



Concordia  
UNIVERSITY • SAINT PAUL

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR FACULTY

### Educator as Professional Decision Maker, Reflective Practitioner, and Adaptive Expert

Mission of the University: The mission of Concordia University, Saint Paul, a university of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, is to prepare students for thoughtful and informed living, for dedicated service to God and humanity, and for enlightened care of God’s creation, all within the context of the Christian Gospel.

### **Liberal Arts Tradition and General Education**

The university has established learning outcomes for all students articulated as the “Framework for Learning.” The university catalog notes that “the function of the Framework for Learning is to make explicit how Concordia University understands and applies its mission statement. To help realize the goals of the mission statement, the total educational experience of Concordia students – both in and out of the classroom – is placed within an overarching structure called the Framework for Learning.” The outcomes of the Framework for Learning are identified in eight areas:

**Aesthetic** – Goal: to increase awareness, understanding and informed critical appreciation of artistic expression and to foster creative talents within the student.

**Intellectual** – Goal: to develop the ability to think critically, incorporating skills for imagining, organizing, analyzing and evaluating.

**Physical** – Goal: to foster informed healthful living, balanced service to God and humanity and enlightened care for self.

**Spiritual** – Goal: to foster understanding of the Gospel and its Biblical source from the perspective of Lutheran theology, including implications of the Gospel for human experience and for vocation in home, workplace, public life and congregation.

**Communication** – Goal: to develop an awareness of communication processes and the desire and skill to improve writing, speaking, research, synthesis and analysis.

**Interpersonal** – Goal: to develop understanding of self and self in relation to others.

**Civic** – Goal: to understand the structure and operations of governments as well as the dynamic interplay between individual and corporate identities; to examine patterns and processes of culture and social structure.

**Global** – Goal: to facilitate an informed understanding of our global interdependence and the ability to interact effectively with people, language and cultures other than a student's own.

“The Framework for Learning shapes the entire Concordia educational experience, entailing not only overt academic work but also chapel and spiritual life opportunities, service learning, foreign study, internships and a wide array of campus life activities. All academic coursework – majors and minors, study in professional programs, electives and especially the general education curriculum – is explicitly guided and informed by the Framework for Learning and is designed to support its goal” (University catalog).

Thus, a critical initial part of the preparation of professional educators at the initial/undergraduate level is the university’s emphasis on a set of unified and strategically-designed outcomes that make up a liberal arts curriculum. Such a background is typically evident for advanced/graduate candidates as well. These outcomes have been dispersed into a series of general education courses that reside primarily in the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Vocation and ministry, but their design and delivery are partnerships with all aspects of the university.

“In particular, the general education curriculum is represented by the areas listed alphabetically below. To the extent relevant to each area and to the particular disciplines or courses the area represents, Concordia students will be expected to mature in their ability to (a) discover, confront and explore unfamiliar information and ideas; (b) use available academic resources and skills to think analytically, critically and synthetically; (c) use appropriate and current technology for research and problem solving; and (d) ideally move beyond the academic data itself to formulate and express new insights and ideas” (University Academic Catalog). In order to reach these outcomes, general education coursework at Concordia University includes experiences in the following 10 areas: Communication, Fine Arts, Global Studies, Health and Physical Education, History and Political Science, Literature, Mathematics and Natural Science, Social and Behavioral Science, Theology, and Writing. Goals for each area are identified below”:

**COMMUNICATION (4 CREDITS REQUIRED)** – Communication courses pertain to the study of verbal and nonverbal messages between communicators in interpersonal, group, public, intercultural and mass media contexts. Communication theory and analysis informs student choice of ethical as well as effective strategies and skills used to relate and respond to ideas.

**FINE ARTS (4 CREDITS REQUIRED)** – The fine arts curriculum increases students' awareness, understanding and critical appreciation of varied aesthetic expression; and seeks to foster their creative talents.

**GLOBAL STUDIES (4 CREDITS REQUIRED)** – Very broadly construed, global courses help students recognize global interdependence and/or cultural connections; as such, they enhance students' ability to work constructively with a people, language, or culture other than their own.

**HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (3 CREDITS REQUIRED)** – The health and physical education curriculum provides students with the resources and strategies necessary for healthy, balanced and vigorous lives.

**HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE (4 CREDITS REQUIRED)** – History offerings help students understand historical sources on their own terms and to recognize the interplay of political, intellectual, social, economic and cultural factors in the development of civilizations. It thereby provides one method whereby present-day circumstances can be better understood and evaluated. Political science courses help students understand their own government and the role of each citizen in the democratic process. Applied globally, political science pertains to the relationships between different governments and peoples and explores how their interests and welfare are connected by many of the same factors examined by historians.

**LITERATURE (4 CREDITS REQUIRED)** – The literature curriculum helps students develop their abilities to think critically about, write coherently on and discuss enthusiastically a variety of literary texts; students develop both an intellectual understanding of the power of literature and an aesthetic appreciation for diverse literary works.

**MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL SCIENCE (9 CREDITS REQUIRED; 3 IN MATHEMATICS, 3 IN BIOLOGY, AND 3 IN PHYSICAL SCIENCE )** – Mathematics offerings are designed to develop student's understanding of basic mathematical concepts, to develop their abilities to analyze and solve mathematics problems and to promote mathematical awareness in the analysis of problem solving strategies and the interpretation of results. Natural science courses examine the physical nature of the world. Biology involves plant, animal and human life; physical science deals with the process of the earth; while earth science studies the earth and the universe.

**SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE (4 CREDITS REQUIRED)** – Social and behavioral science courses provide the perspectives and tools for students to understand human behavior individually, in groups and in organizations.

**THEOLOGY (7-8 CREDITS REQUIRED; 3-4 BIBLICAL, 4 INTERMEDIATE)** – Students meet their general education requirements in theology by taking a minimum of three credits from the "Bible" category and four credits from the "Intermediate" category.

Students in professional church work programs must select from those courses in both categories that are also requirements in the minor in confessional Lutheranism.

WRITING (4 CREDITS REQUIRED) – The writing course provides students with an awareness of written communication – specifically the process of research, synthesis and analysis – as well as opportunities to practice their own writing skills in an academic setting.

## **Conceptual Framework for Professional Educators**

The conceptual framework for the professional development of faculty at Concordia University – Educator as Professional Decision Maker, Reflective Practitioner, and Adaptive Expert – articulates multiple dimensions. The included visual model (Figure 1) presents the components of the framework and communicates the relationships that the components have with one another. The model suggests a dynamic, interactive, energetic, and productive orientation to the preparation of professional educators at Concordia University.

It is tempting to see progress through any program for educators as a linear, course-by-course, step-by-step, from-here-straight-to-there process, but a traditional flow chart with a row of discrete boxes connected by arrows fails to articulate the dynamic and synergistic approach to the preparation of professional educators at Concordia University. The “washing-machine model” has been selected to represent the program, where movement and momentum are implied, where elements swirl and tumble and bump into each other, suggesting a truly interactive and dynamic approach to the preparation of education professionals. A synergistic quality is also suggested in that each element is enriched and enhanced by its position and relation to the others. In effect, the result is greater than the sum of its parts. Educators are more than an embodiment of a university transcript. The conceptual foundations and framework, professional development, and professional practice all interact, contributing to molding professional decision makers, empowered professionals, reflective practitioners, and adaptive experts – educators who know not only what to do but why they do it.

The following “frameworks” are worth noting, are important for the Concordia University understanding of the teaching and learning process, and are presented to candidates at different points in their preparation: Westbury (1973) – teaching as an interaction between four primary tasks and the constraints of the classroom situation; Shulman (1987) – seven areas of professional knowledge for teachers; Slavin (1987) – model of alterable elements of effective instruction; Dillon (1990) – a definition of teaching; Sternberg & Horvath (1995) – a prototype view of expert teaching; Danielson (1996) – a framework for teaching; Garmston (1998) – six knowledge areas of expert teachers; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (1999) – synthesis of how people learn and designs for learning environments; Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness, & Duffy (2005) – synthesis of the knowledge base for “preparing teachers for a changing world”; and Stronge (2007) – qualities of effective teachers.

## **Context of Professionalism**

The word “professional” is often used to describe educators, especially when judging their level of competence, commitment, and integrity. Professionalism often includes such behavioral and attitudinal descriptions as “is always on time,” “accepts responsibility,” “shows initiative,” “is respectful of colleagues and students.” Such criteria may appear soft or fuzzy in a field that has built its theory and practice on the “hard data” of statistical research analyses; however, subjective characterizations like the ones mentioned above are often accepted as at least a part of the definition of professionalism. In addition, the habits and practices of self-evaluation, dedicated scholarship, critical thinking, creative problem solving, effective leadership, and ethical decision making suggest another dimension to the definition of professionalism. Perhaps, true elucidation of the term requires a combination of both common and noble qualities so that teachers demonstrate the simple characteristics of “showing up” as well as the exemplary ones of dedicated service. Much research and conceptual work is being done in this area and needs to be incorporated into coursework for aspiring and in-service professional educators. For example, Shulman (1998) has suggested that there are six commonplaces shared by all professions: service to society, a body of scholarly knowledge that forms the basis of the entitlement to practice, engagement in practical action, uncertainty caused by the different needs of clients and the non-routine nature of problems, the importance of experience in developing practice, and the development of a professional community that aggregates and shares knowledge and develops professional standards (p. 516).

The Concordia University professional education program operates within a context of professionalism as expressed by the diagram in Figure 1. Infused throughout the program is an expectation that faculty members conduct themselves in responsible, moral, ethical, and committed ways. Faculty are encouraged to meet and exceed the high standards that the profession of teaching sets for the personal and professional conduct of its members.

### **Four Areas of Teacher Competence – University “Pillars”**

According to Smith (1992), a well-trained teacher should be prepared in four general areas of teacher competence in order to make informed decisions which translate into successful student learning – these represent the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of all successful teachers: (1) knowledge of subject matter, (2) theoretical knowledge about learning and human behavior, (3) a repertoire of teaching strategies, and (4) attitudes that foster learning. In the conceptual framework model (Figure 1), these four areas make up the field against which Concordia University views all the decision-making components – they are the “pillars” of preparation and learning. Garmston (1998) presents a similar list, suggesting that teachers need knowledge of content, knowledge of pedagogy (a repertoire of teaching skills), knowledge of students and how they learn, and knowledge of self and about collegial interaction.

Decision making is at the heart of the conceptual model: educational decisions are reflections of one’s beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning as well as one’s

knowledge and skills. The impact that each general area of teacher competence has on educational decision making is described below. Interestingly, the conceptual model presented in recent work by Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness, and Duffy (2005, p. 11), is strikingly similar to the model as the one used at Concordia University since 1995 and revised in 2007 (Figure 1). Called Preparing Teachers for a Changing World, the Darling-Hammond, et al., model includes the following “pillars” couched in a milieu of Teaching as a Profession and Learning in Democracy:

- Knowledge of Subject Matter and Curriculum Goals (educational goals and purposes for skills, content, subject matter)
- Knowledge of Learners and Their Development in Social Contexts (learning, human development, language)
- Knowledge of Teaching (content plus content pedagogy, teaching diverse learners, assessment, classroom management)

**Knowledge of subject matter.** Concordia University believes that a broad-based and solid liberal arts education serves as the foundation of knowledge in the preparation of educators. A basic understanding of content to be taught is a fundamental necessity in the teaching and learning process; a thorough and deep understanding of subject matter to be taught must be a lifelong pursuit for the professional educator. The positive results of a growing understanding of subject matter are greater intellectual security and an ability to plan and implement the instructional content in ways which positively impact student learning. If a teacher is planning to teach direct objects, the causes of the Civil War, or the process for solving quadratic equations, he or she must know and understand the content of the lesson. A teacher’s grasp of subject matter knowledge determines if he or she can plan and deliver an integrated, thoughtful, and organized unit of learning and experience, moving beyond a superficial or fragmented curriculum. Subject matter understanding drives many decision-making aspects of the teaching and learning process, including selection of significant topics and subtopics, experiences, materials, methods, questions, and student response opportunities.

Amidst all of their professional development, educators must develop a commitment to lifelong learning. The fleeting nature of knowledge demands that educators in any area of specialization continually renew and update their own knowledge base.

**Theoretical knowledge about learning and human behavior.** While teachers are often criticized for being more interested in practice than theory, the professional teacher recognizes that “we do what we believe” and that, in reality, there is nothing more practical than a good theory. A clear understanding of learning theory and developmental theory (Skinner, 1974; Piaget, 1952; Bandura, 1977; Gagne, 1985; Bruner, 1966; Rogers, 1983; Kohlberg, 1969; and Noddings, 1984) as well as their implications for instruction is necessary if teachers are to be able to create classrooms where the teaching and learning process is powerful and successful. Only when teachers understand, select, transform, and apply the ideas of behavioral, developmental, social learning, cognitive, humanistic, and moral reasoning theories and research will they be able to act with educational integrity and professional skill. These internalized theories assist beginning and experienced teachers in making effective decisions and in interpreting results of

specific decisions. Teachers often have only microseconds to shape their responses to the stream of incidents and spontaneous circumstances in their classrooms. The ability to respond and decide effectively presupposes a knowledge base and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). This theoretical base guides the selection and implementation of the decisions which teachers make. Effective, professional teachers are aware of what theories of learning and behavior they hold and why they hold them. Thus, it follows, that any decision made by a teacher is a reflection of his or her belief system (e.g., How are the desks arranged? How were classroom rules developed? How can this student best learn prosocial skills? How should homework best be used? What reinforcements are emphasized in the classroom – intrinsic or extrinsic – and why? What expectations are set for students and how were they arrived at? What teacher behaviors are influenced by expectations and why? What assessment activities are important and how can they influence decision making?).

The practice of teaching, represented by the variety of answers to these questions, cannot be separated from the theories which direct them. The list of decision points during a school day and a school year is endless and encompasses every area of instructional, management, relational, and administrative concern in the teaching and learning process.

Feedback and reflection opportunities also address the theoretical underpinnings of classroom practice and require teacher education students to articulate the ideas and reasons that drive their teaching actions (Cruikshank, 1987). The “why” question pervades the discussions: Why did you choose that approach? Why do you think that? Why? Examination of daily teaching practice informs and directs a teacher’s continued growth into the profession.

**A repertoire of teaching strategies.** The “teaching effectiveness” literature (Fisher et al., 1980; Gage & Giaconia, 1981; Emmer et al., 1980) revealed a number of teacher skills and behaviors that influence the management and learning of students in the classroom. From this work, we have come to know better that while subject matter knowledge is a necessary condition for effective teaching, it is not sufficient. It is also important to note that we have moved beyond this literature and recognize that it has only begun to address the important issues – the work started us on a path to more fully understanding the “science” of teaching but left us unsatisfied. Most college-educated adults can tell stories of the brilliant chemist or Shakespearean scholar, who knew everything about a topic but was unable to teach it to anyone else. The need for knowledge and skills related to the delivery of instruction – general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987; also implied are knowledge of educational contexts; and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values) – is critical to the success of learning experiences for students. Decisions related to materials, grouping arrangements, assessment methods, pacing, student levels of participation, and questioning strategies list only a few of the “methodological” concerns that effective teachers must address in their planning, implementation, and evaluation of instruction. In addition, effective management skills are also a part of a successful teacher’s “repertoire of teaching skills.” Knowledge of student characteristics, motivation theory, and prevention-intervention techniques determine a teacher’s skill in establishing

and maintaining productive and pleasant learning environments. “Teaching the way I was taught” rarely provides prospective teachers with a rich and robust repertoire of instructional and management skills and strategies. Moving beyond the “folkways and folklore” of teaching (Don’t smile until Christmas!) is necessary. More is known about the skills of teaching today than ever before. As we know, the skills and strategies necessary in the teaching and learning process are closely connected to student learning and understanding.

Concordia University’s program assists teacher education students in developing effective teaching skills and strategies in the following ways: Faculty members in the professional courses model the skills and strategies which accommodate student learning styles, interests, and achievement levels. They incorporate technology into their teaching and require candidates to conduct presentations with technology as well. As Concordia University is a “laptop campus”, all fulltime candidates are issued laptop computers and are able to take advantage of the campus-wide wireless internet capabilities. Faculty incorporate a variety of candidate responding opportunities in their classroom, including cooperative learning, high participation formats, and hands-on experiences with manipulative materials. Their instructional expertise provides a powerful demonstration of effective teaching strategies. The model of effective teaching is presented with particular clarity and focus in the “methods courses,” but all of the education faculty recognize their responsibility to be exemplary teachers, and to present students with the skills and strategies of teaching that represent the “best of practice.”

Field Experiences and Clinical Practices also give candidates in the teacher education program opportunities to observe and practice effective teaching skills. Cooperating Teachers are able to demonstrate current instructional and management practices. In personal and group reflection experiences, student teachers are encouraged to analyze the effectiveness of the approaches they observe and attempt on their own. They are also given opportunities to practice the skills and strategies of effective teaching in their practicum and student teaching classrooms. Frequently observed by their Cooperating Teachers and their University Supervisors, candidates are then given feedback to assist in their continual improvement of teaching skills.

Knowledge of diverse populations is addressed at several points in the program and most notably in the course ED 330 Human Diversity and Relations. Teaching strategies that have been shown to be beneficial in a variety of settings and with diverse populations are included in the methods courses. The book, *Educating Everybody’s Children: Diverse Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners* (Cole, 2008), is used in several courses to introduce candidates to the realities of diversity in classroom settings, in learning styles, etc., and barriers to good instruction, but also to effective teaching strategies for all students, diverse teaching strategies for diverse learners, and strategies specific to certain subject areas.

**Attitudes that foster learning.** Most educators believe that attitudes or dispositions have a profound effect on the teaching and learning process. They are an important dimension of classroom and collegial dynamics and may have either a positive or

negative impact on them. Attitudes have a direct effect on behavior as they determine not only how we view ourselves, but also how we view and interact with others. Cooper (2006) suggests that there are four major categories of attitudes that affect teaching behavior. They include a balance between the following equally important “attitude arenas”:

- (1) teachers’ attitudes toward themselves – research in psychology supports the notion that emotionally healthy individuals are better able to respect and cope with the feelings of others.
- (2) teachers’ attitudes toward children and youth – understanding the power of expectations and human relations and their impact on students’ learning and behavior is an important awareness that teachers must possess.
- (3) teachers’ attitudes toward peers and parents – positive professional and personal relationships with adults are necessary for a successful and satisfying career.
- (4) teachers’ attitudes toward subject matter – being enthusiastic about a learning topic or experience has a dramatic impact on students’ attitudes and achievement.

The program promotes the development of healthy, respectful attitudes toward self and others by engaging candidates in coursework and experiential opportunities which help them assess and grow in intrapersonal and interpersonal knowledge and skill. The Admission to the Teacher Education Professional Program process requires written and verbal responses to inquiries regarding candidates’ perceived strengths and weaknesses related to the social and communication roles of a teacher. Through the processes of writing and interviewing, candidates are assisted in developing a realistic self-perception and in determining goals for growth in academic, social, and communication skills. Goal-setting opportunities are also encountered later on in the program when candidates complete the Practicum experience. If issues are identified by course instructors, Cooperating Teachers, University Supervisors, or the candidate him/herself, reflection and renewal can be addressed by writing specific goals for future experiences.

Human Diversity and Relations coursework (ED 330) and required human relations activities (100 hours) and service-learning experiences expand and enrich the world of the candidates by exposing them to a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, learning styles and abilities, etc. Educators in an increasingly diverse educational world must develop an awareness of their own attitudes and expectations regarding persons who are different from themselves. They interact with persons who play a variety of roles within the school: administrators, colleagues, parents, students, and these persons often reflect the richness and greatness of diversity in society. Developing attitudes of acceptance and appreciation are critical to the transformation of school and society which are too often troubled by the oppressive effects of bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Communication is addressed as the vehicle of attitudinal interchange as we recognize that attitudes are communicated through verbal and nonverbal interactions. Therefore, acquiring the skills necessary to engage in positive interpersonal communications is a prerequisite for operating successfully in the diverse world of the classroom.

The central hub of the conceptual model, around which every element revolves, presents the program's organizing themes – educators as professional decision-makers (initial/undergraduate), and reflective practitioners, and adaptive experts (advanced/graduate). Coursework, Field Experiences, Clinical Practices, and reflections are focused and outcomes are directed to developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of prospective and in-service educators who have the ability to make sound professional decisions, to reflect upon personal practice, and to develop adaptive expertise. The process of decision-making (plan – implement – evaluate; and explained further below) also recognizes the continuous and pervasive role that feedback and reflection plays in the making of decisions. The substantial attention and support that professional decision-making receives as a pivotal activity and area of expertise in educating, is an important validation of its selection as an organizing theme for Concordia University's program. The "agitating action" of decision making as it is portrayed in the model accurately reflects the reality of professional life in and out of the classroom where decisive moments arise quickly, frequently, routinely, and non-routinely. Coursework and field and clinical experiences give candidates opportunities to study and practice the process and method of decision making so they emerge from the program as informed and skilled professionals. Overall, the dynamic design of the model suggests an active, participative orientation to learning and teaching for both faculty and candidates.

Both Smith (1992) and Cooper (2006) organize the decision making of teachers around three basic teaching functions – planning, implementing, and evaluating. This process is reflected in the conceptual model as the first ring around the central theme of Educator as Professional Decision Maker, Reflective Practitioner, and Adaptive Expert. Cooper says it this way (pp. 11-12):

The *planning* function requires that teachers make decisions about their students' needs, the most appropriate goals and objectives to help meet those needs, the content to be taught, the motivation necessary to attain their goals and objectives, and the instructional modes and teaching strategies most suited to the attainment of those goals and objectives. The planning function usually occurs when teachers are alone and have time to reflect and consider long- and short-range plans, the students' progress toward achieving objectives, the availability of materials, the time requirements of particular activities, and other such issues. Some teaching skills that support the planning function include observing pupil behavior, diagnosing pupil needs, setting goals and objectives, sequencing goals and objectives, and determining appropriate learning activities related to the objectives.

The *implementation* function requires that teachers implement the decisions that were made in the planning stage, particularly those relate to instructional modes, teaching strategies, and learning activities. While much of the

planning function is accomplished when teachers are alone, the implementation function occurs when teachers are interacting with students. Research indicates that “teachers make one interactive decision every two minutes” and “the decision-making demands of classroom teaching are relatively intense” (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 274; quotation added from original). These decisions frequently must be made rapidly in response to classroom situations. Often, teachers have to make adjustments in their plans based on student questions and how the teachers perceive the lesson to be going. Teaching skills that support the implementation function included presenting and explaining, questioning, listening, introducing, demonstrating, eliciting student responses, and achieving closure.

The *evaluation* function requires decisions about the suitability of chosen objectives as well as the teaching strategies keyed to those objectives and, ultimately, whether or not the students are achieving what the teacher intended. To make the necessary decisions, teachers must determine what kind of information they need and then gather it. Teaching skills that support the evaluation function include specifying the learning objectives to be evaluated; describing the information needed to make such evaluation; obtaining, analyzing, and recording that information; and forming judgments.

### **Educator as Professional Decision Maker Initial Licensure/Undergraduate**

The conception of “educator as professional decision maker” draws from the work of Shavelson (1973), Smith & Geoffrey (1968); B. O. Smith (1969); C. B. Smith (1992); Brubaker & Simon (1993); Beadi (1996); and Cooper (2006), among others. Shavelson (1973) wrote:

Any teaching act is the result of a decision, whether conscious or unconscious, that the teacher makes after the complex cognitive processing of available information. This reasoning leads to the hypotheses that the basic teaching skill is decision making. (p. 18)

Four general areas of teacher competence necessary to make informed decisions make up the field against which we view all of the decision-making components: subject matter, learning and human development, teaching strategies, and personal qualities. Educational decisions are reflections of one’s content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, teaching skills, beliefs, and personal qualities or dispositions about learning and teaching. Teachers must become active decision makers (even with curriculum mandates) in their understanding and view of the importance of child development, curriculum, evaluation, and their continuous professional development and they should actively participate in the decision-making process, rather than being mere technicians who implement only a prescribed curriculum and decisions made by others.

Smith (1992) suggests that decision-making is a five-step process where one must: refine a question by focusing on a decision point in order to plan, implement or evaluate; consider options by collecting information that suggests a variety of alternatives; determine the factors to be used as means to rate and eliminate alternatives; make a decision that answers the initial question; and finally, reflect on the outcome.

Danielson's Framework for Teaching (1996) establishes four domains or components of Professional practice which imply critical decision making opportunities: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. This framework has tremendous potential for teacher education candidates to conceptualize their practice.

Identifying decision making as a pivotal theme for the preparation of educators as well as actual teaching practice recognizes the pervasiveness of its presence both inside and outside of the classroom. The number of decisions – planned and incidental – that teachers make daily is legion. In his classic observational study of elementary classrooms published in 1968, Jackson suggested an average of 800 decisions were made by the teacher per day and that teachers engage in over 1,000 interpersonal interchanges each day. Later, Murray (1986) estimated the number to be 1,500 and Good and Brophy (2008) write that teachers face 1,000 decision points per day. In her popular book *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, Danielson (1996) suggests that “the complexity of teaching is well recognized; a teacher makes over 3,000 nontrivial decision daily” (p. 2). Research clearly suggests that decision making is the single-most frequent and significant activity of the classroom teacher. Add to these the decisions that teachers make *outside* of the classroom – decisions pertaining to home-school concerns, curricular evaluations and selections, administrative matters, planning (individual and departmental), and collegial relationships (both personal and professional).

Teachers have been characterized as “managers of complexity” (Brandt, 1994) and classrooms as multidimensional environments where events occur simultaneously, where the pace is fast, and where events are unpredictable (Doyle, 1986). The skills needed to manage complexity often boil down to decision making. The complexities of instruction, teacher-student relations, student-student relation, parental interactions, administrative expectations all come to bear upon the daily actions of the teacher, and those complexities require appropriate decision making. Professional practice certainly underscores the ubiquitous nature of the decision-making process in education.

## **Educator as Professional Decision Maker Outcomes Initial Licensure/Undergraduate**

Educational outcomes provide a description of the cognitive and non-cognitive (affective) qualities the Concordia University program helps candidates acquire and more fully develop. The Educator as Professional Decision Maker outcomes provide a complete listing and articulation of the goals of the initial/undergraduate level. It describes the personal and professional arenas of decision-making within which the Concordia University graduate is prepared to function successfully.

Upon completion of the initial/undergraduate teacher education licensure programs at Concordia University, candidates will be professional, academically capable, and personally responsible entry-level educators who are able to apply knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to subject matter, learning and human development, and teaching strategies to the classroom environment. Candidates will also be able to demonstrate personal qualities that foster learning in others by demonstrating positive and caring dispositions, providing direction, and making instructional decisions that enhance educational opportunities for all students. Successful candidates will demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to each of the following as aligned with standards formulated by the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (1992; Model Standards for Beginning Teacher Licensing and Development) also known as the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice:

### **A. Subject matter**

1. Demonstrates the intellectual breadth of a liberally-educated person.
2. Conveys the central concepts, tools of inquiry, content, and structure of the academic discipline(s).

#### **INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 1 – Content Pedagogy**

The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.

### **B. Learning and human development**

1. Applies developmental theories and a philosophy of education in designing instruction.

#### **INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 2 – Student Development**

The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support a child's intellectual, social, and personal development.

2. Demonstrates knowledge of and sensitivity to diverse ways of learning including learning styles related to culture, gender, and ability.

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 3 – Diverse Learners**

The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

C. Teaching strategies

1. Communicates clearly verbally and in writing.

**INTASC MSEP STANDARD 6 – Communication and Technology**

The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

2. Engages students through a variety of instructional strategies (including instructional technology).

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 1 – Content Pedagogy**

The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 2 – Student Development**

The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support a child's intellectual, social, and personal development.

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 3 – Diverse Learners**

The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 4 – Multiple Instructional Strategies**

The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage student development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

**INTASC MSEP STANDARD 6 – Communication and Technology**

The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 7 – Planning**

The candidate plans and manages instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.

3. Applies classroom management strategies successfully according to individual student needs.

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 5 – Motivation and Management**

The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

4. Involves students in curricular, management, and instructional decisions when appropriate.
5. Assesses, evaluates, and communicates student learning effectively.

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 8 – Assessment**

The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 10 – School and Community Involvement**

The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

**D. Personal qualities that foster learning**

1. Maintains a positive self-image, respect and concern for students and co-workers, enthusiasm and resourcefulness, and physical and emotional well-being.
2. Demonstrates awareness of professional, ethical, and legal responsibilities and rights of teachers, knowledge of school organizational structure, and the relationship with the social and philosophical foundations of education.

3. Initiates responsibility for continuous self-learning.

**INTASC/MSEP STANDARD 9 – Reflective Practice:  
Professional Development**

The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his or her choices and actions on others and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.

For candidates pursuing teaching positions in Lutheran schools, the following three outcomes are also included:

1. Models a Christian life based upon a hope in Jesus Christ as Savior.
2. Demonstrates knowledge and skill needed to serve in the parish and school.
3. Demonstrates sufficient theological insight to communicate the Gospel effectively.

## **Educator as Reflective Practitioner and Adaptive Expert Advanced/Graduate**

The advanced/graduate teacher education programs are focused on the preparation of educators who are not only professional decision makers (initial/undergraduate) but also reflective practitioners and adaptive experts (advanced/graduate).

### **Reflective Practitioner**

The foundation for the conception of educators as reflective practitioners has, at its core, the work of Dewey (1933/1998; 1938); Smith & Geoffrey (1968); Cruikshank (1987); Schön (1987); Valli (1992); Zeichner & Liston (1996); Brookfield (1998); Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999); Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness, & Duffy (2005); and Darling-Hammond (2006), among others. The writings of these educators/researchers provide the basis for the conception of reflective practitioners at the advanced/graduate level.

Dewey (1933) introduced the notion of reflection and reflective thinking for teachers in the 1920's as part of his university laboratory school. He viewed education as an unfolding process in which the teacher facilitates the child's learning or understanding of the world around them (1938). Dewey's thoughts, in many ways, are extensions of the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi, Johann Herbart, and Francis Parker – a more naturalist view – in which the child's experience is seen as the heart of learning. The learner is viewed as an emerging and inquiring being, actively striving to understand and manage his/her surroundings. This places both the curriculum and teaching methods in a new light. The quality of the learning experience grows in importance. Students are involved in understanding and constructing their reality and not just memorizing. This more pragmatic approach to learning and teaching contributes a strong base to the understanding of teaching in the graduate programs at Concordia University.

Schön (1987) describes an epistemology of practice that makes the distinction between school knowledge and what he describes as the kind of artistry that good teachers in their everyday work often display, reflection-in-action. Brookfield (1995 and 1998) describes critically reflective practice as a process of inquiry that involves the practitioner in trying to discover the assumptions that frame how they work. The Concordia University advanced/graduate programs ask learners to consistently reflect on their current practice in education and compare them to research-based, best practices as suggested by professional organizations and pertinent research (e.g., National Association for the Education of Young Children).

The notion of “reflective practitioner” is a critical ideal for the preparation of advanced/graduate candidates but will necessarily need more development. Concordia University faculty – and external constituents – will continue to refine this concept.

## Adaptive Expert

The foundation for the conception of educators as adaptive experts reflects the work of the following: Hatano & Inagaki (1986); Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (1999); Hatano & Osura (2003); Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness, & Duffy (2005); Darling-Hammond (2006); and Lin, Schwartz, & Bransford (2007), among others. The writings of these educators/researchers provide the basis for developing adaptive expertise at the advanced/graduate level.

The development of adaptive expertise is the “gold standard for becoming a professional” according to Darling-Hammond, et al., (2005). They hypothesize that there are two dimensions of expertise: efficiency and innovation. Classic experts are efficient when solving problems that are routine. Adaptive experts, when presented with problems that are not routine or when confronted with different types of problem, innovate. However, the relationship between classic experts and adaptive experts is not a dichotomy but rather a continuum of adaptive ability – as one becomes “more adaptive” one becomes “more expert” resulting in adaptive expertise.

Expertise along the *efficiency* dimension involves greater abilities to perform particular tasks without having to devote too many attentional resources to achieve them....Expert teachers are able to perform a variety of activities without having to stop and think about how to do them. Examples include how to manage a classroom while students are working in groups, how to give directions and hand out materials while keeping everyone’s attention, how to predict the range of answers that students may give to a particular question about a concept in math, history, science, and so forth. Expert teachers are also able to notice patterns of classroom activity that, to the novice, often seem like disorganized chaos....

Lifelong learning along the *innovation* dimension typically involves moving beyond existing routines and often requires people to rethink key ideas, practices, and even values in order to change what they are doing. These kinds of activities can be highly emotionally charged, and the capacity to consider change without feeling threatened is an important ability (p. 361).

Two possible trajectories to adaptive expertise are available (Schwartz, Bransford, & Sears; 2005): innovate and then become efficient or become efficient and then practice innovating.

## **Educator as Reflective Practitioner and Adaptive Expert Outcomes Advanced/Graduate**

### MA in Classroom Instruction

The Master of Arts in Education program with an emphasis in Classroom Instruction prepares highly effective professional, decision-making, and reflective educators who:

1. Exhibit strong communication (written, oral, listening) and critical thinking skills.
2. Provide high-level instructional leadership including supervision of educational curriculum and instruction congruent with historical and contemporary ideas in education.
3. Design classroom instruction that utilizes best practices in educational technology
4. Evaluate educational research for professional decision-making leading to improvement in student learning.
5. Design and implement educational solutions to issues stemming from the reality of multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, and multi-ability school populations.
6. Demonstrate awareness of professional, ethical, and legal responsibilities and rights of teachers, knowledge of school organizational structure, and the relationship with the social and philosophical foundations of education.

“Grand Tour Question”: In light of what we know about how children learn and educational policy and practice, how shall we best teach to impact student learning?

### MA in Classroom Instruction with K-12 Reading emphasis

The Master of Arts in Education program with an emphasis in Classroom Instruction (with Reading endorsement) prepares highly effective professional, decision-making, and reflective educators who:

1. Exhibit strong communication (written, oral, listening) and critical thinking skills.
2. Evaluate educational research for professional decision-making leading to improvement in student learning.
3. Design and implement educational solutions to issues stemming from the reality of multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, and multi-ability school populations.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of literacy, i.e. reading and writing processes and instruction.
5. Effectively use a wide range of instructional practices, approaches, methods, and curriculum materials to support reading and writing instruction.
6. Effectively use a variety of assessment tools and practices to plan and evaluate effective reading instruction.
7. Create a literate environment that fosters reading and writing by integrating foundational knowledge, use of instructional practices, approaches and methods, curriculum materials, and the appropriate use of assessments.

8. Demonstrate awareness of professional, ethical, and legal responsibilities and rights of teachers, knowledge of school organizational structure, and the relationship with the social and philosophical foundations of education.

“Grand Tour Question”: In light of what we know about how children learn and educational policy and practice, how shall we best teach literacy in educational settings today?

### MA in Differentiated Instruction

The Master of Arts in Education program with an emphasis in Differentiated Instruction prepares highly effective professional, decision-making, and reflective educators who:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical bases of researched-based strategies in relation to diverse curricular and behavioral situations.
2. Demonstrate an increased ability to analyze curricular situations and adapt instructional strategies accordingly.
3. Demonstrate application of new strategic knowledge and understanding of differentiated instruction to their own practice in educational settings, designing explicit curriculum documents that represent actual educational practices.
4. Demonstrate investigation and identification of the personal curricular beliefs and theories that guide their own professional function.
5. Demonstrate collaboration skills as members of teams within inclusive settings, taking leadership roles in schools and programs.
6. Demonstrate ability to conduct research, to evaluate and apply the research of others, and to present, orally and in writing, the results of such study and research.
7. Demonstrate completion of a program of advanced study and a commitment to continuous self-directed professional growth.

“Grand Tour Question”: In light of what we know about differentiated instruction, how do we, as professional educators, effectively teach every student?

### MA in Early Childhood

The Master of Arts in Education program with an emphasis in Early Childhood prepares highly effective professional, decision-making, reflective educators, and adaptive experts who:

1. Understand the theoretical perspectives supporting the broad content of the discipline.
2. Connect theory with the essential relationships between research and practice within the discipline.
3. Communicate the content of the discipline effectively through academic and professional activities.
4. Design and implement research and apply the results to a practical problem.
5. Access and utilize research to inform decision making in programs for children and families.

## MA in Educational Leadership

The Master of Arts in Education program with an emphasis in Educational Leadership prepares highly effective professional, decision-making, and reflective leaders for educational settings who:

1. Exhibit strong communication (written, oral, listening) and critical thinking skills.
2. Provide high-level instructional leadership including supervision of educational curriculum and instruction.
3. Evaluate educational research for professional decision-making, leading to school improvement and better student learning.
4. Design and implement educational solutions to issues stemming from the reality of multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, and multi-ability school populations.
5. Demonstrate effective leadership, administration, and management skills for professional, ethical, and legal responsibilities and rights of teachers, knowledge of school organizational structure, and the relationship with the social and philosophical foundations of education.
6. Administer effectively curricular, financial, and personnel resources for educational purposes.
7. Participate actively in educational politics, policy analysis, and policy implementation.

“Grand Tour Question”: In light of what we know about how children learn and educational policy and practice, how shall we best lead in educational settings today in order to impact student learning?

## **Accreditation and Certification**

The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association  
30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400; Chicago, IL 60602-2504  
(312) 263-0456

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education  
2010 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 500; Washington, DC 20036-1023;  
(202) 466-7496

Minnesota Board of Teaching  
1500 Highway 36 West; Roseville, MN 55113-4266  
(651) 582-8833

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, SAINT PAUL

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR FACULTY

Educator as Professional Decision Maker,  
Reflective Practitioner, and Adaptive Expert

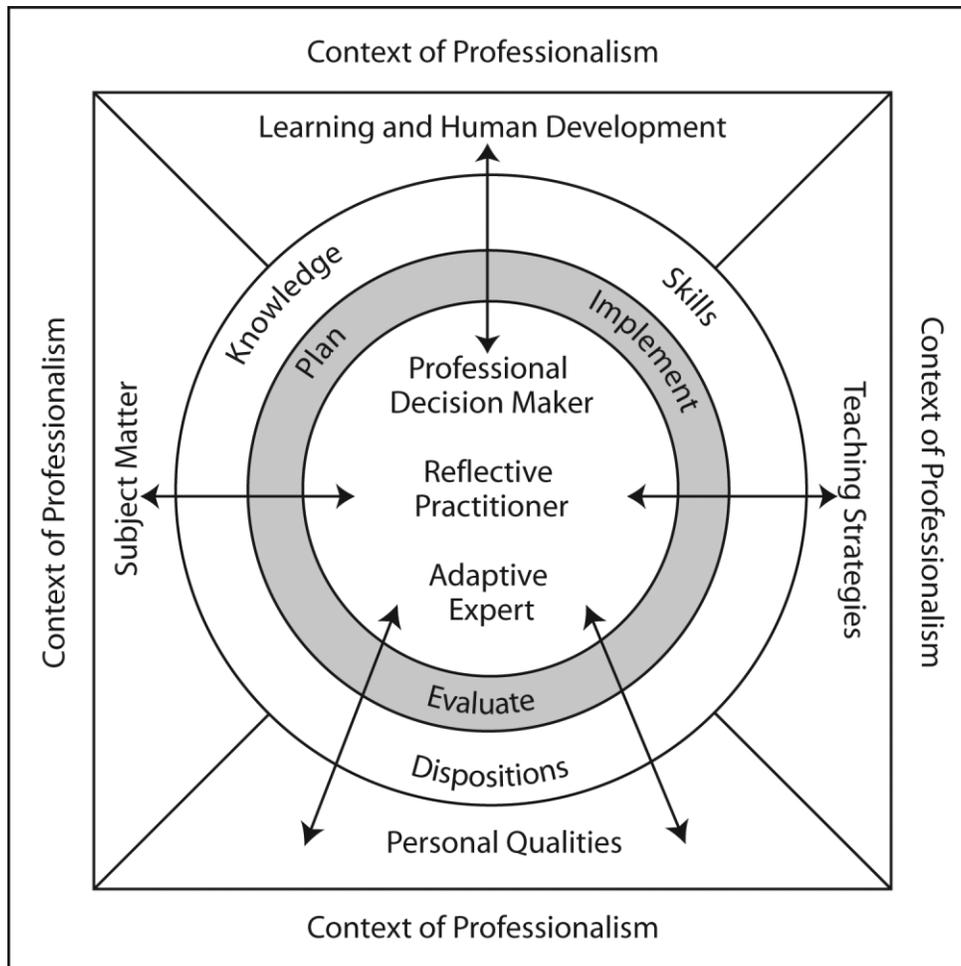


FIGURE 1

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