



# **Blackburn College**

## **Education Unit**

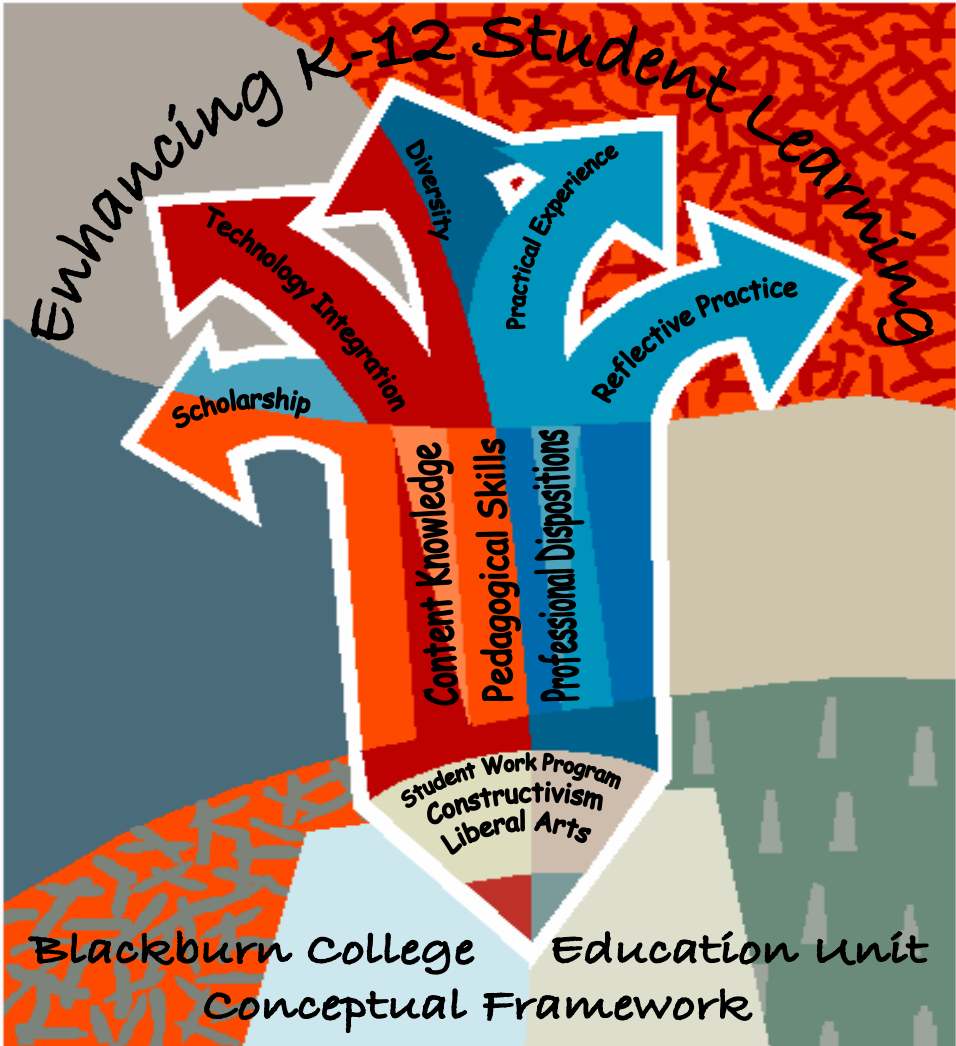
**Conceptual Framework**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Edition**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Conceptual Framework defines and describes the philosophies, research, commitments, and outcomes expected of the Education Unit faculty and candidates. The framework emphasizes three overarching components vital to the preparation of teachers at Blackburn College. The components - content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and professional dispositions - are an essential core to candidates' preparation. The framework also emphasizes a shared ideal of preparation built upon the eleven Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (I.S.B.E., 2002) and particularly on the department's guiding theme, "Preparing Educators to Enhance K-12 Student Learning."



## **Coherence of the Conceptual Framework**

This Conceptual Framework was reviewed and improved throughout the academic years of 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, and the Education Unit adopted the framework after review by all stakeholders (departmental , program, and clinical faculty, internal and external advisory committees and adjuncts). The Conceptual Framework was developed and strengthened using a knowledge base derived from empirical research, informed theory, collaborative efforts, state and national standards, and wisdom resulting from practice. The Conceptual Framework is a living document reviewed on an on-going basis in order to make improvements based on changes in state requirements or standards, new developments in academic research, and/or emergent themes that represent areas needing improvement as indicated by assessment data collected in accordance with the Unit Assessment System.

This document elaborates the Conceptual Framework, an outline of a system for ensuring the direction and coherence of the Blackburn College Department of Education Unit programs, courses, teaching, scholarship, service, and unit accountability.

## THE VISION AND MISSION OF THE INSTITUTION & UNIT

### Introduction to Blackburn College

Blackburn College, founded in 1837, primarily a residential college, currently enrolls approximately 630 students, one third of which are enrolled in the Department of Education programs. The College has been co-educational since 1864; the enrollment is currently divided between women and men approximately 60/40. Students enroll from all parts of the nation and from several other countries; the majority are from the Midwest region of Illinois. The College seeks a student body from diverse, social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Its relatively small size and democratic tradition permit and encourage wide participation by all through the student-managed work program.

Blackburn is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and is actively committed to helping students develop their own life values and religious perspectives. Blackburn has long enjoyed a reputation for academic quality. Over 90 percent of the faculty has the highest graduate degree, usually the doctorate, in applicable fields of study. All of the full-time members of the education faculty hold a PhD. Students and faculty have the opportunity to work together in small classes, which frequently have no more than 15 students. Class discussion and individual attention are a normal part of a Blackburn education. This personal attention makes it possible for interested students to undertake independent study projects under faculty supervision or to work with a faculty member on a research project.

Through a collaborative effort in 2002, the faculty, staff and students revisited and revised the Blackburn College mission statement:

Blackburn College . . . provides a coeducational student body with a rigorous, distinctive, and affordable liberal arts education that prepares graduates to be responsible, productive citizens. The Blackburn community values critical and independent thinking, leadership development, respect for all individuals, and lifelong learning. The college fosters a sense of service, community, and moral responsibility through its unique student-managed work program, its collegial concept of shared governance, and its faculty/staff mentor relationship with students (College Mission Statement, 2002).

Accompanying the revised mission statement is the articulation by the Blackburn faculty of its understanding of a liberal arts education, which was formally approved by the Faculty Assembly in Spring 2002. It explicates the relationship of the curriculum to the college mission. The Blackburn Faculty Assembly agrees on a concept of liberal arts that “intends to enhance the quality of individual and social life, and promote responsibility for and awareness of the public good. Fundamentally democratic and egalitarian, this core component seeks to develop the whole person, one who exhibits a passion for reflective

engagement with the world through reasoned opinions, intellectual integrity, and fair-mindedness” (Statement on the Liberal Arts, May 2002).

Blackburn is an institution dedicated to service by preparing men and women who will take their places as leaders, educators, and public servants in the greater society. The college’s commitment to support the aspirations of people of humble birth to such roles was strengthened by the 1913 adoption and transformation of the old work-study model employed by colleges of an earlier era. In recent decades, the Work Program has become more than a way to hold down costs. It has become a program that creates a unique community across campus where each individual contributes to its productivity, operation, and success. The Work Program provides an opportunity for students to practice professional dispositions and responsibilities in a safe environment where mistakes and choices are a part of learning.

The Work Program entrusts almost all essential functions of the college’s daily operations to the students. Students prepare all meals, maintain the cleanliness of the campus, maintain the landscape and provide safety; they are also responsible for vital support to the admissions, records, administrative, and academic offices. Today, Blackburn College is unique among the handful of work colleges in the United States, because its Work Program is student-managed. This unique aspect of the Work Program has evolved into a foundation for true egalitarianism, providing a place where each member of the college community contributes to the daily operation, governance, and learning on campus. The college strives for a commitment to service in basic daily tasks, practical leadership, and personal responsibility to create a community dedicated to the proposition that higher education entails much more than seat time in classes or the accumulation of credit hours and acquisition of information. The Education Unit shares these commitments and embraces the belief that the best method for preparing a teacher requires more than attendance in education classes. The best method also requires an academic program that seeks to develop the whole teacher, one who exhibits a passion for reflective engagement with the world through reasoned opinions, intellectual integrity, and fair-mindedness. The teacher preparation programs share the institutions dedication to educate men and women who will take their places as leaders, public servants, and educators in their chosen profession.

### **Introduction to the Blackburn College Work Program**

The Work Program is perhaps the most obvious expression of the college’s commitment to four concepts: learning by direct experience, developing a sense of community, developing students’ professionalism and mentoring students using the theories of constructivism. These concepts set forth common, campus-wide goals and lend direction to the seven teacher preparation programs on campus. The Department of Education strives to incorporate these same four concepts into the education programs. In particular, classroom instruction, field experiences and student teaching clinical semester reflect the constructivist philosophy that mirrors the tenets of learning in realistic settings where knowledge is constructed from experience. The constructivist philosophy that directs the Education Unit mirrors many core aspects of the Work Program philosophy and mission.

The Work Program mission statement includes “providing ‘hands-on’ work, service, and leadership learning opportunities in addition to the classroom” and “providing an added dimension of community involvement, and student character development emphasizing a strong work ethic, professionalism, responsibility, and accountability” (Blackburn Work Program Mission Statement, 2001). The Work Program provides Blackburn students with unique job opportunities; for example, the Community Service Department allows students to work their required employment hours (10 per week) off-campus in the local community in a number of different job opportunities. The community service positions reflect the college’s understanding of work as more than a provision of needed goods and services. Many of the education candidates (13 percent) elect to work in the Community Service Department in positions in the local schools. Candidates work as teaching assistants, tutors, or in other education related positions. The education students who chose to work in local schools did so in addition to the field experience hours required for program completion.

Teacher education candidates benefit from Work Program experiences by learning and practicing such skills, as working with others, refining collegial and respectful relations with co-workers, modeling professional dispositions, cultivating a strong work ethic, practicing responsibility and accountability, and exercising caring leadership. The lessons education candidates learn from participating in the Work Program directly parallel the effective methods prescribed for the preparation of teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Fulton, 2000; Franklin, Laurence, & Welles 1999; Gordon, 2000; Ohnemus, 2000). Along with the many other skills, they learn and practice time management, conflict resolution, and working with others in a diverse community.

Through the liberal arts curriculum, Work Program, and system of shared governance, Blackburn empowers its students to be responsible and reliable members of the college and outside community.

### **Introduction to the Education Unit**

Blackburn College has long been committed to teacher education, having been involved in the preparation of secondary and elementary school teachers since the early 1900s. The Illinois State Teacher Certification Board and the State Superintendent of Education officially recognized the teacher education programs in 1949 (McConagha, 1988). Teacher education at Blackburn College over the years has changed to reflect the growth of professional teacher training in American higher education by embracing traditional methods of preparing teachers as well as changing and updating methods consistent with evolving national trends, research findings and changes in standards.

The emphasis of preparing candidates at Blackburn focuses on candidates acquiring content knowledge, practicing pedagogical skills, demonstrating professional dispositions, mastering specialized education coursework, and participating in field experiences needed for a initial teaching certification in Illinois in Elementary Education (K-9), Secondary Education (9-12), or Special Certificates (K-12). The Department of Education offers seven different certification programs: Elementary Education, Secondary English/Language Arts, Secondary Mathematics, Secondary Science: Biology, Secondary Social Science: History, Physical Education and Visual Arts. Table 1 offers an overview of the credit and field

experience hours required for each program as well as the total number of education candidates (2004/05) whose major was education.

**Table 1**

<b>Introduction To The Department Of Education Programs</b>				
<b>Certification Programs</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Number of Credit Hours Required</b>	<b>Total Number of Education Majors 2004-05</b>	<b>Field Experience Hours Required</b>
Elementary Education	Bachelor of Arts	124	103	160
Secondary English	Bachelor of Arts	122	9	130
Secondary Mathematics	Bachelor of Arts	122	8	130
Secondary Science: Biology	Bachelor of Arts	131	6	130
Secondary Social Science: History	Bachelor of Arts	131	30	130
Physical Education (K-12)	Bachelor of Arts	122	12	170
Visual Arts (K-12)	Bachelor of Arts	124	8	150

The Education Unit welcomes a diversity of cultures, needs and ideas to promote the rigorous learning environment and scholarship required of all candidates. Each of the programs is designed to promote candidates' personal commitment to excellence in teaching that enhances K-12 student learning opportunities. Through this commitment, graduates of Blackburn College's education programs are required to demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skills and professional dispositions to enhance K-12 student learning.

In order to provide educational opportunities for candidates to meet and practice the necessary knowledge and performance standards, education courses are tightly integrated with developmentally sequenced field experiences. The culminating field experience is student teaching, an intensive, one semester off-campus experience in which the candidate earns 12 academic credits.

The mission statement for the Department of Education has evolved over the last several years; however, during the 2004-2005 academic school year the stakeholders, through a collaborative effort, developed updated vision and mission statements used to guide the Education Unit as it engages in the preparation of teacher candidates who are equipped to maximize opportunities for K-12 student learning. Discussions during the academic year were held on a weekly basis to discuss the mission statement and its ultimate impact on all aspects of the Conceptual Framework. The faculty also developed performance goals for all candidates. While working to revise the mission statement, stakeholders considered the college mission, Work Program mission, faculty's perception of liberal arts, current research and theory fundamental to preparing teachers, and practices representing the best in teaching.

**Mission Statement**

As part of a liberal arts college with a student-managed work program which fosters critical thinking, effective communication, responsibility to the larger community, and reflective professional practice, the teacher preparation program in the



Blackburn College Department of Education strives to provide candidates with excellent preparation for becoming productive citizens and effective educators.

**Teacher Education Program Candidate Performance Goals**

Candidates will be committed to engage in reflective practice, to acquire content knowledge, to practice pedagogical skills, and to demonstrate professional dispositions, which will enhance the learning of their future students and will promote positive educational experiences for all students.

## UNIT PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSES, & GOALS

### **The Conceptual Framework Development and Core Philosophical Beliefs**

The Conceptual Framework identifies nine core philosophical beliefs for preparing teachers who can enhance K-12 student learning. These core beliefs inform the daily work carried out by the unit:

1. We will engage in careful recruitment and selection of teacher candidates to ensure they will enter and stay in the teaching profession long-term.
2. We will emphasize the idea that excellence and competence in teaching is the right of every K-12 student.
3. We will provide a comprehensive curriculum within a liberal arts program to guide candidates toward the development of a cohesive knowledge base for effective teaching, critical thinking and decision-making.
4. We will provide a variety of course-related field experiences where candidates have opportunities to interact with excellent models and mentors.
5. We will build cooperative partnerships with schools that are distinct so teacher candidates have the opportunity to work with students who are diverse.
6. We will provide sufficient resources (intellectual, financial and professional) to support the mission of preparing educators to enhance K-12 student learning.
7. We will maintain a data tracking system to assess unit and program efficiency and success, ensuring candidates meet the unit candidate performance goal.
8. We will stress the importance of the candidates' ability to think critically, engaging in reflective practice in their daily routine by evaluating the effects of their choices and actions in order to improve and adjust practices and professional dispositions.
9. We will maintain accountability through a unit assessment system that assures candidate competency, program quality, and institutional responsibility within the context of appropriate assessment principles.

These beliefs are the basis of the department's vision of an effective preparation program so candidates ultimately have the best opportunities for learning. The core beliefs also provide a structure for establishing the commitments that make up the Conceptual Framework. The Conceptual Framework represents an integration of current and classic literature, national and

state standards, professional association standards, the mission statement of the college, department and particular programs, the faculty's beliefs, and the resources of the college.

### *Commitment To Constructivism*

Many theorists believe constructivism is an appropriate philosophy for preparing teachers (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Bacon & Bloom, 1995; Fox, 2001; Lee & Osman, 2003; Starnes, 1999; Sudzina, 1997), and the Education Unit incorporates the principles of constructivism as it develops, assesses, and operates its programs. In a broader perspective, constructivism is an epistemology that links the college and work program philosophy for preparing graduates to the methods applied for preparing teachers.

“Constructivism is an epistemology, a learning or meaning-making theory, that offers an explanation of the nature of knowledge and how humans learn. It maintains that individuals create or construct their own new understands or knowledge through the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the ideas, events, and activities with which they have contact” (Abdal-Haqq, 1998 p. 1). Constructivism refers to the idea that “learners construct knowledge for themselves – each learner individually (and socially) constructs meaning as he or she learns” (Hein, 1991 p. 1). Kamii, Manning and Manning (1991) further develop the concept “individuals do not acquire knowledge by internalizing it directly from the outside but by constructing it from the inside, through interactions with the environment” (p. 18). Hanley (1994) provides another way to define the term, focusing more on an educational description:

“Meaning is intimately connected with experience. Students come into a classroom with their own experience and a cognitive structure based on those experiences. These preconceived structures are valid, invalid or incomplete. The learner will reformulate his or her existing structures only if new information or experiences are connected to knowledge already in memory. Inferences, elaborations, and relationships between old perceptions and new ideas must be personally drawn by the student in order for the new idea to become an integrated, useful part of his or her memory. Memorized facts or information that has not been connected with the learner's prior experiences will be quickly forgotten. In short, the learner must actively construct new information onto his or her existing mental framework for meaningful learning to occur” (p.2)

### **Constructivism as a Programmatic Teaching Model**

While constructivism is by definition a descriptive theory of learning and not a formula for instruction, research on effective classroom practice provides insights into numerous design principles necessary when developing a constructivist teacher preparation program (Barman, 1997; Bonnstetter, 1994; Hammrich, 1998; Plourde & Alawlye, 2003; Richardson, 1997). Based on this research, the unit incorporates these tenets:

- Seek out and use student questions and ideas to guide lessons and instructional units.
- Encourage students to initiate ideas.
- Promote student leadership, collaboration, seeking of information and taking action as a result of the learning process.
- Use the thinking, the experience, and the interests of students to drive lessons.
- Encourage the use of alternative sources of information.
- Encourage students to test their own ideas, even predicting and speculating on outcomes.
- Use cooperative learning strategies that emphasize collaboration, respect of individuals, and encourage the division of labor.
- Provide adequate time for student to reflect and analyze information.
- Encourage the collection of real evidence to support ideas and the reformation of ideas in light of new evidence or experiences (Plourde & Alawlye, 2003).

This list of pedagogical principles forms the foundation of the constructivist teacher preparation model, and the department incorporates these tenets through modeling, teaching, communication, and providing opportunities through practical experiences (Plourde & Alawlye, 2003).

## *Commitment to Candidates as Reflective Practitioners*

Because reflection is a vital tool for navigating life in today's classroom the Education Unit mission statement incorporates reflective practice as a standard within the process of preparing teachers.

John Dewey introduced the concept "reflective thought" in 1910 in "How We Think", a work designed for teachers. Dewey's basic assumption was that learning improves to the degree that it arises out of the process of reflection. As time went on, "definitions concerning reflective thought proliferated, spawning a host of synonyms, such as "critical thinking," "problem solving," and "action research" (Shermis, 1999 p. 86).

Educators have become familiar with the concept of reflective practice through Schon's (1983, 1988, 1991) writings about reflective practitioners. Schon's work has an historical foundation in a tradition of learning supported by Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, who each advocated that learning is dependent upon the integration of experience with reflection and of theory with practice (Imel, 1992). In reflective practice, reflection is the essential part of the learning process because it results in making sense of or extracting meaning from the experience (Osterman, 1990).

Schon (1996) recommended reflective practice as a way for beginners in a discipline to recognize agreement between their own individual practices and those of successful practitioners. As defined by Schon, reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline.

A review of the literature provides a basis for a theoretical model that gives direction to preparing candidates to become reflective practitioners (Archambault, 1964; Amulya, 2003; Brookfield, 1995; Check, 2003; Dewey, 1964; Imel, 1992; Kottkamp, 1990; Osterman, 1990; Peters, 1991; Ross, 1989; Schon, 1983, 1987, 1991; Shermis, 1999). The culmination of researchers' and scholars' works informed the definition the unit utilizes when designing course materials and assessing candidates' effective use of the tenets of reflective practice.

For Blackburn's teacher education unit, reflective practice means looking at the wider contexts that affect preservice candidates. This requires candidates to assume the perspective of an external observer in order to identify the assumptions and feelings underlying their practice (Kottkamp, 1990; Osterman, 1990; Peters 1991) and then to speculate about the practices of others to gain new perspectives of the dilemmas and contradictions inherent in educational situations. The wider context of reflective practice also requires Blackburn candidates to consider the perceptions of their students and to utilize theoretical and research literature to increase the probability of taking informed action when situations are complex, unique, and uncertain (Ross, 1989). The unit believes that becoming a reflective practitioner means perpetually growing and expanding, opening up to a great

range of possible choices and responses to classroom situations. Derived from Osterman's work the unit faculty further delineates reflective practice for candidates through four distinct lenses: perceptions of the self, perceptions of their students, perceptions and interactions with colleagues, and perceptions of the professional literature.

Throughout the process of preparation, each program offers numerous opportunities for candidates to learn and practice skills. Specifically, field experiences and clinical practices provide opportunities that support learning from experience. Blackburn candidates can gain information without reflective practice to a limited degree; they can hypothesize and draw conclusions from the "data" about their experiences. However, it is reflective practice that provides the infrastructures of method and process for building knowledge from practice, allowing candidate learning to be a deliberate and conscious progression.

Reflective practice should be performed in the midst of an activity or as an activity in itself. It should be practiced every day or at a specific time of day, and anytime in-between. Reflection also varies in intensity – from simple observation to deep examination (Amulya, 2003). Using the four different lenses (Osterman, 1990) prescribed for the unit provides candidates with opportunities to examine their patterns of thinking and acting in the course of exploring the perceptions of looking within oneself, analyzing the perceptions of one's students and peers and investigating professional development literature. The use of the lenses is integrated into all aspects of discussion and assignments within courses and field experiences.

### ***Reflective Practice Perception Lenses***

#### **Perception of Self**

Using this lens while engaging in reflective practice helps create a habit, or routine around examining one's own performance. Reflecting through this lens allows Blackburn candidates to bring about a high level of awareness of their own thoughts and actions in order to find patterns of thinking across different situations to allow themselves to realign daily activities, to have deeper value, to develop shared thinking and to find patterns in behaviors. The following statements encourage candidates to focus on the Perception of Self Lens when engaged in reflective practice:

- Examine assessment data to analyze levels of student learning and comprehension as an indicator of one's own effectiveness as an instructor.
- Recognize educational dilemmas and respond by recognizing both similarities in other situations and the unique patterns of the particular situation.
- Experiment with personal responses to educational problems to explore various solutions.
- Examine self-perception of one's own ability to succeed at a certain task.
- Explore the personal story of one's teaching experiences.
- Investigate statements about the classroom instructional environment.
- Create change-statements that communicate the intention to alter existing and future practices.
- Assess educational outcomes.

- Examine one's level of knowledge and the social circumstances of students while developing curriculum or teaching lessons.
- Assess assumptions (What is one's intention? What advice is one giving self in the situation? How does one interpret what is happening?) (Osterman, 1990)

### **Perception of Students**

Using this lens while engaging in reflective practice help candidates bring forth an understanding of their abilities, background, and self-perspective of their students. This lens provides an awareness of the “larger context” of the classroom and encourages instruction that is informed by cultural, social, gender, and historical origins of the students. It helps teacher candidates understand how their students perceive what is happening as they address the process and content of learning. This lens also helps candidates interpret the diverse meanings students read into the candidates’ words and actions as they teach (Ross, 1989). Practicing reflection while using this directional lens allows candidates to think about how their students are experiencing the lesson being taught. The following statements help candidates to focus on the Perception of Student Lens when engaged in reflective practice:

- Evaluate the variables that affect learning. (How will students find this learning experience meaningful? Based on Bloom’s taxonomy, describe what was accomplished.)
- Explore beliefs about learner characteristics. (How does this lesson provide students with opportunities to make connections to real world issues and/or relate to themselves?)
- Analyze student assessment data to determine effectiveness of content and delivery of instruction to ensure student learning.
- Develop statements that pose hypotheses, which serve to test assumptions about student learning, reactions, and behaviors. (Osterman, 1990)

### **Perception of Colleagues**

Using this lens while engaging in reflective practice supports a concept of reflection as a collective practice. This reflective lens, therefore, requires candidates to make their thinking patterns public. Candidates must be open to dialogue with course faculty and field experience and clinical cooperating teachers. While candidates engage in reflective conversations, they can check others’ ideas, responses, assumptions, and justifications against their own. Department faculty and cooperating school personnel who observe candidate performance and then engage in reflective conversations help candidates notice aspects of their practice of which they may not be aware. The following statements help candidates to focus using the Perception of Colleagues Lens when engaged in reflective practice:

- Respond with courage and openness when examining evaluation data provided by a peer or mentor so reflection and improvement related to the performance and students’ learning follows.
- Pose questions to peers, faculty, and/or K-12 school practitioners.
- Examine data from student outcomes (Osterman, 1990).

- Self-monitor one's own learning by defining personal learning goals and checking the progress of achieving them.

### **Perception of Theoretical & Research Literature**

Using this lens while engaging in reflective practice helps candidates to illuminate multiple interpretations of familiar situations. Critical reading of professional literature helps name and understand experiences by approaching the occurrences from multiple points of view, or theories while providing resources for an underlying rationale and/or alternative practices that may be unfamiliar. The following statements help candidates to focus using the Perception of Theoretical & Research Literature Lens when engaged in reflective practice:

- Explore concepts that refer to knowledge/skills learned in education courses.
- Examine ideas that relate to prominent theoretical perspectives.
- Link research and/or testing particular theories to solve specific dilemmas.
- Engage in Action Research. (Osterman, 1990)



### *Commitment To Candidate Proficiencies of Knowledge And Skills*

The unit embraces the belief articulated in the Preamble of the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (2002): “the standards and programmatic opportunities should enable teachers to support the intellectual, social, emotional, ethical, and physical development of students, to respond with flexibility and professional judgment to students’ different needs; and to actively engage students in their own learning so that they can use and generate knowledge in effective and powerful ways” (p. 1). The Blackburn teacher preparation unit focuses on “the changing role of the teacher, from instructor to learning guide and coach” (p. 1).

Candidate content knowledge and pedagogy skills are assessed and refined through the transition points of the Unit Assessment System (see Table 4: Unit Assessment System Transition Points). Content knowledge is specifically measured in content area designations and certification courses as well as the Illinois State Content/Subject Area exam. Pedagogical skills are practiced and measured in field experiences in all methods courses. Field experiences provide opportunities to not only observe K-12 teachers as they model content knowledge and pedagogical skills but also to apply knowledge and skills in an environment that allows for constructive feedback and reflection.

## *Commitment To Candidate Professional Dispositions*

The Education Unit views the assessment of professional dispositions as an evaluation of the demonstrative dimension of the candidate, the inner motivations or desires that influence behavior and actions (Stiggins, 2005). The focus is not on candidates' inner perceptions; the focus is on observable professional behavior and performance of instruction and teaching that predispose candidates to effective teaching and appropriate professional behavior. Richart (2002) believes, "Dispositions concern not only what we can do, our abilities, but what we are actually likely to do, addressing the gap we often notice between our abilities and our actions" (p.18). The definition of "disposition" that guides the unit is found in the NCATE (2003) standards guide glossary, which states,

The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. (p. 53).

The purpose of assessing professional dispositions throughout candidates' preparation is to bring those affective dimensions (attitudes and beliefs of teaching and working, learning, communication, attitude, and other professional dimensions related to education and life) into the candidates' consciousness. The unit evaluates for effect with the objective to ensure dispositions are not just cosmetic or short-lived but ingrained ways of behavior. Assessing professional dispositions and making them a focus throughout the five transition points of the teacher preparation Unit Assessment System allows time for candidates to reflect on their dispositional actions and possibly change what is within their power to change: themselves.

It is the department's intention to strengthen certain dispositions in each candidate's repertoire. The unit views the preparation of teachers as a developmental process that helps candidates move to a closer approximation of the ideal teacher (Oja, 1990). Teacher preparation sequencing requires progressively more sophisticated ways of thinking as well as a more highly honed sense of one's own values, beliefs and attitudes. It is understood, however, that in order to change dispositionally, candidates must first want to change; therefore, the unit's goal is to help candidates become conscious of the dispositions that influence their thoughts and actions as well as to provide perception changing educational opportunity. (Freeman, 2004).

It is important for candidates to become competent, effective educators; however, as they enter the classroom for the first time, they should believe in and embrace the spirit of what they have learned and why they have learned it. It is possible for candidates to have all the necessary skills but lack the impetus for or habit of using them. Similarly, knowledge can be acquired without having the predilection to use it. The department will fall short of its goal to develop excellent teachers if it does not require and ensure candidates have the

dispositions needed for creating positive learning environments that enhance student achievement.

The unit recognizes the challenge presented in assessing professional dispositions. Candidates' dispositions towards education vary both in direction (from positive to neutral to negative) and intensity (from very strong to moderate to very weak) (Stiggins, 2005). The department's assessment task is to determine both direction and intensity. The unit, therefore, has constructed an evaluation instrument that works to meet this challenge and regularly conducts rigorous evaluation of candidates' professional dispositions. Blackburn's Professional Disposition Assessment Instrument evaluates four subcategories of dispositions: Altruism, Professionalism, Communication, and Attitude, with 15 different terms falling under the subcategories. Although dispositions are formally evaluated through the Unit Assessment System at the strategic transition points, all faculty have the opportunity to provide feedback to candidates via the Professional Dispositions Feedback Form.

## *Commitment To Diversity*

The United States is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse nations in the world. Because of this, citizens need to understand and respect one another, both as individuals and as members of culturally distinct groups. To this end, education that is multicultural (Grant & Sleeter, 1989), “multicultural education,” has received considerable attention (Oliver, & Howley, 1992). Gorski, (2005) believes that the basis of multicultural education can be effectively expressed by one question: “Does every student who walks into a school or classroom have an opportunity to achieve to her or his fullest, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, first language, (dis)ability, national origin, or any other personal, social, or political identifier” (p.13). In the glossary of the NCATE Professional Standards Book (2002), the term multicultural education is not defined, however, the concept multicultural perspective is defined as an understanding of the social, political, economic, academic, and historical constructs of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area.

These definitions help clarify the multiple realities that exist within the contexts of school and society, and the demands multiple realities place upon teachers and guide teacher preparation at Blackburn College. First, the definitions guide educational opportunities so candidates learn to communicate and interact with people of different cultural backgrounds (Hernandez, 1989). In this sense, multicultural education is a process through which our candidates develop ways of perceiving, evaluating, and behaving within cultural systems different from their own (Gibson, 1984). Second, the definitions guide course content that requires “consideration of those forces that exert a powerful influence on schooling, directly and indirectly, including societal and school factors affecting the priorities and directions of education nationwide and at the state and local levels” (Hernandez, 1989 p. 5).

The Education Unit is committed to preparing teachers who understand and embrace Gorski’s vision of multicultural education as well as NCATE’s definition of multicultural perspective. The unit is devoted to the idea of preparing candidates who are committed to the principles of equity and social justice and who can provide evidence of such in their practices and in their relationships with others and the community.

The department expects teacher candidates to demonstrate both a knowledge base related to multicultural understanding, and the pedagogical skills and professional dispositions that enable them to create appropriate learning environments where all students experience equal opportunity and success. Outside of candidates’ required course (ED 200 Diversity in Teacher Education), evidence of the unit’s commitment to candidates’ multicultural learning is found in all education courses, field experiences, the student teaching semester, and the Unit Assessment System. Faculty and others on campus assess candidates’ knowledge and skills related to diversity using the Dispositions Assessment Instrument, evaluating

reflective practice assignments, assessing practical field experiences, evaluating activities and assignments, and appraising work program professional interactions.

The field and student teaching experiences are designed to help candidates understand the influence of culture on education and acquire the ability to develop meaningful learning experiences for all students (NCATE, 2003). Candidates have opportunities to learn about exceptionalities and inclusion as well as gender differences and how these differences impact learning (NCATE, 2003).

All teaching should be multicultural, and all classrooms should be models of equity and social justice. In order to accomplish this, Blackburn teacher candidates must believe, as the unit does, in a concept of multicultural education (Gollnick & Chinn, 2004), which for Blackburn is based on the following fundamental beliefs and assumptions:

- Cultural differences have strength and value.
- All students are placed at the center of the teaching and learning process.
- Schools should be models for the protection of human rights and respect for cultural differences.
- Social justice and equality for all people should be of paramount importance in the design and delivery of curricula.
- All students can learn.
- Attitudes and values necessary for the continuation of a democratic society can be promoted in schools.
- Schooling can provide the knowledge, dispositions, and skills for the redistribution of power and income among diverse groups.
- Educators working with families and communities can create an environment that is supportive and respectful of multiculturalism.

During the 2004/2005 academic year, the College developed new multicultural education learning objectives to include within the general education program requirements. All candidates completing the general education sequence will be evaluated on their ability to understand and demonstrate mastery of the general education multicultural learning objectives:

1. Explain the way groups, societies, and cultures address human needs and concerns.

Students should be able to identify ways that different groups meet their needs in different ways. For example, in some cultures, it is customary for extended families to live within a small geographic area and depend on one another, while for other cultures the nuclear family is the basic unit of society.

2. Describe awareness of cultural unity and diversity.

Students should be able to identify areas of cultural unity and diversity within their own cultures. For example, the freedom to worship as we choose provides

a sense of cultural unity in the United States, but citizens' views differ widely in other areas, such as the morality of war

3. Identify values and attitudes that pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding.

Student should understand that difference in values lead to misunderstanding; for example, U.S. society is economically based on the ownership of land, whereas the native American culture does not believe that land can be owned, thus creating a major source of conflict

4. Understand another culture in order to predict how information and experiences will be interpreted by people from that culture.

Students should understand that differences in experiences lead to misunderstanding. For example, many cultures do not accept women as equal to men. If the U.S. appointed a female ambassador to such a country, the government of the country would likely consider the appointment an insult.

5. Apply the mode of inquiry in a student's discipline to the study of multiculturalism

Students should be able to see how chosen fields of study might approach the understanding of another culture. For example, a biologist might form and test hypotheses, while an English major would likely look for common themes in the literature of a different culture.

6. Propose solutions to persistent human problems that demonstrate understanding of underlying cultural values and attitudes.

Students should learn to take cultural values into account when proposing solutions to problems. To suggest that an agrarian culture solve housing problems by building high rises would indicate a lack of understanding of cultural attitudes, for example.

The general education multicultural education component complements the Education Unit requirements, further strengthening the commitment to prepare teachers who understand and embrace the college and Education Unit commitment to multicultural awareness.

The Unit is dedicated to enhancing the diversity of the faculty, candidates, field experiences, and programs. The Unit focuses on recruiting and retaining candidates who are diverse as well as recruiting, hiring, and retaining diverse faculty.

Blackburn serves a largely Caucasian, central Illinois population, although the college strives to serve the larger causes of diversity critical to a complete education in the modern world. The small size of the community in which the Blackburn campus lies is also a factor in the students, faculty, and staff who can be effectively recruited and retained by the college. Students and professionals who prefer the resources available in larger urban areas

are often reluctant to relocate to a small, rural community that has little racial or ethnic diversity. The college and Education Unit will continue in its efforts to increase the diversity of its faculty staff, and students to meet NCATE standard four.

The college strategic plan outlines a commitment to improve the number of minority students entering and graduating over the next ten years. Specifically, the plan includes minority recruitment efforts through the Office of Admissions and additional resources for programming to improve minority student retention to graduation.

The college also has a goal that 85% of alums will report that their appreciation for human diversity was enhanced by the Blackburn education experience. Data for the three most recent years (2002-03, 2003-04), from alumni surveys reflect to some degree the achievement of the college regarding student respect for others. Over 80% of recent alums surveyed (2003, 2004) reported that the college goal helped them to learn to respect others and appreciate human diversity.

The college does have mission-specific indicators that shape the Education Unit's practice. Particularly, that a diverse college community supports and is supported by an emphasis within the college mission emphasizing the mutuality of community and respect for others.

All field experiences, education coursework, professional dispositions, and the liberal arts education curriculum support the preparation of teachers who can apply their multicultural knowledge in schools where every student in the classroom has the opportunity to achieve to her or his fullest potential regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, first language, (dis)ability, national origin, or any other personal, social, or political identifier (Gorski, 2005).

## Commitment To Technology

Becoming an excellent teacher means, in part, being able to provide technology-supported learning opportunities to enhance K-12 student learning. Candidates must be prepared to empower their students with the advantages technology can bring. Teachers must be equipped with technological resources and skills to effectively teach the necessary content while incorporating technology concepts and skills (ISTE, 2002).

As access to technology in schools and classrooms continues to increase, the unit also continues to increase the emphasis placed on preparing educators to integrate technology. There is a substantial body of research focused on teachers' use of computer-based technology (Brownell & Brownell, 1991; Garmon, 2003; Harrington, 1993). Across this body of research, what is meant by "technology use" for educators varies widely. Researchers describe it specifically related to delivering instruction (Alessi, & Trollip, 1991; Ravitz, Becker, & Wong, 2000; Scheidet, 2003), to requiring K-12 students to use technology to facilitate learning (Becker, 1994; Kim, Williams, & Dattilo, 2002), to preparing lessons (Bebell, Russell, & O'Dwyer, 2003; Pope & Golub, 2000; Schrum, 2003), to communicating via e-mail (Russell, Bebell, O'Dwyer, & O'Connor, 2003; Lerman, 1998; Papert, 1996), or to assisting students while accommodating special needs (Geoffrey, 1990; Hudson, & Thomas, 2003; Kumar, Ramasamy, Stefanich, 2001). With the many different ways scholars define technology use, the Education Unit considers it important to define its vision and purpose for preparing educators with regard to technology.

Using Bebell, Russell, and O'Dwyer's (2003) research, the department finds a definition of technology use for educators, which informs the curricula and the approach to preparation. The researchers outline several distinct factors or categories of teacher technology use. Based on their research, the department's purpose for preparing teachers to use technology is delineated by four methods:

1. Integration into the curriculum and instruction
2. Communication with others and improved productivity
3. Guidance of K-12 students in using technology for specific instructional purposes
4. Assisting students in accommodating their special needs.

With such a wide variety of technology applications available, Blackburn emphasizes teacher preparation on types of uses rather than just on familiarizing candidates with technology in general (Russell, Bebell, O'Conner, O'Dwyer, 2003). Importance is also placed on developing strong beliefs about the positive impacts of technology use in classrooms related to student learning (Christensen, 2002).

In his book, *Integrating Educational Technology into Teaching*, Roblyer (2003) describes a five-part technology-integration model for preparing candidates. The model assumes that



candidates have considerable knowledge about current technology applications in their content areas as well as skills using various technology resources. This assumption leads the Unit to use the Computer Operations Competency Checklist as a prerequisite that requires each candidate to have considerable knowledge and skills about current technology applications. Candidates must complete the competencies and the checklist to register for and take the ED410, Integration of Technology into Education Curricula. When candidates are prepared with the operational knowledge and skills required within the checklist they are then able to analyze instructional situations to ensure technology is used in the classroom appropriately and effectively to enhance student learning. Roblyer's (2003) five-part technology integration planning model for preparing teachers further informs the department's foundational ideal for viewing technology preparation (p.39).

**Table 2**

<b>A Planning Model for the Integration of Technology</b>	
<p><b>Phase One</b> Determining the “Relative Advantage” – Why use Technology?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers must be able to recognize the difference between a technology solution that makes a difference and one that is an inessential add-on, between one that improves the quality of the teaching and learning experience and one that is simply innovative.</li> <li>• Matching needs with technology-based strategies: In order to make connections in specific content areas, teachers must be well acquainted with current technology resources and know how each can enhance teaching and learning. When they can do this, they begin to recognize places in their curriculum where the use of technology can create a relative advantage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase Two</b> Planning Assessments – What Are Appropriate Assessment Strategies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the skill being learned and the student performance the teacher wants to measure?</li> <li>• What is the best way to assess learning?</li> <li>• Is a more “authentic” performance assessment needed?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase Three</b> Planning Instruction – What Are Appropriate Technology Integration Strategies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers must address several interrelated concerns during their systematic instructional planning process including: how to handle curriculum topics, instructional grouping decisions, provisions for equity, and sequencing plans.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase Four</b> Logistics – How Do I Prepare the Classroom Environment and Instructional Materials for Technology Integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideally, teachers would identify needed resources after deciding on learning sequence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Part Five</b> Evaluating and Revising Technology Integration Strategies – How Do I Know It's Working?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making improvements in teaching over time requires teachers to adopt a systematic approach to observing and reflecting on what worked and what didn't, and how it can be improved.</li> </ul>

Understanding the philosophy for embedding technology within the education program guides the department's goals for technology instruction and helps to identify the skills and resources needed to accomplish these goals. Using Roblyer, Edwards, and Havriluk's (1997) rationale for using technology in education provides meaning and direction to the department's goals for technology instruction. Technology can be used in education to:

1. Motivate
  - a. Gaining learner attention
  - b. Engaging the learner through production work
  - c. Increasing perceptions of control
  
2. Provide Unique Instructional Capabilities
  - a. Linking learners to information sources
  - b. Helping learner visualize problems and solutions
  - c. Tracking learner progress
  - d. Linking learners to learning tools
  
3. Support New Instructional Approaches
  - a. Cooperative learning
  - b. Shared intelligence
  
4. Increase Teacher Productivity
  - a. Freeing time to work with students by helping with production and record keeping tasks
  - b. Providing more accurate information quickly
  - c. Allowing teachers to produce better-looking more “student-friendly” materials more quickly (p. 29)

Incorporating the research above and state and national standards the Department of Education has developed a commitment to technology that includes technology performance objectives for all candidates. The performance objectives were designed mutually with stakeholders, while considering an extensive review of professional literature (International Society for Technology in Education, 1999; National Center for Education Statistics, 1999; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1997; Willis & Mehlinger, 1996, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, Illinois State Board of Education Core Technology Standards). A candidate must meet and/or exceed the following technology performance objectives:

1. Candidates will be able to use and maintain a multimedia computer system to run software and perform presentations; to access, generate and manipulate data; and to publish reports.
  
2. Candidates will be able to use technology to enhance learning and productivity by designing lessons that integrate a variety of software, applications and technology-based learning tools.
  
3. Candidates will be able to use advanced features of productivity tools and software (word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets, electronic presentation) to design and develop professional teaching/learning tools.

4. Candidates will be able to use technology-based information resources to access and share information and to research, evaluate, and integrate emerging learning technologies into classroom instruction.
5. Candidates will demonstrate an awareness of learning resources, adaptive devices and productivity tools available for students with special needs.
6. Candidates will demonstrate an awareness of using technology to increase productivity, specifically learning production and record keeping tasks, and day-to-day management tools.
7. Candidates will promote and demonstrate equitable, ethical and legal use of computer/technology resources.

### **Technology Evaluation Plan**

Within the Unit Assessment System, a structure is in place that monitors and evaluates the unit's ability to provide experiences and an environment that supports candidates as they learn about the integration of technology into teaching and learning. The Department of Education Faculty and Internal Advisory Committee will assess the unit's ability to:

1. Integrate state and national technology standards.
2. Accomplish the goals set for technology.
3. Carry out the technology activities.
4. Review and update the inventory of the equipment and software.
5. Assess candidates' ability, skills, and the degree to which they are able to integrate technology into their own classroom.

The unit is committed to providing learning experiences that enable candidates to develop meaningful technology skills and competencies more importantly, the unit is committed to the belief that educational technology is more than just acquired skills and/or a tool for production but a catalyst for enhancing learning (Algozzine, Bateman, Flowers, Gretes, Hughes & Lambert, 1999). In other words, the unit approaches the preparation of teaching technology to candidates in a manner that has moved away from the traditional view that focuses on "teaching technology" and instead focuses on "teaching with technology". Rather than introducing technology as an available yet peripheral tool, the unit emphasizes technology as an integral tool with diverse uses and inherent potential to enhance teaching and learning beyond what traditional methods allow (Babel et al, 2003).

## CANDIDATE PROFICIENCIES ALIGNED WITH THE EXPECTATIONS IN PROFESSIONAL, STATE, & INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

### *Candidate Proficiencies & Expectations Within Field Experiences and Clinical Practice*

Field experiences and the student teaching clinical are integral program components for the preparation of teacher candidates and are designed and sequenced to help candidates develop the competence necessary to begin careers as effective teachers (NCATE, 2003). To link with the reality of practice for candidates in the preparation program, the unit has designed each of the program's curricula to include diverse field experiences. Candidates have the opportunity to interact with teachers and students as well as with administration and staff in K-12 schools. These field opportunities are designed to allow candidates the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to real life teaching situations. The early experiences are also structured to allow candidates the opportunity for explore the reality of working in schools and, consequently, their future occupational choice. The purpose of field experiences is to provide candidates with a link to the reality of practice where they can understand the nature of teaching by observing and interacting with cooperating teachers to develop the competence and confidence necessary to begin careers as teachers.

#### **Sites for Field Experiences**

Approximately 50 schools across the mid region of Illinois (mainly in Macoupin, Greene, Montgomery, and Sangamon counties) accommodate candidates for field experiences. The sites chosen have a range of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, various socio-economic levels, and differing (dis)abilities. The Director of Teacher Education works with individual faculty members, adjunct faculty, superintendents, school principals, and classroom teachers to place candidates in mutually agreed upon experience sites. Candidates are purposefully placed with teachers and/or encounters based on the specific course(s) for which the field experience hours are required. The college and schools share expertise to support candidates' learning and practice and partner to determine specific placements of different candidates. In each program, the field experience hours required are a minimum of 130 hours; however, some programs require more hours depending on the required number of courses with field experience hours needed for program completion.

**Table 3**

Course-Embedded Field Experience Chart 2005-06									
Course	Field Exp. Hrs.	Required To be Completed By:	Art Sec Ed	Sci-Bio Sec Ed	El Ed	Eng Sec Ed	SS-His Sec Ed	Math Sec Ed	PE
ED100 Introduction to Teacher Education (3 Hrs.)	35	All	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
ED200 Diversity in Teacher Education (3 Hrs.)	20	All	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
ED205 Curriculum, Philosophy, and Instructional Methods of Teaching in the Middle School (3 Hrs.)	20	All El Ed Optional for Secondary			20				
ED220 Educating Children with Exceptional Needs (3 Hrs.)	20	All	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
ED232 Children's Literature (3 Hrs.)	0	El Ed			0				
ED300 Internship (1-12 Hrs.)	As needed								
ED240 Educational Psychology: Human Development and Learning (3 Hrs.)	10	All	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
ED250 Visual Arts Integration in Elementary Education	0	El Ed			0				
ED260 Drama and Music Integration in Elementary Education	0	El Ed			0				
ED270 Health and Physical Development Integration in Elementary Education	0	El Ed			0				
ED315 Instructional Strategies and Methods in Secondary Teacher Education (3 Hrs.)		All Secondary (Except PE)							
ED316 Secondary School Methods in English (2 Hrs.)	60	English				60			
ED318 Secondary School Methods in Science (2 Hrs.)	60	Science-Bio		60					
ED320 Classroom Management (3 Hrs.)	10	All	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
ED322 Physical Education Methods for Elementary School (3 Hrs.)	20	Physical Ed							20
ED323 Physical Education Methods for Secondary School (3 Hrs.)	20	Physical Ed							20
ED324 Secondary School Methods in Social Sciences (2 Hrs.)	60	SS-History					60		
ED326 Secondary School Methods in Art (2 Hrs.)	60	Visual Arts	60						
ED328 Secondary School Methods in Mathematics (2 Hrs.)	60	Math						60	
ED350 Elementary School Methods in Reading/Language Arts (3 Hrs.)	0	El Ed			0				
ED353 Elementary School Methods in Science (3 Hrs.)	10	El Ed			10				
ED354 Elementary School Methods in Social Sciences (3 Hrs.)	10	El Ed			10				
ED355 Elementary School Methods in Mathematics (3 credits)	10	El Ed			10				

ED358 Elementary School Methods for Secondary Art Education (2 Hrs.)	20	Visual Arts	20						
ED360 Elementary School Practicum in Adv. Reading and Language Arts (3 Hrs.)	35	El Ed			35				
ED370 Assessment in Teacher Education (3 Hrs.)	0	All							
ED400 American Teacher Education (3 Hrs.)	0	All							
ED410 Integrating Technology in Education Curricula (3 Hrs.)	0	All							
ED460 Interventions in Teacher Education (1-12 credits)	As Needed								
ED490 Special Topics (1-3 Hrs.)	As Needed								
ED491 Clinical Seminar (3 Hrs.) A. Elementary B. Secondary	0	All							
ED492 Clinical Experience (12 Hrs.) A. Elementary B. Secondary	All Day	All							
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>135</b>

### **Student Teaching Clinical Practice**

The culminating field experience within all seven of the education programs is the semester long Student Teaching Clinical Experience. Student Teaching provides candidates with opportunities for full immersion in the learning community so they are able to demonstrate proficiencies in the professional role of teaching (NCATE, 2003). Under the supervision of a Cooperating Teacher(s) and College supervisor, the student teacher assumes the responsibility of a full-time classroom teacher. The Student Teaching Experience includes requirements for candidates to:

1. Demonstrate content knowledge, pedagogy skills and professional dispositions
2. Show evidence of professional knowledge aligned with state and professional standards
3. Show the ability to positively impact all students' learning
4. Reveal skills for working collaboratively with others
5. Exhibit success in a setting at the grade level and subject for which they are preparing

The student teaching experience is based upon guidelines and longstanding relationships between the unit and K-12 schools. The schools and the Education Unit have mutually agreed upon guidelines and continually monitor effectiveness. A systematic data collection process exists to support improvement based on analysis and consultation. The guidelines as set forth in the Student Teaching Manual address issues such as placement procedures, cooperating teacher qualifications, rights and responsibilities of all parties, the structure of the experience, and the nature of evaluation (NCATE, 1996).

## **Student Teaching Clinical Practice Candidate Objectives**

The Student Teaching Clinical provides teacher candidates with an intensive and authentic opportunity to:

1. Write and implement their own teaching plans and units and reflect on their effectiveness and impact on student learning.
2. Experiment with a variety of teaching strategies and reflect on the outcomes, particularly as they relate to the development of a curriculum in the teacher candidates' certification designation.
3. Apply and reflect on their content, professional, and pedagogical knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions.
4. Work with and appreciate the needs and contributions of students of differing abilities, socioeconomic levels, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds, while also understanding how these factors affect students' development and learning.
5. Consider and determine students' learning styles and identify their crucial learning goals.
6. Meet regularly for focused, intensive sessions with cooperating teacher(s) to review performance and discuss improvement goals.
7. Examine materials and resources, which support effective teaching in the K-12 school.
8. Observe cooperating and other classroom teachers and allow ample opportunity to discuss the observations with the individuals involved.
9. Learn about the work of other teachers, administration and staff; participate in meetings, conferences, and professional development and school improvement sessions.
10. Participate in extra-curricular activities and other school functions to gain an understanding of the full scope of a school's operation and mission.
11. Meet formally once a week in the seminar course (ED491) with other teacher candidates to engage in reflection, learning, collegiality and create a support network.
12. Reflect on performance and proficiency as professional teacher.

## **Assessment Goals for Student Teaching Clinical Practice**

The evaluation system for the Student Teaching Experience will:

1. Provide clear expectations of the roles of teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, college supervisors and all stakeholders.
2. Provide an opportunity to evaluate teacher candidates' ability to enhance and assess all student learning.
3. Provide time for the teacher candidate, cooperating teacher, and college supervisor to set goals collaboratively that fit within the overall expectation for the Student Teaching Experience.
4. Provide for frequent observations and feedback by cooperating teachers and the college supervisor so candidates can reflect on feedback and improve on their practice.
5. Provide evaluations of teacher candidates that are aligned with state, professional and institutional standards.
6. Utilize assessment instruments that are fair, accurate, and consistent and free from bias (NCTE, 1996; NCATE 2002).

The student teaching experience for the teacher candidate is divided into four distinct phases (Observation and Participation, Transitioning to Planning and Teaching, Independent Teaching, and Closure and Transitioning Out). These four phases allow gradual expansion of the teacher candidate's responsibilities while allowing a positive experience in the growth and development necessary to achieve high levels of instructional effectiveness.

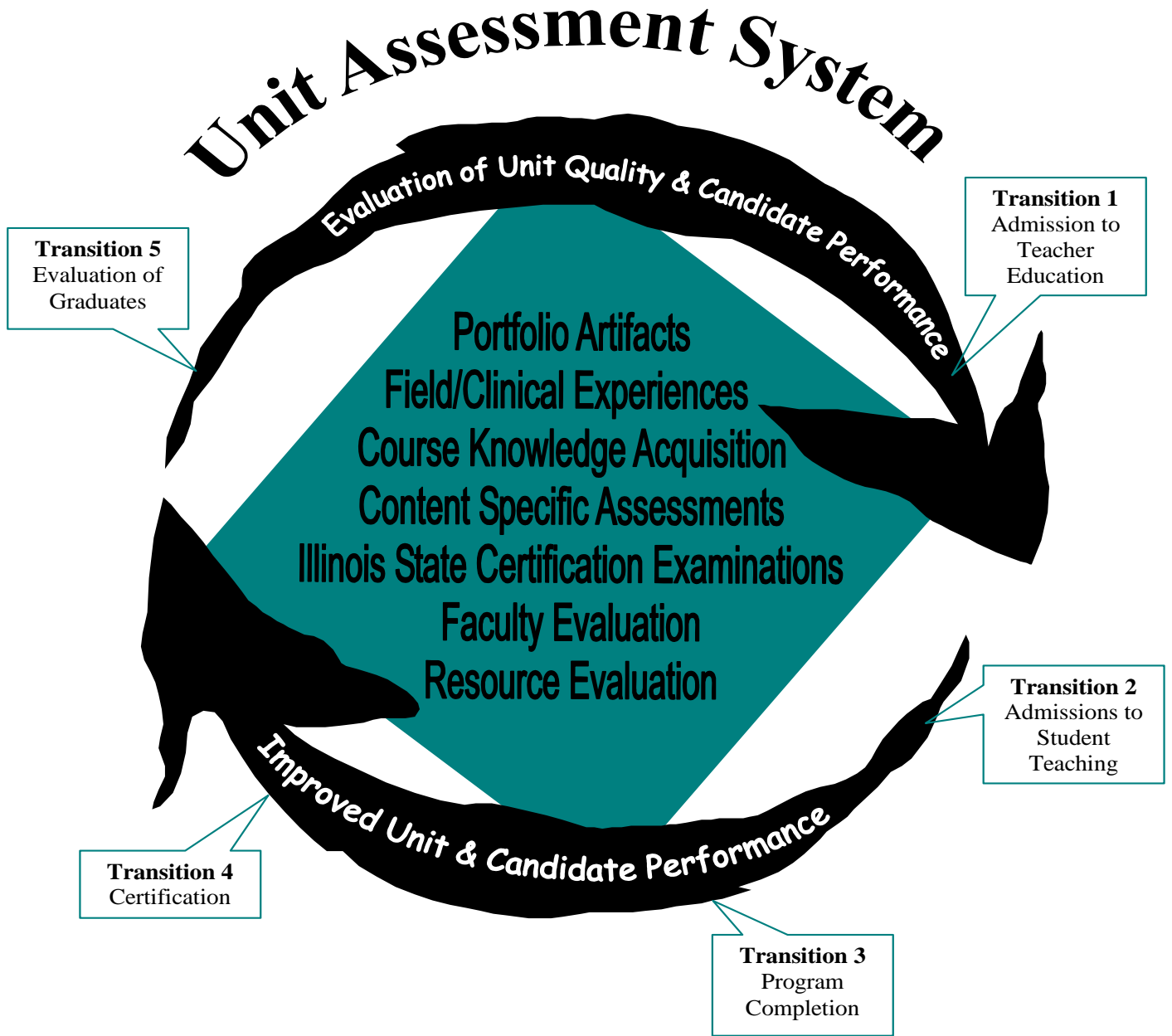
Through the span of the semester, the college supervisor conducts an average of five formal observations. Faculty from the content certification areas also evaluate candidates a minimum of one time during the clinical experience. The observations are conducted in a three-stage technical/didactic model called the supervision plan, pioneered by Acheson and Gall (1998). The three stages are: Stage One: The Pre-Observation Conference, Stage Two: The Observation, Stage Three: The Feedback Conference.



## UNIT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM & CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

### *Assessment System And Unit Evaluation*

The Education Unit is responsible for ensuring that its programs and graduates are of the highest quality. The unit designed and implemented a Unit Assessment System (UAS) for that specific purpose. Evaluative data about candidates' knowledge and performances are generated in a variety of ways and at multiple points within their programs. Each candidate is evaluated over the length of his/her academic program in order to produce developmentally appropriate assessment data as he/she moves through the different transition points of the UAS. A purpose of the Unit Assessment System, therefore, is to track candidates' growth and development over time. The Unit Assessment System provides candidates with ongoing assessment and analysis about their content knowledge, pedagogy skills, and dispositions, thus providing vital feedback for needed improvement. The aggregated data produced from candidate assessments and other instruments are structured to evaluate program and unit effectiveness for the purpose of establishing fairness, accuracy, and consistency as well as to make changes in unit procedures found to be ineffective. The unit not only makes changes when evaluations suggest the need but also systematically studies the effects of any changes to assure that the intended program strengthening occurs and no adverse consequences are present (NCATE, 2002). The Unit Assessment System is subject to continual review to provide the best possible information for ongoing improvement for the candidate, the system and the programs. The Unit Assessment System operates to ensure that all aspects of the preparation programs are focused on learning, emphasizing the education candidates' learning as well as their ability to enhance and impact their K-12 students' learning.



Using state, national, and institutional standards as reference points, the unit faculty collaborated with members of the professional community to design and implement the Unit Assessment System. To ensure that the Unit Assessment System operates with ongoing effectiveness and success, the unit employs the six strategies outlined by Palomba and Banta (1999), which the authors describe as “assessment essentials” (p. 6). The six strategies are used to create an assessment system that flows in a continuous feedback loop. This provides an opportunity to view the assessment process cyclically as a system that incorporates the collection and analysis of data on applicant qualifications, candidate and alumni performance, and unit operations in order to provide feedback that allows for continual evaluation and improvement to the unit and its programs. This view also allows the unit to

examine the validity and utility of the data produced through its multiple assessment measures and allows for modifications based on possible inaccuracy, changes in professional standards and/or new research studies (NCATE, 2000). Although Palomba and Banta (1999) present the six essentials as steps and explain they are not sequential and are likely to occur simultaneously, the faculty considered them sequentially when they last revisited and revised the Unit Assessment System. The faculty evaluates the system using each of the six assessment essentials:

1. Agree on goals and objectives for learning.
2. Design and implement a thoughtful approach to assessment planning.
3. Involve all stakeholders.
4. Examine data collection, analysis, summary, approaches.
5. Examine, share, and act on assessment findings.
6. Annually reexamine the Unit Assessment System (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

How do we know what our candidates know? The Unit Assessment System is designed so that the unit can collect and aggregate meaningful data to “make the case” concerning the effectiveness of the preparation and the skills and abilities of teacher candidates. Within the Unit Assessment System, several other components are considered on a regular basis. When the unit annually evaluates the Unit Assessment System, it considers four concepts:

1. The involvement of the professional community,
2. The integration of the Conceptual Framework,
3. The importance of the state, national, and institutional standards, and
4. The use of multiple assessments at various points in the program and the ongoing improvement of the assessments through examination of fairness, accuracy, consistency, reliability and validity (Weisenbach, 2000).

The involvement of different stakeholders is a critical element in the process to maintain the Unit Assessment System. Many different professionals have been a part of the distinct processes required to make the system operational, including developing the assessment instruments, deciding the various points along the program where assessing candidates should be required, evaluating candidates using the instruments, analyzing the data, evaluating instruments for reliability, validity and utility, and taking part in program improvement decisions. The stakeholders include Department of Education faculty, faculty within the liberal arts, program faculty, K-12 colleagues, and college administration, staff, and Internal and External Education Advisory Committees.

### **Transition Points**

While incorporating the direction provided by the “assessment essentials” (Paloma & Banta, 1999) and four concepts (Wesinbach, 2000) described above, the Education Unit developed a Unit Assessment System that includes five transition points, which provide regular and comprehensive data on candidate performance within each transition of the program. Blackburn’s Unit Assessment System Transition Points (see Table 3 below) correspond to

what NCATE (2002) calls multiple decision points and represent the formative and summative benchmarks within the Unit Assessment System:

1. Admission to the Teacher Education Program
2. Admission to the Student Teaching Clinical Experience
3. Program Completion for Graduation
4. Program Completion for State Certification
5. Teaching Effectiveness after Graduation.

Within each of the five Transition Points, multiple indicators ensure candidate knowledge and skill proficiency and identify candidates with the potential to become successful teachers, such as information from state licensing exams, evaluations from cooperating teachers, evaluation feedback from Work Program supervisors, mastery of basic skills, and content mastery. The indicators mirror standards of the Illinois State Board of Education and discipline-based professional associations. The Blackburn Education Unit has expectations of candidates that include required proficiency in language arts, technology integration, professional teaching skills, content knowledge, and appropriate demonstrated professional dispositions. The five transition points are structured to serve as formative and summative evaluations of candidates as they progress through their teacher preparation program (Other methods and points of assessment unique to each program exist but are not included within the UAS Transition Points.).

Blackburn candidates progress through the unit program moving from “emerging” to “competent” as they acquire increasingly more focused, mature repertoires of skills, knowledge, and abilities. Candidates must successfully follow and meet the transition points in order to continue and graduate in their particular certification designations. Denial of a request for admission to any transition point means a candidate is either missing the requirements and/or has not met the skill or performance level required to justify admission at the time of the application. Upon the applicant’s request, a candidate who has been denied admission to any transition point is permitted to appeal.

**Table 4**

<b>Unit Assessment System Transition Points</b>	
<b>Transition One – Admission to The Teacher Education Program</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cumulative GPA 2.50 or higher (no rounding; must be maintained)</li> <li>2. Evidence of passing IL Basic Skills Test</li> <li>3. Grade of C or better in CO111 and CO112</li> <li>4. Grade of C or better in all ED courses</li> <li>5. Evidence of completion of 35 hours of ED100 field experience (Required for all candidates who complete ED100 Fall 2004 or later)</li> <li>6. Evidence of IL State Police Criminal Background Check (see Dept. of Education Office)</li> <li>7. Submit Professional Dispositions Evaluations (Required for all candidates who complete ED 100 Fall 2004 or later)               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Self-evaluation</li> <li>b. Evaluation from ED100 faculty</li> <li>c. Work Program – person for whom candidate works or who know the candidate’s work best (if applicable)</li> </ol> </li> <li>8. Completed Application to Teacher Education Program</li> <li>9. Advisor signature on Teacher Education Program Application</li> <li>10. Submit Portfolio Artifacts (Grading rubrics must be submitted with artifacts; all artifacts must be graded at the acceptable or target level.) Required for all candidates who complete ED 100 Fall 2004 or later.</li> </ol>	

- a. Artifact 1: Lesson Plan (assignment from ED100)
- b. Artifact 2: IPTS Reflections (assignment from ED100)

**Transition Two – Admission to Student Teaching**

1. Cumulative GPA 2.50 or higher (no rounding; must be maintained)
2. Grade of C or better in all required ED courses
3. Grade of C or better in all required certification designation content courses
4. Evidence of passing IL Content Teaching Exam
5. Evidence of completion of all field experience hours required for specific certification designation

Program	Hours
Visual Arts Education	175
Secondary Science Education: Biology	155
Elementary Education	180
Secondary English Education	155
Secondary Mathematics Education	155
Physical Education	135
Secondary Social Science Education: History	155

6. Submit Professional Dispositions Evaluations
  - a. Self-evaluation
  - b. Faculty Evaluations from the following courses: 310 AND ED353 or 354 (Elementary candidates only), ED322 (Physical Education candidates only), or ED315 (Secondary Education candidates only)
  - c. Cooperating Teacher (applicable only to Secondary Education candidates; must be completed by the cooperating teacher of the candidate’s secondary methods course field experience placement)
  - d. Work Program - person for whom candidate works or who know the candidate’s work best (if applicable)
7. Observation of current student teacher, using the Midterm/Final Student Teaching Performance Assessment (Secondary ED 315; Physical Education ED 323; Elementary ED 353 or 354)
8. Completed Application to Student Teaching
9. Advisor Signature on Student Teaching Application
10. Unit Portfolio Artifacts (Grading rubrics must be submitted with artifacts; all artifacts must be assessed at the acceptable or target level.) All candidates required to submit artifacts from the following courses taken Fall 2004 or later:
  - a. Artifact 3: Diversity Field Experience Reflection (assignment from ED 200)
  - b. Artifact 4: Observation Reflective Paper (assignment from ED 220)
  - c. Artifact 5: UDL Lesson Plan (assignment from ED 220)
  - d. Artifact 6: Presentation of Teaching Strategies (assignment from ED 310)
  - e. Artifact 7: Classroom Management Plan (assignment from ED 320)
  - f. Artifact 8: Assessment Collection (assignment from ED 370)
  - g. Artifact 9: Philosophy of Education (assignment from ED 400)
  - h. Artifact 10: PowerPoint Electronic Project (assignment from ED 410)
  - i. Artifact 11: Unit Plan
    - Elementary Ed Candidates: Assignment from 353/354 (candidate’s choice)
    - Secondary Ed Candidates: Assignment from ED315
    - Physical Education Candidates: Assignment from ED323

**Transition Three – Program Completion (for Graduation)**

1. Grade of B or better in ED491: Student Teaching Seminar
2. Grade of B or better in ED492: Student Teaching Experience
3. Submit Professional Dispositions Evaluations
  - a. Self-evaluation
  - b. Cooperating Teacher Evaluation
  - c. College Supervisor Evaluation
4. Completed Lesson Observation by Content Faculty
5. Unit Portfolio Artifacts (All grading rubrics must be submitted with artifacts; All artifacts must be assessed at the acceptable or target level.):
  - a. Artifact 12: Student Teaching Reflective Journal (assignment from ED 491)
  - b. Artifact 13: Student Teaching Video and Self-Assessment (assignment from ED 491)
  - c. Artifact 14: Student Teaching Action Research Project (assignment from ED 491)
  - d. Artifact 15: Interview Artifact Collection (assignment from ED 491)

**Transition Four – Certification**

1. Evidence of passing the APT exam (Illinois Assessment of Professional Teaching)
2. Application for Teacher Certification
3. All Blackburn College Graduation Requirements Met

## Transition Five – Evaluation of Alumni

1. Annual Survey of Graduates (candidates who graduated 1 and 5 years ago)
2. Annual Survey of Principals (Student Teaching Principals/Supervisors of candidates 1 and 5 years ago).

### Unit Assessment System Portfolio Requirements

Portfolios provide a way to compile authentic assessments of a candidate's knowledge and skills (Williams, Davis, Metcalf, Covington, 2003). A teacher candidate's portfolio is a purposeful collection of work that portrays a story about his/her efforts, progress, and/or achievement. Blackburn's education portfolio requirements provide essential communication and instructional usefulness because

- (1) candidates participate in selecting the portfolio's contents,
- (2) candidates understand that the materials required for submission follow predetermined guidelines,
- (3) candidates are aware of and are provided with grading rubrics for judging the merit of their work, and
- (4) candidates regularly reflect on the evolving quality of their work (Arter & Spandel, 1992). Kilbane and Milman, (2003) provide a definition of a teaching portfolio that guides:

“A teaching portfolio is a special type of presentation portfolio that demonstrates the professional competence of anyone who engages in the act of teaching at any academic level. Traditionally, teaching portfolios contain a variety of materials or artifacts from teaching. These artifacts may include curricular units, syllabi, communication with students, writing samples, photographs, and videos. Professional documents such as letters of recommendation, records of academic course work, and teaching evaluations can also be included. (p. 6) “

In the past decade, portfolios have become a popular assessment tool in teacher preparation programs (Fredrick, McMahan, & Shaw, 2000; Kilbane & Milman, 2003; Krause, 1996; Mokhtari & Yellin, 1996; Kenney, Hammitte, Rakestraw, & LaMontagne, 2000; Otis-Welborn & Winn, 2000; Williams et. All, 2003). Mokharti and Yellin (1996), Doolase (1996), Klenowski (2000) and Williams (2003) found that a candidate's use of a portfolio can promote collaborative learning, increased candidate reflection, and improved presentation, questioning, and overall teaching skills, including organization and self-monitoring. Portfolios are an effective method for compiling evidence to satisfy a variety of candidate and program needs. Wilkerson & Lang (2003) believe portfolios are an excellent tool for reinforcing learning and for making formative decisions about a candidate's knowledge, skills, dispositions, and growth.

Teacher education programs today use many different formats and/or types of portfolios. Bullock and Hawk (2001) define three types of portfolios: 1) a product portfolio (forecast oriented and short-term), 2) a showcase portfolio (best work in one or more areas) and 3) a process portfolio (focus on ongoing assessment). Krause (1997) believes that the process portfolio is most useful for assessment in teacher education programs, because they facilitate

candidates' use of the portfolio to portray learning over a time span. Blackburn's Department of Education incorporates portfolio assessment into the evaluation of candidates by primarily using a "process portfolio" (Bullock & Hawk, 2001), because it provides candidates with formative feedback throughout their academic programs giving them the ability to self-assess and improve as they continue to progress to graduation. All of the artifacts represent a core of evidence required from candidates regardless of the certification designation they are seeking. These common artifacts were developed to provide consistency across the seven programs. Each program also requires the submission of distinct artifacts, which are embedded within the specific program methods course(s). Unique artifacts (indicative of a showcase portfolio (Bullock and Hawk, 2001)) are also created during a candidate's student teaching clinical experience. The portfolio, provides evidence of a candidate's ability to meet state and institutional standards over time (i.e., Unit Assessment System Transition Points 1, 2, 3, & 4); however, the portfolio then can transform into a "showcase portfolio" (Bullock & Hawk, 2001), which a candidate can use after graduation for the job interviewing process.

The Education Unit identified four overarching goals requiring candidate portfolios.

1. Portfolios provide the ability to track candidates' longitudinal achievement, which is the most powerful method we have of measuring candidate learning and performance over time to reveal development and improvement or the lack thereof.
2. Portfolios provide candidates with the opportunity to practice their reflective skills; allowing them to self-assess their own progress and abilities.
3. Portfolios provide the opportunity to use artifacts to validate evaluations. Portfolio artifacts provide insight into the process and progress of learning, both on an individual level of the specific candidate but also on a collective level for the department (Montgomery & Wiley, 2004).
4. Portfolios provide the unit with a cumulative record (archive of data) of advancement for advisement, assessment, and progression through the transition points of the Unit Assessment System.

**Table 5**

<b>Portfolio Artifact Requirements</b>															
<b>Artifact Number</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Artifact Title</b>	Lesson Plan	IPTS Reflections	Diversity Field Experience Reflection	Observation Reflective Paper	UDL Lesson Plan	Presentation of Teaching Strategies	Classroom Management Plan	Assessment Collection	Philosophy of Education	PowerPoint Electronic Project	Unit Plan	Student Teaching Reflective Journal	Student Teaching Video and Self-Assessment	Student Teaching Action Research Project	Interview Artifact Collection
<b>Transition Point</b>	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3

### **Unit Assessment System Data Collection and Programmatic Improvement**

Unit and programmatic improvement is based on the data collected from the Transition Points as well as from other assessment instruments designed to evaluate program and unit effectiveness. Most important, data provides clear and compelling evidence about the quality of the unit’s graduates and their abilities to teach effectively and impact student learning (Weisenbach, 2000).



## **SUMMARY & CONCLUSION**

In summary, the Blackburn teacher preparation unit has a comprehensive Conceptual Framework that defines and describes the philosophies, research, and outcomes expected of the unit faculty and candidates. The Conceptual Framework was developed and multiple drafts were subjected to comment and revision by the unit faculty, the college's administration, and the stakeholders in the collaborative public schools. The vision the Conceptual Framework expresses is shared with all stakeholders and is based on a knowledge base derived from empirical research, informed theory, collaborative effects, state and national standards, and wisdom resulting from practice.

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