

HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY

School of Education



Knowledge Base & Conceptual Framework

(Approved by Teacher Education Council March 2011)

With the beginning of the 21st century and the explosion of digital technologies, the classroom has become the world. The learner must now navigate the world with 21st century literacies. The teacher facilitating the development of the learner must not only be a reflective decision-maker, continue to have a strong knowledge base and understanding of the learner, but also to be an effective leader and collaborator.

The professional development of the effective teacher is portrayed in the triangle which showcases the characteristics of reflection, collaboration and leadership. The effective teacher must be able to reflect in order to make informed decisions and develop the skills needed to collaborate with colleagues, parents and the community to improve the ability of the learner to succeed in the P-12 environment. Along with reflection and collaboration, the effective 21st Century teacher must expand the role by development of leadership skills. With the combination of these three characteristics, the effective teacher can facilitate change and innovation in the experiences of the learner, via the classroom and the school as well as professional development.

Surrounding the professional development of the teacher candidate is the 21st century knowledge of the learner, knowing the developmental, emotional and cultural aspects of each learner. This leads to the teacher's facilitation of the acquisition of 21st century skills needed by the learner to critically think, problem solve, utilize technology, communicate, and collaborate. All this occurs in the 21st century classroom which mirrors the world both in diversity and communication but also provides the learner an environment that is nurturing, inclusive, healthy and safe.

Leadership in the "Global" 21st Century Classroom

In order for today's students to be prepared to navigate the 21st century world, they must become proficient in 21st century literacies, including media, information and cyber literacies. Twenty-first century curriculum has certain critical attributes in that it should be interdisciplinary, project-based, and research-driven. Multiple literacies such as higher order thinking skills, multiple intelligences, and 21st century technologies should be emphasized. The classroom must be expanded to include the greater community and service learning should become the focus of many critical long-term projects. The curriculum and instruction should be designed to challenge all students, and provide for

differentiation. There is substantial research supporting the effectiveness of 21st century instructional methodologies which include technology-assisted and inquiry-based learning activities. When these instructional strategies are used in a cooperative learning environment, students are seen to learn more and retain knowledge better (Moursund, 2004; President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology, 2001). Teaching through "inquiry" involves engaging students in the process of researching and collecting data with teacher support and coaching. The inquiry-process emphasizes web research and critical thinking skills through active teacher coaching to model effective inquiry and to promote reflection (Roy, D.; Kustra, E; & Borin P., 2003). Because this approach to teaching and learning is significantly different from the "stand and deliver" approach used by many teachers, it tends to require a significant amount of ongoing and sustained professional development for its effective implementation (Sandholtz et al. 2000). Although the incorporation of technology is central to the types inquiry-based instruction found in a 21st century classroom, research suggests that most teachers have difficulty incorporating these tools into daily instruction (Comeau, 2008). In many countries today's students are referred to as "digital natives", and today's educators as "digital immigrants" (Wesch, 2008).

Teacher Leadership in the School

The vision for 21st century schools emphasizes that today's teachers are empowered to expand their leadership by working collaboratively with all school personnel on important issues such as curriculum design and school improvement. Darling-Hammond (1996) cited shared decision making as a factor in curriculum reform and the transformation of teaching roles in some schools. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. This process, in turn, leads to higher levels of teacher commitment and subsequent student achievement (Maxwell, 2005). Despite compelling evidence indicating that working collaboratively represents best practice; teachers in many schools continue to work in isolation. Even in schools that endorse the idea of collaboration, the willingness to collaborate often equates with congeniality or developing consensus on operational procedures, and committees to oversee different facets of the school's operation, such as discipline, technology, and social climate. Although each of these activities can serve a useful purpose, none represents the kind of professional dialogue that can transform a school into a professional learning community. The development of professional learning communities requires training, structure, and support for this expanded professional role for today's teacher leaders. As an organizational arrangement, the professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement (Dufour, 2004). Professionally, teachers who have participated in professional learning communities have reported benefits such as a reduction in feelings of isolation, increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school, and increased feelings of professional renewal, morale, and desire to inspire students (Hord, 1997).

Toward this end, the teacher education programs at High Point University have adopted the following program objectives (effective fall, 2009):

1. To provide a teacher education program that provides candidates with the experiences needed to become 21st century professionals.
2. To facilitate the teacher education candidate's acquisition of the 21st century knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to produce globally competitive P-12 students.
3. To help prospective teachers to develop the leadership skills needed to effectively collaborate, facilitate change and innovation, and make informed decisions which impact student success.
4. To promote the teacher education candidate's understanding of how to develop a learning environment that is nurturing, inclusive, healthy, and safe.

In addition, those completing the High Point University Teacher Education Program are expected to meet or exceed *proficiency* in the following areas (effective Fall 2009):

- Content Knowledge in the Major
- Leadership skills
- Collaboration Skills
- Relationship Building
- Use of Technology
- A knowledge of formative and summative assessment procedures
- A knowledge of Research
- Media and Financial Literacy
- A knowledge of diverse cultures and global issues
- A knowledge of multiple languages
- An understanding of the process of life-long learning
- Reading, Science, Mathematics, and Communication Skills
- Critical Thinking and problem solving skills
- Innovative and Creative Thinking
- Reflection and Informed Decision Making

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