



Professional Education Unit

**Conceptual Framework
(Student Version)**

Guide for the Reader

WKU's *Conceptual Framework* represents beliefs and values that are shared by all programs that prepare university students to enter education professional fields. These fields include:

- Teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools
- Library media specialists
- Principals and superintendents
- School counselors
- School nurses
- School psychologists
- Speech pathologists

All these education professional preparation programs are considered by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and Kentucky's Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) to represent WKU's *Professional Education Unit*. Faculty representatives from each of the education fields in the *Unit* were involved in various aspects related to the development and approval of the *Conceptual Framework*.

The document after this opening Guide is an abridged version of the WKU *Conceptual Framework*. The full version is also available on the CEBS webpage (<http://edtech.wku.edu/peu/index.htm>). After a statement of the *Unit* mission and vision, the *Conceptual Framework* conforms to the following format:

- First, a **key belief** is stated.
- Second, **key ideas** related to the belief are outlined.
- Third, **unit implications** are outlined that describe actions/activities that the unit should consider in order to live out the key belief.

It is important to note that during the development of the Conceptual Framework, committee members thought it important to outline all essential beliefs, ideas, and implications *even if they were difficult to measure or live out*. Thus, many beliefs, ideas, or implications reflect what the unit *aspires* to accomplish over time. The careful reader who is also a student completing one of WKU's education preparation programs should be able to recognize those aspects of the *Conceptual Framework* WKU has accomplished, those that are in progress, and those that represent a "reach that exceeds our grasp."

Conceptual Framework

(03292007 version)

Professional Education Unit

Mission

- The professional education unit of Western Kentucky University recruits, prepares, and supports school practitioners and education leaders who can facilitate the learning of all children and empower them to achieve at high levels as they become life-long learners and productive citizens in a global society.

Vision

- The professional education unit aspires to become a nationally recognized community of scholars who apply the best that theory, research, and experience can contribute to teaching and learning and create new knowledge that makes teaching, learning, and the operation of school more efficient and effective.

Beliefs About Children & Schools

BELIEF 1

All children can learn at high levels.

KEY IDEAS:

- Children have an inherent ability to communicate and process information, the limits of which are unknown.
- The few exceptions with appropriate opportunities can progress to a level that far exceeds past expectations.
- State and local learning standards reflect at a minimum what all children need to know and be able to do.
- No ethnic, cultural, or economic background should lower expectations.

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Develop a shared understanding of what “all children can learn” means.
- Provide evidence that supports what is possible with all children.
- Provide candidates with a variety of field experiences.
- Establish a program of ongoing inquiry and research with respect to achievement gaps (race, gender, and socioeconomic background).

BELIEF 2

All children have a right to a quality education that empowers them to meet high expectations for learning as defined by a democratic society.

KEY IDEAS:

- A democratic society demands an education system that enables all students to be proficient in state standards for learning.
- The state of Kentucky is committed to a school performance goal for 2014 that all children will reach a level of proficiency.

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Help candidates acquire a clear understanding of the P-12 schooling expectations of parents, citizens, and elected officials.
- Ensure that candidates demonstrate both a knowledge of and commitment to these expectations.

Beliefs About Education Professionals

BELIEF 3

Diversity in our schools adds richness to the learning environment and provides enhanced opportunities and possibilities for teaching and learning.

KEY IDEAS:

- Diversity is an *instructional opportunity* for education professionals to use what each child brings to the learning situation to facilitate learning experiences.
- Diversity is a *necessity* in that those ignoring it risk marginalizing students, as diversity exists, on some level, in every classroom and in every school.
- No Child Left Behind legislation targets culturally and linguistically diverse students.

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Develop and maintain dynamic and on-going inquiry and research.
- Provide candidates with both a knowledge and experience base.
- Provide candidates with a variety of field experiences.

BELIEF 4

Highly effective education professionals require high levels of ability, rigorous training, and on-going development of teaching/leadership skills that include reflective decision-making.

KEY IDEAS:

- High-ability, highly skilled school leaders and other education professionals play essential roles in the performance of schools.
- KERA's underlying premise is that teachers should have the authority to make decisions at the school level and be held accountable for those decisions.

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Develop programs to recruit and select candidates who demonstrate potential with respect to academic performance and professional dispositions.
- Ensure that candidates are provided experiences and training to develop teaching/leadership and reflective skills.
- Model independent and critical thinking as well as life-long learning through scholarship and professional development activities.
- Embrace a life-long mentoring philosophy that includes seamless professional development support system and continuous university-school collaboration.

BELIEF 5

Highly effective education professionals know, apply, and reflect on the effectiveness of a variety of theories, models and strategies in order to produce maximum learning for all students in all types of school contexts and cultures.

KEY IDEAS:

- Moving all students toward success involves knowledge and application of a full range of research and theory-based models and strategies to diverse learning situations.
- It also requires reflection as the means by which education professionals continue to improve their practice.

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Ensure that education professional candidates acquire an understanding of the complex set of factors involved in teaching and learning.
- Provide candidates opportunities to apply in a field-based setting a broad range of learning theories and teaching strategies that are consistent with research-based instructional taxonomies, address student learning in various educational domains, and are known to impact on student learning.
- Provide candidates multiple opportunities to reflect on their experiences toward the goals of improving their skills and P-12 student learning.

BELIEF 6

Highly effective education professionals interact with the home and/or community of their students to facilitate teaching and learning.

KEY IDEAS:

- Students learn better if parents, teachers, administrators and the community are involved. Home/community interaction helps educators learn how parents think and act, what their family values are, and what they want for their children.
- Educators also gain understanding of difficulties and ability to deal more intelligently with home/community needs.

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Ensure that candidates understand the importance of effective school-community relations in the teaching and learning process.
- Provide candidates with classroom instruction and field experiences sufficiently diverse enough to enable them to skillfully nurture a positive relationship with students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and the school community in order to build support for schools.

BELIEF 7

Highly effective education professionals have a strong content knowledge, sound pedagogical knowledge and skills, and essential dispositions for facilitating learning and functioning as team members in schools.

KEY IDEAS:

- Research confirms the relationship between knowledge of teaching and learning acquired in teacher preparation programs and student achievement.
- Stronger education professional preparation results in greater success with students and the increased likelihood of continuing in the teaching profession.
- National and state educational organizations have been able to identify core competencies that are necessary for educational professionals to be successful.
- There is a consensus about what knowledge, skills, and dispositions characterize successful educational professionals.
- For Kentucky institutions, the knowledge and skills to which our education preparation programs should aspire are provided for us by the Education Professional Standards Board's (EPSB) Teacher Standards listed below.

Kentucky's Teacher Standards

Standard 1 – Content Knowledge: Demonstrates a current and sufficient knowledge of certified content areas to develop student knowledge and performance in those areas

Standard 2 – Designs/Plans: Designs/plans instruction and learning climates that develop student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team members, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge

Standard 3 – Learning Climate: Creates a learning climate that supports the development of student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team members, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge

Standard 4 – Implements/Manages: Introduces/implements/manages instruction that develops student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team members, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge

Standard 5 – Assessment: Assesses learning and communicates results to students and others with respect to student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team members, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge

Standard 6 – Technology: Uses technology to support instruction; access and manipulate data; enhance professional growth and productivity; communicate and collaborate with colleagues, parents, and the community; and conduct research

Standard 7 – Reflection: Reflects on and evaluates specific teaching/learning situations and/or programs

Standard 8 – Collaboration: Collaborates with colleagues, parents, and other agencies to design, implement, and support learning programs that develop student abilities to use communication skills, apply core concepts, become self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team members, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge

Standard 9 – Professional Development: Evaluates his/her overall performance with respect to modeling and teaching Kentucky's learning goals, refines the skills and processes necessary, and implements a professional development plan

Standard 10 – Leadership: Provides professional leadership within the school, community, and education profession to improve student learning and well-being

- WKU has adopted the following dispositions as key to the success of education professionals:

<i>Candidate Values...</i>	<i>As Demonstrated by...</i>
<i>Learning</i>	Attendance - Consistently attends class and is on time
	Class participation - Actively engaged and interested in the class activities
	Class preparation - Consistently comes to class well prepared
	Communication - Uses language to express ideas very effectively regardless of the age of the listener
<i>Personal Integrity</i>	Emotional control - Displays steady emotional temperament, is receptive to viewpoints of others and their suggestions
	Ethical behavior - Shows self to be a person of strong character
<i>Diversity</i>	Willingly works with others from different ability, race, gender, or ethnic groups
<i>Collaboration</i>	Actively seeks out and incorporates ideas of others and willingly works with others to improve the overall environment
<i>Professionalism</i>	Respect for school rules, policies, and norms - Knows school rules and policies, follows them consistently, understands the purpose of regulations and respects their intent
	Commitment to self-reflection and growth - Actively seeks suggestions and constructive criticism, regularly engages in learning through self-reflection
	Professional development and involvement - Makes use of information from professional organizations, professional publications, and educational resources
	Professional responsibility - Accepts responsibility for own actions and for helping all students learning and actively seeks self-improvement

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Ensure that all candidates have acquired adequate knowledge of subject matter, pedagogical knowledge and skills, and professional dispositions.
- Align curriculum and experiences to ensure that all candidates are provided the opportunity to develop these essential competencies.
- Clearly communicate with candidates that assessments aligned to these standards will serve as the criteria by which their progress will be measured.
- Use measures and reports on these standards as the central mechanisms for curricular and other programmatic changes.

BELIEF 8

Highly effective education professionals utilize technology for teaching and learning, assessment management, and research to the greatest extent possible.

KEY IDEAS:

- Technology advances permeate almost every aspect of our lives, including teaching, learning and managing classrooms and schools.
- Technology provides teachers, school practitioners and all educators' extensions of their abilities to move toward new and higher performance levels.
- Developmental shift from using technology as consumers to integration to enhance student learning.

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Provide instruction in, model, and assess the use of technology tools.
- Provide resources and training opportunities for faculty.
- Be prepared to work with candidates at various levels of initial understanding of technology.
- Use ISTE and Kentucky Teacher Standards guidelines to ensuring candidates' ability to successfully implement technology.
- Unit faculty should continually development technology skills.

Beliefs About Assessment and Accountability**BELIEF 9**

Highly effective education professionals hold themselves accountable for their own performance by collecting, analyzing, and reporting learning results and using this information to improve performance and programs.

KEY IDEAS:

- Highly effective education professionals select appropriate learning goals and instructional strategies based on standards and contextual factors, conduct pre, formative, and post assessments, and analyze results as a means to provide student feedback and to reflect on their instruction.
- Highly effective education professionals hold themselves accountable for students' learning results and use these results to make decisions about professional development and program improvement.

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Ensure candidates' ability to use multiple modes of assessment to analyze and demonstrate impact on P-12 student learning, to provide student feedback, for reflection, and for decision-making (*TWS processes*).
- Model effective assessment practice and reflection by systematically collecting, analyzing, and reporting data that are an essential and regularly scheduled part of the program.

BELIEF 10

Highly effective education units develop and maintain assessment systems that follow the continuous progress of candidates toward the achievement of high standards-based performance expectations that are clearly defined and publicly communicated.

KEY IDEAS:

- Education professional skill development is characterized by a continuous, life-long pattern of acquisition, application, and performance in real-life settings.
- Highly effective education units develop and maintain an assessment system that provides credible performance data on the progress and achievement of candidates.

UNIT IMPLICATIONS:

- Identify and align knowledge sequences that guide candidate development through the stages of acquisition, application, and performance in educational settings of content, pedagogical knowledge and skills, and professional dispositions
- Identify existing or develop new standard-aligned assessment processes that reflect the continuous stages of knowledge, skill, and disposition development.
- Unit performance expectations, measures, and results should be publicly available and publicly reported.