Conceptual Framework Theme

The Conceptual Framework for Talladega College’s teacher education program describes the synergistic experience that prepares educators of the highest caliber to work in K-12 schools. Organized around the theme Educators as Global Leaders, the conceptual framework articulates the vision, philosophy, goals, and purpose guiding the program’s operation. It provides direction for the coherent design and delivery of curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, assessment, and evaluation. The educator as global leader is one who is equipped to deliver curriculum to K-12 educational settings.

Consistency of the Conceptual Framework with Talladega College’s Mission

The Conceptual Framework Model

The Department of Education has adopted the Talladega College mascot, the tornado, as the model to visually illustrate the underlying structure of the teacher education program and the progression of candidates through the multiple dimensions of their educational experience. Setting aside the negative, destructive effects of the tornado, we see in tornado imagery some of the positive, dynamic qualities of our program. In very simplified terms and concentrating on the funnel-like, swirling configuration of the tornado form, the model reflects a kind of interactive rotation that characterizes the synergy inherent in a candidate’s educational experience. Our concept of synergy derives from the simplest, most basic meaning provided in general definitions of the term: (1) a collection of different elements working together to produce a result that cannot be obtained by any of the individual elements working alone; (2) interrelated entities or components cooperating advantageously to achieve a final outcome. All of our program elements or components—faculty, candidates, curriculum, instruction, policies, accountability—function together interactively to achieve expected outcomes.
All aspects of the program are intricately integrated and equally essential in the upwardly spiraling phases of developing educators to be global leaders.

**Phase I:** Students enter Talladega College as prospective or pre-candidates who must satisfy the requirements for the admission as teacher candidates in the department’s program. Candidates admitted to the program are **diverse and inquiring learners** who bring with them a body of prior knowledge, their own values and vision, and a diversity of societal and cultural influences. They are inquisitive, seeking understanding and direction. Together, these qualities serve as the foundation for the teaching and learning that take place in the department’s program. During Phase I, the candidates are enrolled in general studies sources and in EDU 110. EDU 110 introduces them to teacher education as a profession and helps them to decide if this is the career path they wish to pursue.

**Phase II:** Students have decided to become teachers and have been admitted to the teacher education program as teacher candidates. During this phase, teacher candidates complete their general studies courses and embark on their progression through the teacher education curriculum to acquire the subject content and pedagogical knowledge and skills essential for becoming **competent and skillful facilitators** in K-12 classrooms. They learn and become confident in their knowledge of the structures, tools of inquiry, and central concepts of their teaching field. They gain the knowledge essential for competence in translating subject content into forms understandable for K-12 students—knowledge of teaching and learning and of the principles of effective practice, i.e., learning development theories, use of instructional technologies, student motivation, classroom management strategies, and assessment techniques.

**Phase III:** Teacher candidates engage in K-12 classroom experiences (field and clinical) that require application of and reflection on their learning and their practice as they become **knowledgeable and reflective practitioners**. During these experiences, candidates observe and practice integrating the above knowledge and skills and studied. They develop and implement, review and revise instructional plans and continuously enhance their knowledge and refine their teaching practices.

**Phase IV:** Throughout the above phases, teacher candidates learn laws and rules of the profession, professional codes of conduct, ethical behavior, personal and professional responsibility, dispositions, and commitments, and appreciation of diversity. As teacher candidates engage in field and clinical experiences, they learn to practice these and other aspects of being **caring and ethical professional** in real-world teaching venues.

**Phase V:** The value of continuous learning is emphasized in all phases of the candidates’ experience. As they learn what it means to be **life-long learners**, they interact and collaborate with the community of educators and stakeholders; they participate in professional associations, conferences, workshops, and research activities; they engage in community projects. As life-long learners, they will continue to improve their teaching, enhance their self-development, foster innovation and change, keep abreast of educational developments, and contribute to the knowledge base in their profession.
The candidates’ progression through these phases of the teacher education program is characterized by teamwork, interaction, collaboration, cooperation, cohesiveness-by dynamic, synergistic group activity. Neither phase is separate and independent of the others. Each phase evolves, fuels into, and feeds the others. As with the tornado, a rotational motion spins within the core of the program; it is a two-way, continuously descending and ascending movement. The education faculty, as experienced global leaders, is at the top of the configuration where the teacher candidates are aspiring to reach. By funneling their knowledge and experiences to the candidates and guiding them through the program (in a metaphorically descending fashion), the faculty provides the directional force and power that candidates through the swirling vortex of experiences leading (ascending) to the outcomes explained below. Upon achieving these outcomes, the candidates become experienced global leaders themselves teaching and directing their students like the faculty who mentored and guided them.

**Conceptual Framework Outcomes**

To become educators who are global leaders, candidates completing Talladega College’s teacher preparation program are expected to be competent and skillful facilitators, knowledgeable and reflective practitioners, caring and ethical professionals, and life-long learners. These program outcomes are incorporated into the syllabi of all departmental courses, including field experiences and internships. They are integrated into the planning, delivering, and assessing of instruction. They provide a basis for evaluating the competence of the candidates and the faculty as well as the quality of the program as a whole. The outcomes thus represent the candidate proficiencies and the standards adopted for the teacher education program, they are aligned with professional, state, and institutional standards.

**Outcome 1: Competent and Skillful Facilitators demonstrate**

1.1 Knowledge of the structure, important facts, central concepts, tools of inquiry, and theories associated with their teaching field as outlined professional, state, and institutional standards.

1.2 Knowledge of the interaction of subject matter and effective teaching strategies to make learning understandable and meaningful to all students at particular instructional levels.

1.3 Ability to understand, explain, and present content in multiple ways that motivate and challenge all students.

1.4 Understanding of subject content and standards through inquiry, analysis, and synthesis.

1.5 Knowledge of the foundations of education, of how children learn and develop, and of how families and communities impact student learning.

1.6 Knowledge of how student differences impact learning and academic performance—differences in culture, ethnicity, social and economic background, special needs, second language learning, exceptionalities, gender, and learning styles (diversity).
1.7 Ability to create interdisciplinary or cross-curricular learning activities that address students’ prior knowledge and experience and that connect to content to other subjects and to the real-world.

1.8 Ability to use and to teach the fundamentals of reading, writing, and oral communications across all content areas.

**Outcome 2: Knowledgeable and Reflective Practitioners demonstrate**

2.1 Ability to combine knowledge and strategies to select content and design instruction which meets the need of individual learners and addresses the scope and sequence of the curriculum.

2.2 Knowledge of ways to develop meaningful learning experiences and manage student-centered learning environments that encourage critical thinking, problem solving, and effectively facilitate learning for all students.

2.3 Ability to create learning communities that encourage respect for students’ individual differences and promote awareness, acceptance and appreciation of the broad range of diversity in the classroom (diversity).

2.4 Ability to use effective oral and written communications, reading, and mathematics to foster supportive interaction and promote critical thinking, active inquiry, and problem solving in the learning experiences of each individual learner.

2.5 Ability to integrate appropriate instructional technology into the teaching of subject content to facilitate optimal learning for all students.

2.6 Knowledge and use of ways to design and use formal, informal, and research-based assessment strategies that maximize the learning of all students.

2.7 Ability to use technology for classroom management and research to support and enhance student learning.

2.8 Ability to use communication, mathematics, and technology skills to collect, analyze, and summarize data related to their work, reflect on and use the results to enhance learning for all students.

2.9 Ability to use continuous reflection to examine, adjust, and refine instructional practices and decisions to enhance student learning.
**Outcome 3: Caring and Ethical Professional demonstrate**

3.1 Collaboration with students (and parents/guardians if necessary), following assessment formal and informal and analysis of their learning, to adjust strategies and monitor performance in an effort to bring about positive change in learning as needed.

3.2 Continuous collaboration with colleagues, other professionals, parents, guardians, and community persons to create and maintain learning environments that assure academic development, that are safe and caring and that advocate justice and wellness for all students.

3.3 Continuous collaboration with colleagues to create and adopt research-based best practices to achieve ongoing classroom and school improvement.

3.4 Ability to engage productively in a variety of teamwork scenarios to support and improve education for all students.

3.5 Commitment to educational reform through the use of research-based strategies and data-driven program evaluation to support and influence educational change.

3.6 Ability to recognize when their dispositions may need adjusting and to make appropriate changes in their attitude and behavior.

**Outcome 4: Life-Long Learners demonstrate**

4.1 Active involvement in continuous professional research learning and self-improvement at all stages of their careers.

4.2 Appropriate professional dispositions as delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards while working with students, colleagues, families, and communities.

4.3 Knowledge of and adherence to the roles and responsibilities of the profession, to the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics, to federal, state, and local laws and policies, and to professional ethics in general.

4.4 Knowledge and use of the current theories, resources, and emerging technologies in their field and in education generally.

4.5 Knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the profession, of general and policy issues, of national and Alabama-specific initiatives for improving education.
Commitments to Knowledge, Teaching Competence, and Student Learning

The outcomes listed and described above embrace the program’s professional commitments to knowledge, teaching competence, and student learning. Each candidate is expected to embrace and uphold the following professional commitments:

- A commitment to teaching as a profession and to the demonstration of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that characterize competent professionals.
- A commitment to acquire in-depth knowledge of content and pedagogy and to use this knowledge to make subject matter meaningful for students.
- A commitment to acquire knowledge of learners and the learning process and to use this knowledge to design and implement effective learning experiences for all students.
- A commitment to understand and respect diversity – ability, learning styles, gender, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, language, cultural, special needs – and to develop fair and unbiased approaches to educating all students.
- A commitment to teaching/learning as a process which requires active inquiry, critical thinking, and problem solving.
- A commitment to being effective communicators and to promoting the development of effective communication skills in students.
- A commitment to teaching as reflective practice.
- A commitment to using knowledge, reflections, and assessments to promote positive educational change.
- A commitment to life-long learning.

Commitment to Diversity

Consistent with the Department of Education’s theme, vision, mission, and philosophy there is a commitment to and value of diversity. The Department of Education is committed to attracting and retaining candidates and faculty with diverse backgrounds and providing diverse and inclusive teaching and learning experiences. The Department of Education’s theme, “Educators as Global Leaders” further emphasizes an essential belief that all students can learn at a high level. Faculty members of the Department of Education intentionally teach that learning is not predicated upon gender, race, disability, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.

The importance of recognizing the racial, behavioral, and cultural diversity of students has inspired much recent discussion and research in higher education. Racially diverse environments, when properly nurtured, lead to gains in educational outcomes for all students. Diversity extends beyond student demographics. Cultural, philosophical, ideological, language, and intellectual diversity are among the many forms of diversity which are recognized by the Conceptual Framework and are integrated into the principles and practices of each program.
Education in a democracy requires a commitment to affirming diversity and meeting the challenges presented by a wide range of constituents and communities. The Department of Education prepares candidates who are equipped with knowledge, competency, and dispositions required to provide equitable educational experiences for all students within a diverse K-12 population. The Department of Education envisions that its candidates emerge as knowledgeable, skilled, and collaborative scholars who are effective communicators and reflective decision makers, accountable for the learning of all students.

Commitment to Use of Technology

The International Society for Technology in Education (2008) states that through the ongoing use of technology in the schooling process, students are empowered to achieve important technology capabilities. A key individual in helping students develop those capabilities is the classroom teacher. The teacher is responsible for establishing the classroom environment and preparing the learning opportunities that facilitate students’ use of technology to learn, communicate, and develop knowledge products. Consequently, the Department of Education faculty believes it is critical that all candidates are prepared to provide their students with opportunities to develop their technological knowledge and skills.

The Department of Education is committed to the integration, infusion, and application of technology to enhance instruction and advance student learning. Each initial certification education candidate must successfully complete an educational technology class, EDU 372—Educational Media as well as technology assignments in various content and pedagogy course. Candidates must complete all educational courses with a “C” or better to continue progressing in their teacher education program.

All candidates are required to develop and maintain an electronic portfolio (ePortfolio) using http://mahara.org during their professional semesters. The ePortfolio requires candidates to use technology to document their knowledge, skills, and dispositions as outlined in the ePortfolio rubric and aligned with the appropriate standards.

In addition, through various forms of instructional technology, candidates learn how to create meaningful experiences and personalized learning for K-12 students. Computers and information technologies offer candidates a myriad of possibilities to bring the digital world into the classroom. Education faculties are also committed to modeling positive technology usage by seamlessly infusing technology into their lessons. Two examples of this infusion is the use of Jenzabar and Blackboard for blended and online course delivery. Jenzabar and Blackboard allows educators to provide collaborative activities, critical reflection, and instructional resources to candidates in both online and face-to-face courses. In addition, faculties have the opportunity to attend on-campus technology seminars and workshops to enhance their technological skills. Faculty and candidates also receive technology support as needed from the college’s Informational Technology Department.
Alignment with Standards

Each program in the Department of Education has defined the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions that its candidates must possess to successfully complete the program. These program requirements and experiences are consistent with the essential knowledge of the profession as defined by the appropriate Alabama Quality Teacher guidelines. For example, the elementary program requirements and experiences are designed to meet the standards for the Childhood Education International (CEI).

Context for Developing and Assessing Candidate Proficiencies

The Department of Education’s theme “Educators as Global Leaders” is derived from candidate proficiencies and outcomes pertaining to the standards governing initial and advanced programs. The Conceptual Framework follows the alignment of The Alabama State Department of Education to ensure that candidates demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to positively impact K-12 student learning. In addition, the Conceptual Framework guides faculty to make data driven decisions when evaluating the effectiveness of candidates and/or programs.

The Department of Education prepares candidates who are advocates for all learners and are proficient as:

- Knowledgeable scholars (which includes content, professional, pedagogical, diversity and technical knowledge). Candidates are well-grounded in theory and equipped with a strong knowledge base to provide learning environments that value diversity, collaboration, and promote a high level of achievement and quality for all learners.
- Skilled scholars (which includes lesson and unit planning, classroom management, classroom teaching, communication, reflection, assessment, accountability for student learning, and technology skills). The effective use of pedagogical skills is essential in building a community of learners to ensure a positive impact on K-12 learning.
- Collaborative scholars (which includes the ability to collaborate with students, parents, and colleagues; interpersonal skills; dispositions; professionalism; and self-evaluation). Candidates contemplate the appropriateness and possible long-term consequences of their professional dispositions and actions on student performance and all aspects of their teaching and instruction.
Conclusion

The Conceptual Framework incorporates a shared view of how to best prepare Talladega College of Department of Education candidates to deliver educational services to children and youth, schools, families, and communities. This framework embodies the essential elements of the Department of Education’s programs and provides a blueprint for ensuring coherence among curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, and assessment of candidates. It is a guide for the systematic experiences required of candidates in each program and provides the basis for the continuous assessment and improvement of candidates and programs. The goals of this collaborative process are to continuously evolve and improve each program while developing candidates who effectively demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of highly qualified teachers, who are global leaders.