reflects on teaching practice and its effectiveness with respect to larger social, cultural, and ethical complexities

 We believe that the very fact of being an educator commits one to a particular set of moral principles by virtue of membership in the profession (Carr, 2000; Goodlad, et al., 1990; Sockett, 1993). These principles are articulated in the codes of conduct of our various specialized professional educational associations, as well as in the Licensure Code of Professional Conduct for Ohio Educators (2008). More importantly, however, these principles and the requisite character traits are infused in our program areas through the formal mechanism of the dispositions assessment and via a deeper and more essential process of ethical socialization within each licensure area. Although we do not have a formal course in ethics for educators at the undergraduate level, candidates develop many of the skills of reflective ethical practice in the foundations courses that constitute the professional educational sequence, as well as in courses in content and pedagogy in the various licensure areas. Each licensure area in the teacher education program promotes a particular ethos, i.e. a set of moral commitments and ethical understandings that candidates learn as they move through the sequence of courses and into their field experiences.

 The dispositions assessment functions both as an explicit statement of professional conduct expected of candidates for licensure and as a mechanism for ensuring that potential licensure candidates have the opportunity to address areas of candidate conduct that may be an obstacle to future success in the profession. Students are notified of the rationale for the dispositions assessment in the first course in their professional educational sequence (Education in a Democratic Society), and they are formally assessed at two other points in their program: a selected methods course usually taken midway through the program, and during the student teaching seminar at the end of their program. Students understand that they also can be assessed at any other point in their program should their conduct prove to be a concern. When this happens, students are notified immediately and required to follow up with any evaluator who marks particular conduct as “in need of improvement.” A professional development plan is formalized and the student is expected to demonstrate improvement. Students have the opportunity to appeal these assessments. As a faculty, we strive to make the dispositions assessments educative rather than punitive, and we find that because students have an understanding of these expectations early on in their program – sometimes before they have declared a major – they have time to think about both the moral commitments of the profession as a whole and their disposition for teaching in relation to this. In short, we think critically about the question of “fit” as we guide students through their candidacy phase, and considerations of ethical fitness for the profession factor into our efforts to counsel some students out of the field.

Reflective practice means comprehending the complexity of what we do and the material we teach. This typically includes seeing our actions and curricula through multiple lenses, understanding overt and hidden assumptions, and being aware of intended and unintended consequences. Reflective practice means looking beneath surfaces, asking questions, and raising issues, as well as exercising and judging merit. It means questioning practice with respect to larger social, ethical, cultural complexities and questions (Brookfield, 1995; Dewey, 1916; Schon, 1983).

Teaching is a process of continual interaction and reflection between teacher, students, lessons or curricula, and the context in which teaching and learning occur. Skills are an important part of the knowledge base in professional education for teachers who are involved in adapting curriculum, changing teaching methods, creating individual lessons, and designing assessments to account for the complexity of differences, both individual and cultural. While we are mindful of the need to help our candidates develop teaching strategies that are responsive to pervasive educational inequalities, we also recognize the richness and the complexity of societal diversity. Thus, it is thus not enough to have a broad understanding of group differences. Candidates must develop an appreciation of the array of individual differences they are likely to encounter in their classroom contexts. More importantly, they need to develop the capacity to connect meaningfully with students who differ on a range of biological, psychological, and socio-cultural dimensions, including race, ethnicity, social class, religion, gender, geographical region, ability/disability, language, social status, sexuality, health, and age. Thus, the approach to difference in this program is not necessarily *group-oriented* (e.g., Native Americans, Hispanics, males and females, etc.), but rather is based on two central ideas: 1) that in a pluralistic society such as the United States, everyone is to some degree multicultural, and 2) that there are as many differences within groups as there are between them. The approach is thus *educational* rather than political in nature. One does not teach only *one aspect* of a student; nor does one teach a whole *class* of candidates; one teaches individual candidates, one student at a time. The program subscribes to the need for multiple teaching strategies—based on the best current knowledge about learning—and on the need for multiple forms of assessment, shaped to capture the many ways in which candidates learn and demonstrate what they have learned.

At the same time, our teacher education faculty understands the need for candidates to attend to the ways in which racial inequality remains an ongoing challenge in our region and nationwide, not just in terms of the unequal distribution of educational resources, but also in terms of teacher attitudes and aptitude. We strive to create candidates who are mindful of the ways in which they can contribute to the process of ameliorating ongoing educational injustice through their work with their students in the classroom, as well as through school-wide outreach to families and communities. Ongoing work among the faculty in the form of study groups has provided opportunities for faculty from diverse licensure areas to come together to develop strategies for infusing content knowledge about students living in poverty, as well as English Language Learners into the teacher education program. In this way, we seek to ensure that our programs are preparing candidates for the range of new permutations of identity/difference that they are likely to encounter throughout their teaching careers even as we seek to prepare them for specific needs that our regional school partners have identified as essential to candidate preparation in the immediate future.

Finally, as a public university, we are committed to preparing candidates who understand the origins, development and heightened obligations of public education in a democracy. We understand this to mean several things: our teacher education candidates appreciate that in addition to preparing young people for the workforce, they will be educating citizens whose participation in the political process will enable them to shape the shared world. Our candidates also recognize that as teachers, they will not simply be conduits for educational policy. We urge them to play a part in shaping the policies that will govern their teaching careers and indeed, the lives of their students. Our faculty seeks to open space for teacher voice in the democratic process through our scholarship and our reflective teaching practice.

**Professional Collaboration**

The Candidate

* Understands the role of other professional educators and ancillary personnel
* Demonstrates leadership for educating all children in collaboration with educators, agencies, families, and communities
* Uses knowledge, diverse cultural frames of reference, and alternative perspectives to think critically and solve problem
* Values and demonstrates commitment to on-going professional development

The professional education programs at Kent State University take place within the context of a strong, supportive and collaborative community of learners. Broadly stated, this collaborative community of learners encompasses the eight campuses, public schools, other colleges, families, social service agencies, and several state and federal agencies. Working together in an intellectual effort is the hallmark of collaboration (Earle, Friend & Cook, 2000; Galassi, 2000; Seehafer, & Ostlund, 2001; Welch, 1998). Professional collaboration is one of the most important factors that contributes to advancement of professional development. Both pre- and in-service professional development necessitates partnerships among schools, higher education institutions and other appropriate entities to promote inclusive learning communities of everyone who impacts students and their learning. Those within and outside schools are required to work together to forge ideas, commitments and resources necessary to address important and complex educational issues in a variety of settings and for a diverse student body (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

 According to the Standards for Ohio Educators, specifically Professional Development Standard 3, (2007), “High Quality Professional Development is collaborative.” (p.67). It is through professional collaboration that school-wide changes and improvements occur. Professional learning teams may engage in varied activities—curriculum development, action research, case discussion, coaching, study groups -- to improve teaching, student learning and achievement which are the ultimate goals of professional development (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010; ODE, 2007; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Richardson, Andree & Orphanos, 2009). Collaboration is an essential condition of high quality professional development, providing opportunities for teachers and ancillary personnel to form diverse teams to plan, deliver and evaluate professional development and to incorporate communication technologies to broaden the scope of the collaboration (ODE, 2007). Through these collaborative strategies, effective professional development meets the needs of educators, ancillary personnel, and related professionals, to best respond to the needs of the students.

 “The fast-paced, dynamic, global world of the 21st century places new demands on all of us, as citizens and as workers. To productively engage in our democracy and compete in our global economy, all students will need strong, well-rounded academic foundations; cultural and global competencies; the ability to collaborate, communicate, and solve problems; and strong digital literacy skills. And their teachers and principals -- who are critical to ensuring this high-quality education -- need a similar and wide range of knowledge, skills, and strategies to guide their students” (USDOE, 2012, Transforming the Teaching Profession, p. 1). Thus, KSU strives to prepare our pre-service and in-service professionals for the 21st century workplace that requires skills in critical thinking (Brookfield, 2011), global competence (Boix-Mansilla & Jackson, 2011; Schleicher, 2012), cultural agility (Caligiuri, 2012), intercultural competence (Cushner, 2011), innovation (Wagner, 2012), in-depth content knowledge, technological competence, and leadership, in ways not previously conceived.

 Schools reflect the values of the community. If one of the most important goals of all schools is to help students achieve a world-class education, then that responsibility does not lie solely in the hands of the schools. In particular, parents and the community also share responsibility. Everyone must get involved in the schools; if the community works together, then schools can succeed in providing world-class education. Teachers, therefore, need partners who can help them create world-class schools and communities of learners. Effective educators are able to join with families and community partners such as the library, local businesses, health and social service organizations, museums and universities to support students’ learning. Effective educational professionals form long-term and collaborative relationships with these organizations to help schools set the vision for students’ success (Delpit, 1995). Wei, Darling-Hammond, Richardson, Andree and Orphanos (2009) emphasize that long-term relationships in schools support professional learning far better and is overwhelmingly preferred compared with stand-alone professional development experience(s).

 “If the school is to be a growth environment for children, it must be a growth environment for teachers" as well (Elliott Eisner, as cited in Holly, 1998). For the teacher candidate, learning to teach and learning to interact with colleagues are important needs. Pre-service and in-service professionals grow as they observe their colleagues teach, learn about exciting and worthwhile innovations and strategies, acknowledge the diversity of good ideas that different teachers bring to the profession, and make decisions about what and how they will incorporate ideas into their own approaches (Routman, 1999). Teacher candidates work together to find the best representations of their teaching through peer analysis and critique. When novice teachers make connections with their colleagues, they form a community, thereby counteracting the isolation that pervades the teaching profession, fractionalizing programs of teaching and learning (Holmes Group, 1995). The process of collaboration with their colleagues regarding lesson and field/ classroom experiences greatly helps beginning teachers to perceive themselves as life-long learners and their school as a place where professionals can work collectively and learn collectively throughout their professional careers (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Richardson, Andree, & Orphanos, 2009).

 Therefore, teacher candidates at KSU are expected to learn their content richly so that they can create engaging, learner-centered lessons that address the diverse needs of students in their classrooms -- whatever those differences entail, through meaningful, reflective practice in a collaborative and collegial manner. In this way, learning is seen as a life-long endeavor for all, continually working for a more socially just world, the ideal of a democratic society.

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1. “All learners” is defined as P-12 learners including learners with disabilities, learners who are gifted, and learners who represent diversity based on ethnicity, race, socieoeconomic status, gender, language, religion, sexual identification, and geographic origin. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://speccoll.library.kent.edu/4may70/exhibit/chronology/index.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A University committee tasked with exploring the historical impact of May 4th recommended a permanent memorial be built and that, “the site should present the visitor with the opportunity to inquire into the many reasons and purposes of the events that led to the killing and wounding of students on May 4, 1970, and to encourage a learning process to broaden the perspective of these events.” <http://www.kent.edu/about/history/May4/memorials.cfm> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)