CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Preparing Professionals for Service in Our Communities
2013-2014

Introduction
The Conceptual Framework serves as the guiding document that is foundational to an understanding of our programs, our philosophy, and the standards that align with our programs. Directly linked to curricula of the School of Education and professional Studies (SEPS), the Conceptual Framework also provides a basis for assessment, analysis, and on-going program improvement. Our Conceptual Framework is closely aligned with both state and national standards, and is consistent with the philosophy and mission of the University and SEPS. It is also subject to on-going review and revision.

The Historical Evolution of the Conceptual Framework
Prior to 2001, a number of different efforts were made to articulate a unified and consistent Conceptual Framework. The earliest draft was prepared for the first NCATE accreditation of SEPS in 1997-1998. In January 2001, a workshop was conducted by an outside expert on the role of the Conceptual Framework as a shared, coherent vision for the unit and as the basis and foundation for a system of assessment within the unit. During the Spring 2001 semester, the faculty of SEPS engaged in a further review of both the Conceptual Framework and the various curricula of various SEPS programs.

This review led to a number of important modifications in the Conceptual Framework, as well as in both curricula and assessments in SEPS. Following this review process, the faculty of SEPS and the members of the NCATE Steering Committee finalized the Conceptual Framework. This was then circulated further within CCSU, as well as with adjunct faculty and with our colleagues in the Professional Development School Network. The revised Conceptual Framework was presented to the SEPS Governance Council and approved.

Since 2002, the Conceptual Framework has been revisited both formally and informally, and has been subject to a number of on-going revisions, refinements and clarifications. Changes to the Conceptual Framework have been driven by a number of factors, including modifications and changes in state certification requirements, new standards at the state level, and transitions in senior leadership both in SEPS and the University. In addition, the Conceptual Framework was explicitly reviewed by the SEPS Governing Council and updated on an annual basis. Finally, the Conceptual Framework was further revised during the Spring 2009 semester, and in September 2009, the SEPS Governance Council voted unanimously to approve the full Conceptual Framework, including the expanded document.
Throughout its various revisions, including this one, a consistent theme of the *Conceptual Framework* has been retained: its ongoing commitment to educating professional leaders for learning and other service communities. In preparation for the upcoming NCATE review, the *Conceptual Framework* adopted in 2009 was reviewed and agreed by the NCATE writing team in conjunction with Department Chairs and Department Faculty during the 2013-2014 academic year. The *Conceptual Framework* presented in this document is thus the most up-to-date version available, and is the version that currently guides our practice. It will be available to the visiting team of NCATE reviewers both electronically and in the on-site NCATE Exhibit Room.

**The Relationship of the Conceptual Framework to the Mission of the University**

The *Conceptual Framework*, with its overarching theme of “Preparing Professionals for Service in Our Communities,” is derived in part from the University’s Mission Statement, which states: “Central Connecticut State University is a community of learners dedicated to teaching and scholarship that emphasizes development and application of knowledge and ideas through research and outreach activities, and prepares students to be thoughtful, responsible and successful citizens”.

In SEPS, the emphasis on service is a key component in the connection between our mission and the University’s mission. We see education professionals as individuals who can offer leadership and service to their communities, and who are thoughtful and responsible citizens of both their local communities and of the State and nation. We expect our candidates to reflect upon their practice, and emphasize the acquisition of knowledge to make informed and reasonable decisions. The mission of SEPS further expands the basic concepts inherent in the University’s mission as it specifically relates to the preparation of teachers and other education professionals. The faculty of SEPS constitute a professional School dedicated to the quality preparation of professionals in education and other human service settings. As an integral part of CCSU’s history and traditions, the faculty in SEPS embrace the University’s mission.

The current version of a strategic plan first adopted by the University in 2008 includes four explicit distinctive elements within the Connecticut State University system toward which all programs are expected to contribute. These four “distinctive elements” are: international education, workforce and state economic development, community engagement, and interdisciplinary studies and cross-curricular initiatives. (The President's Report Card on the progress toward the goals of the strategic plan can be downloaded by clicking here—http://www.ccsu.edu/uploaded/departments/AdministrativeDepartments/Presidents_Office/ReportCardFinalWeb.pdf.) SEPS has contributed to all four of these “distinctive elements,” and all four have been incorporated into the *Conceptual Framework*. Examples of how each of the four “points of distinction” are manifested in SEPS include:
• the development of a Global Studies program at the M.S. level in the Department of Educational Leadership and Instructional Technology; the development of a course in Social Work in Peru, as well as the provision of scholarships for students in that course; the continued operation of graduate-level programs in Jamaica offered by the Department of Educational Leadership and the Department of Reading and Language Arts;

• support for faculty to travel to conferences and to conduct research overseas;

• community engagement by departments in SEPS, ranging from internship experiences to faculty and student activities in the local schools and communities;

• workforce development activities related to existing preparation programs at the initial and advanced levels as well as the continued implementation of newer programs such as the B.S. in Nursing, the M.A.T. program, and the Ed.D. program in Educational Leadership; and

• on-going participation in the Honors Program that includes students across all disciplines and close cooperation with Departments in other Schools of the University whose students have been admitted to the teacher certification program.

From the first NCATE accreditation self-study presented in 1997-1998, SEPS has strongly articulated and embraced the belief that teaching is situational and consists of interactions between the teacher as an individual and the learning community. The act of teaching is thus conceived as occurring in five situational contexts: within the individual teacher, within the classroom, within the school, within the community, and within the profession (see Table 1).

Table 1
Situational Contexts for the Act of Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within the Teacher</th>
<th>The teacher/educator engages in on-going examination and refinement of his or her own beliefs about teaching and learning. He or she also consistently reflects on and analyzes significant information to make effective decisions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within the Classroom</td>
<td>The teacher/educator models best pedagogical practice and seeks to provide leadership for developing classrooms that take into account individual, cooperative, and inquiry-based learning, and which promote diversity and address multiple ways of knowing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within the School</td>
<td>The teacher/educator engages in collaboration with peers and others to establish a school-wide learning community. He or she participates in the development of environments that foster individual and shared inquiry and seeks to facilitate best practice. He or she is a skilled consumer of research, and utilizes research to</td>
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inform school-wide practice.

Within the Community
The teacher/educator provides leadership to parents and others in the school community, and serves as an advocate for children and youth.

Within the Profession
The teacher/educator provides leadership and contributes to the growth of the educational profession.

Overview of the Conceptual Framework
Across our programs, we attempt to instill appropriate dispositions which include sensitivity to the rights of all children and youth in a culturally diverse society, commitment to a shared responsibility for all of the children and youth of our State and nation, courage and a strong sense of moral conviction, a passion for the importance of teaching and learning, a willingness to look for ways to improve the status quo of contemporary education, and a desire to seek practical and insightful ideas for improving schools and classrooms. In addition, we want our graduates to have: a willingness to take responsibility for their actions in the classroom or in other educational settings; respect for peers and a desire for them to succeed; respect for families and the difficult job of parenting; and other personal qualities that will earn respect. Our belief in these fundamental dispositions, attitudes and beliefs guides our practice in the preparation of teachers and other educational professionals.

The Organizational Structure of the Conceptual Framework
SEPS’s Conceptual Framework is comprised of the following themes (outcomes) and connected elements (proficiencies):

I. The Educational Professional as Active Learner
A. Possesses Content Knowledge in the Arts and Sciences and an Understanding of the Social Contexts of Schooling
B. Demonstrates General Pedagogical Knowledge
C. Possesses Content-Specific Pedagogical Knowledge
D. Engages in Habits of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving

II. The Educational Professional as Facilitator of Learning for All Students
A. Applies Knowledge of Human Development Across the Life Span
B. Respects and Values All Learners
C. Addresses the Diversity of Learning Environments
D. Understands the Learning Process and Applies Instructional and Assessment Strategies and Technologies to Facilitate Learning
III. The Educational Professional as Reflective and Collaborative Practitioner

A. Makes Informed and Ethical Decisions
B. Accepts Responsibility for Student Learning
C. Engages in Opportunities for Professional Growth
D. Collaborates with Colleagues, Families and the School Community

This outline of the Conceptual Framework provides the organizational structure upon which the outcomes and proficiencies of our programs are based, and from which our assessments are derived.

SEPS Conceptual Framework
The Educational Professional as Active Learner

A fundamental tenet that guides all of our preparation programs is the belief that before individuals can teach, lead or serve others, they must first pursue, value and achieve high standards with respect to their own learning. Learning for educators consists of having a strong academic background, a sound understanding of pedagogy, and a deep appreciation of the social contexts of schooling including issues of poverty and sustainability that impact or have pressing implications for schooling in the 21st century (French, 2013; Love, 2013; Nieto, 2013, Werblow and Longo, 2013). Our preparation programs are grounded in the conceptualization of the educational knowledge base provided by Lee Shuman (1987) and others (see., e.g., Arends, 2009; Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemster & McIntyre, 2008; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002), which includes:

- content knowledge and an understanding of the social contexts of schooling
- general pedagogical knowledge
- curriculum knowledge
- pedagogical content knowledge
- knowledge of learners and their characteristics
- knowledge of educational contexts
- knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values.

This means that the individual educator must have a broad general education and an understanding of the interplay of the multiplicity of social factors in shaping the direction and conduct of schooling: cultural, economic, global, philosophical, political, and technological. He or she must also understand at a deep level the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures, or the specific content area to be taught. The educator needs to understand and be able to implement best practice both in terms of general pedagogy and content-specific pedagogy, and must also possess a well-grounded framework for understanding diversity in the classroom and community.

Possesses Knowledge in Arts and Sciences and Appreciation of the Contexts of Schooling

We take as self-evident that educators should themselves be well-educated persons who possess both a breadth of knowledge across the various liberal arts and sciences and an in-depth knowledge of at least one specific discipline (see Floden & Meniketti, 2005; Walker &
We believe that every educator should possess a cohesive knowledge base that provides him or her with knowledge and understanding of the subject matter he or she is to teach. The educator should thus be able to create learning experiences for students that make the subject-matter meaningful; they should also be able to show a commitment to and passion for the subject-matter. It is also important, as Shulman (1987) noted, that educators be not only masters of their subject-area as it is taught at the University level, but also thoroughly versed in its manifestations in public school curricula (i.e., that they have “curriculum knowledge”).

**Demonstrates General Pedagogical Knowledge ****

For more than two decades, three components of teacher knowledge have been discussed, namely, content knowledge (CK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and general pedagogical knowledge (GPK). Although there is a growing body of analytic clarification and empirical testing with regard to CK and PCK, especially with a focus on mathematics teachers, hardly any attempt has been made to learn more about teachers’ GPK although recent research suggests procedural GPK can be acquired and may be beneficial especially for teaching some students. (Konig, Blomeke, Paine, Schmidt, & Hsieh, 2011; Kleickmann, Richter, Kunter, Elsner, Besser, Krauss, & Baumert, 2013). General pedagogical knowledge refers to those broad principles and strategies of effective classroom management and instruction that transcend subject-matter. While research in the area is not as advanced as in others, it is generally recognized that there is no one best way to teach all students, and that the classroom teacher must be able to address a variety of different learning styles and communication needs (Bensimon, 1996; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Gardner, 2006, 2007). Educators must have the ability to teach diverse groups of students through the use of multiple instructional strategies, methods of instruction, and assessment, while at the same time understanding the limitations of the classroom environment (Veal & MaKinster, 1999). Recognizing the importance of the role of language in the teaching and learning processes, including both communication theory and language development (Bloom, 2005; Brisk, 2008; Gayle, 2006; Biesta, 2006; Powell & Caseau, 2004), is also important.

**Possesses Content-Specific Pedagogical Knowledge**

John Dewey believed that scholarly knowledge of the disciplines differs from the kind of knowledge required for teaching. In this view, the dichotomy created in public discourse between content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge is a false one. Of course teachers need to know their content area, but they also need to know how to teach it in school settings (Good & Brophy, 2008). As Veal and MaKinster (1999) have argued, “The key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy, in the capacity to transform the content knowledge into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background of the students” (p. 3; see also Shor, 1992).

Pedagogy, in short, refers the exceptional way in which a teacher helps to guide a student to understand content in a manner that is personally meaningful for the student (Veal & MaKinster, 1999; Freire, 1971). Pedagogical knowledge draws upon a range of ideas that relate to students, curricular materials, and educational contexts (Good & Brophy, 2008). Educators with solid
pedagogical content knowledge understand and apply disciplinary structures, concepts, and tools of inquiry to create learning experiences and opportunities within and across disciplines. An educator’s knowledge is formed by the synthesis of three knowledge bases: subject-matter knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and content-specific pedagogical knowledge (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser & McIntyre, 2008; Shor, 1992; Shulman, 1987).

Engages in Habits of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving
A key element, in our view, of the preparation of professional educators is the development and enhancement of the ability to engage in reflection about one’s professional practice and decision-making. Through this reflection, educators seek to create the most advantageous conditions for student learning in the classroom. Educators at all levels thus model critical thinking and problem-solving in their daily practice (see Goos, Galbraith & Renshaw, 2004; Renkl, Atkinson, Maier & Staley, 2002). They actively gather information, they take measured risks in order to make decisions, and they engage in complex decision-making throughout the day. By modeling critical thinking and problem-solving, educators encourage learners to reflect on prior knowledge and transfer familiar ideas to new settings and topics, and to draw connections between their experiences and new learning. Such critical and creative thinking, problem structuring and problem-solving, together with intervention to assist learners in active learning opportunities, promotes the development of high-level learning performance (Jasper, 2003; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Reagan, Case & Brubacher, 2000; Schön, 1983, 1987). As Ku (2009) argues, this is especially so when teachers “adopt different assessment methods, such as exercises that allow students to self-construct answers, assignments that facilitate the practice of strategic use of thinking skills in everyday contexts, and when adopting multiple-choice exercises, follow-up questions should be given to probe students’ underlying reasoning” (p. 75). The preparation of our candidates is focused in part on requiring them to constantly evaluate and assess problems and situations, reflect on their own and others’ practice, and engage in problem-solving.

The Educational Professional as Facilitator of Learning for All Students
The second broad theme of the Conceptual Framework is “The Educational Professional as Facilitator of Learning for All Students.” This theme elaborates upon the educator’s knowledge of human development, respect for diversity of all learners and learning environments, and the appropriate application of instructional and assessment strategies as well as the application of instructional technologies. It reflects the position voiced by Pring (2012) that we need to begin thinking about education by considering the aims of education and what it means to learn practically, theoretically and morally, while also paying attention to the very many different needs of the learners (see also, Clark, 2013).

At CCSU, the faculty in SEPS are committed to the belief that all educators should be facilitators of learning, not simply dispensers of information The facilitator encompasses a wide range of knowledge and understanding of human growth and development and the understanding to apply
Appropriate instructional and assessment strategies in classroom and school settings. The ability to provide appropriate instruction for all students requires that candidates acquire knowledge about diversity, communication styles and differences, and human development and learning. Consistent with the concepts of knowing, teaching, and learning in the community, we believe that teaching and learning are shared activities, and we embrace the concept that teaching is often a courageous act and a work of the heart (Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Palmer, 1993, 1998).

**Applies Knowledge of Human Development Across the Life Span**
The prior knowledge that learners bring to the classroom is a crucial part of the educator’s planning and adaptation of lessons (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Meece & Daniels, 2008; Pressley & McCormick, 2007). An awareness of the learner’s background can and should inform the educator in the decision-making process when selecting instructional strategies, materials and methods of assessment (Diller & Moule, 2005; Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). Understanding how children learn, and the developmental stages guiding this process, creates a framework for educators to provide learning opportunities that take into account each learner’s intellectual, social, and personal development (see Meece & Daniels, 2008; Pressley & McCormick, 2007). For this reason, educators need to be able to apply a research-based understanding of physical, social, emotional, cognitive, moral and linguistic developmental characteristics of all ages of students in their professional practice (see Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemster & McIntyre, 2008; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Meece & Daniels, 2008; Pressley & McCormick, 2007). They must also understand how developmental differences in learners affect attitudes, values, and personal conduct in the school setting. Effective educators demonstrate in both their belief systems and their practice that all children are capable of learning when developmental factors are recognized, respected, and accommodated. Further, effective educators seek to identify individual differences among learners, cultures, and social groups and are aware of the characteristics of all special needs populations (Hallahan, Kauffman & Pullen, 2008; Smith & Tyler, 2009). They engage in on-going reflection about how moral and ethical issues relate to all students (Oakes & Lipton, 2007; Strike & Soltis, 1992) and modify their own beliefs about teaching and learning accordingly (see Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemster & McIntyre, 2008; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

**Respects and Values All Learners**
We believe that educators and students should be encouraged to value the qualities--both common and different – in each of us, because we live in a multicultural world. Educators must understand the cultural diversity of the students they teach, communicate positive attitudes about cultural diversity, and employ a variety of instructional approaches that accommodate it (Brisk, 2008; Diller & Moule, 2005; Dilworth & Browbn, 2001; Gollnick & Chinn, 2009; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Nieto, 2013; Nieto & Bode, 2011; Oakes & Lipton, 2007; Spring, 2008).
Curricular content, instructional strategies, methods of assessment, and issues of classroom management are important components in this regard. We believe that all students can learn, and that in order for them to succeed, educators must hold high expectations for all students (Good & Brophy, 2008). At the same time, we believe that classroom management and methods of assessment must be appropriate and thoughtful, both in design and implementation, and must take into account relevant kinds of student diversity including students with special needs (see Hallahan, Kauffman & Pullen, 2008; Smith & Tyler, 2009; Turner, Foshay & Pancsofar, 2013). We also believe that clear communication and appropriate responses that encourage culturally sensitive communication by and among all students in the classroom is essential in the creation of a community of learners (Watkins, 2005).

**Addresses the Diversity of Learning Environments**

If students are to be able to live and succeed in a multicultural world and society, schools and other educational institutions must create an ethos that is respectful of all and committed to the principles of social justice of the kind identified by Carlisle, Jackson, & George (2006). They must heed the words of James A Banks that “literate citizens in a diverse democratic society should be reflective, moral, and active citizens in an interconnected global world (Banks, 2004, p. 298)” They must also help prepare students to be independent, reflective critical thinkers (Gardner, 2006, 2007; Jasper, 2003; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Reagan, Case & Brubacher, 2000; Schön, 1983, 1987). This particular disposition requires that educators extend their reach beyond the classroom and school, and take into greater account the communities in which they live and work as well as the broader national and global scene. There is a growing interest in international service-learning (Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011; Tonkin, 2004) and a well-established tradition of outreach in American higher education (Ogden & Brennan, 2014), an area in which CCSU has a special mission and one which serves the needs of both students and faculty. Factors such as language, racial and ethnic heritage, and culture, that sometimes affect educational achievement, must be taken into consideration when planning and implementing the curriculum, instructional strategies, assessment, and classroom management. When an educator is sensitive to the varying social demands and expectations placed on his or her students, then he or she is more likely to create a successful learning community (Diller & Moule, 2005; Gollnick & Chinn, 2009).

**Understands the Learning Process and Applies Instructional and Assessment Strategies and Technologies to Facilitate Learning**

Educators understand the mental processes that are taking place in the student as learning occurs, as well as how knowledge and skills are constructed, how to help their students develop critical and reflective thinking skills. Of special importance along with STEM subjects and other curriculum elements reflected in the Common Core State Standards, is the crucial place of literacy in its various forms in the learning process (Bybee, 2010; Leu et al., 2007; Mulcahy, C., 2010). In addition, teachers need tools to make learning meaningful and relevant for their students. Among these tools are content knowledge, both general and content-specific pedagogical tools, assessment tools, and technology tools. It is clear that not all strategies work well in all situations, and therefore the effective educator must be able to make an informed
decision about when particular strategies are appropriate. Such decisions, in turn, are made based on the educator’s past experience, as well as his or her engagement in reflective practice (Jasper, 2003; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Reagan, Case & Brubacher, 2000; Schön, 1983, 1987). Educators are also aware of the fact that content knowledge, both general and content-specific, pedagogical knowledge, assessment tools, and technology tools are not static in nature, but rather are constantly evolving and developing (see Waks, 2014).

Effective educators today need to be able to use a wide variety of technology in all aspects of their work, both as productivity tools and as learning tools for students. Technology as a productivity tool is manifested in a number of ways: as presentation software, as a spreadsheet grade book, as a data base to keep track of materials, as a word processor and e-mail facilitator to correspond with students and parents, as a way of using the Web as a resource for information gathering, etc. (Davis & Roblyer, 2005; Kay, 2006; Rakes, Fields & Cox, 2006). In addition to productivity tools, technology must be infused seamlessly into the repertoire of effective educators as the chalkboard and overhead projector once were incorporated. This means that educators must be able to use technology, especially computers as “mind tools” (Kay, 2006). Integrated software, multimedia, presentation software, and Web-based tools must be part of the educator’s “tool kit.” Effective educators know how to utilize technology to help their students learn to think and solve problems, to evaluate web-based resources, and to teach their students to critically analyze sources. Educators must also be able to deal with issues of equitable access to computers and ethical considerations such as copyright laws and questionable websites (Davis & Roblyer, 2005; Eagleton, Dobler & Leu, 2007; Kay, 2006; Rakes, Fields & Cox, 2006).

Assessment of student learning is an area that has witnessed considerable evolution and change in recent years, and we believe that this is an area in which candidates must be especially well-informed. We take it as a given that the way in which students are assessed should incorporate assessments that are meaningful and relevant, that are timely, that require more than the mere recall of information, that are authentic, and that require critical thinking and real-world problem-solving. Educators must be able to understand the characteristics, uses, advantages, limitations, and importance of such assessments. Knowledge of appropriate approaches to assessment should guide educators in determining what kinds of experiences can support further growth and development. In short, we believe, assessment should be used as a way to improve student learning (i.e., as a diagnostic and formative measure) as well as a summative measure.
The Educational Professional as Reflective and Collaborative Practitioner

The third theme of the Conceptual Framework is, “The Educational Professional as Reflective and Collaborative Practitioner.” The educational professional values and takes responsibility for continuous learning and sets an example as a lifelong learner. To this end, we believe that educators must be able to make informed and ethical decisions, accept responsibility for student learning, engage in opportunities to grow professionally, and collaborate with colleagues, families, and the broader school community, a goal to which our graduate programs aim to achieve.

Makes Informed and Ethical Decisions
Educators who engage in critical reflection about their daily practice are more effective than those who do not. Educators who engage in critical reflection create classroom environments in which learning is paramount, and in which all classroom participants, teacher and students alike, are active and engaged learners (see Giroux, 1988). When making decisions, educators must be constantly vigilant and aware of the social and ethical implications of their decisions and actions (Goree, Pyle, Baker & Hopkins, 2007; Strike & Soltis, 1992). All candidates in our professional preparation programs are expected to know, to understand, and to practice the tenets of both the “Code of Ethics” of the National Education Association and the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibilities for Teachers (as well as other professional ethical codes as they may apply).

Accepts Responsibility for Student Learning
The educator must accept his or her responsibility for helping all students to achieve high standards. He or she must work to establish a learning environment that is positive and caring, and must show a commitment to his or her students by knowing and employing best practice in the classroom.

Engages in Opportunities for Professional Growth
Henry Giroux (1988) has described teachers as “transformative intellectuals.” The educator should have a disposition to continued learning, rather than perceiving continued educational obligations, whatever their form, as an externally imposed burden. Students are more likely to learn from teachers who are themselves open to new learning experiences, who question and analyze situations, and who make efforts to engage in problem-solving (Reagan, Case & Brubacher, 2000; Schulman, 1987). The effective educator takes responsibility for his or her own professional growth in a largely self-sufficient manner (see Lieberman & Miller, 2008).

We do not believe that opportunities for professional growth should be narrowly construed. The formal goal of much professional development for educators is student achievement, and this is of course appropriate. Expanding one’s knowledge of content knowledge is also useful and
appropriate; greater content knowledge can assist the educator to make informed decisions about the curriculum, textbooks, the relevance of standards, and a multitude of other areas. The goal of continued professional development, in short, is viewed by us as the development of mastery and expertise in the many tasks involved in the teaching and learning processes (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

**Collaborates with Colleagues, Families and the School Community**

Education is influenced by the larger community in which it takes place (Spring, 2008; Tozer, Senese & Violas, 2009). Families and the community also share responsibility for the wellbeing of their schools. Teachers need partners who can help them to create communities of learners. Community partners include both individuals in the community and more formal institutional partners, such as libraries, local businesses, museums and universities. Effective educators form long-term, collaborative relationships with these organizations to help the school set the vision for students’ success (Epstein, 2001).

The primary partners for the effective educator, however, are the parents (Epstein, 2001). Parents must be welcomed into the school and into individual classrooms. The effective educator will also share success and disappointment in a timely and constructive manner with parents and will seek to maintain an active two-way discourse with parents. Because the educator has expertise in content, pedagogy, assessment, and child development, he or she will seek to inform and educate parents, thus helping them to make informed decisions about their children’s learning. Teachers and administrators collaborate and share new knowledge to increase their effectiveness (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemster & McIntyre, 2008).

**Unit Assessment**

The *Conceptual Framework* reflects the beliefs and practices that guide the professional preparation programs at CCSU. It is knowledge-based, and aligned with national and state standards and with what is known about best practice. To assure that the *Conceptual Framework* is coherent and consistent with practice, the Unit Assessment Plan was developed from the *Conceptual Framework*. Assessments across programs have been developed and implemented to assure the achievement of the outcomes and proficiencies identified in the *Conceptual Framework*. With the collection and aggregation of data linked to the *Conceptual Framework*, assessments inform decision-making for program improvement.
References


