



The Transforming Educator

Conceptual Framework

**Professional Education Unit
Tift College of Education
Mercer University**

*The Transforming Educator:
To Know, To Do, To Be*

THE TRANSFORMING EDUCATOR: TO KNOW, TO DO, TO BE

Overview

Theme

The Professional Education Unit's Conceptual Framework is the underlying foundation for its teacher education and educational leadership programs and is organized around the theme, "**The Transforming Educator**," at both the initial and advanced levels of study.

"The Transforming Educator," a living link in the educational process, is an educator who continually changes internally through understanding, practicing, and reflecting, such that, individually and collaboratively, he or she is an advocate for all learners. The Transforming Educator implements appropriate and significant life-changing experiences that effectively provide for the needs of the individual, actively engage others in transformative processes, and promote life-long learning.

The Conceptual Framework

Within the context of a distinctive heritage, the Professional Education Unit has chosen **To Know, To Do, and To Be** as organizing principles of the Conceptual Framework that undergirds its curriculum and instruction, educational leadership, and school counseling programs at Mercer University.

The Conceptual Framework principles, **To Know, To Do, and To Be**, prepare the candidate to adapt to and meet the needs of a current and changing society while highlighting the Baptist tradition of promoting mediation, settlement, compromise, and understanding in the classroom, in the school system, and in the community. Preparing the candidate to be a Transforming Educator is vital to successful educational practice in increasingly diverse settings. Blending theory with field experiences helps to actualize this preparation for teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors.

Teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors who are Transforming Educators must embrace the processes of *understanding, practicing, and reflecting*, which are indeed vital components of transformation. Each of these three processes is important and meaningful in itself, but the three are also interconnected in very real ways. **Understanding** informs practice. The wisdom developed through **practice** increases and modifies understanding and, ideally, leads to rich and meaningful reflection. **Reflection** causes teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors to enhance their levels of understanding and to make substantive as well as subtle changes in their practice. These processes of understanding, practicing, and reflecting are themes that are infused in and richly woven throughout the principles of the Conceptual Framework: To Know, To Do, and To Be. Moreover, The Transforming Educator demonstrates the following three characteristics in school settings: **engagement** of students in learning, the ability to work with a **diversity** of students in meaningful and respectful ways, and the ability to be involved in effective **collaboration** with students, other educators, parents, and the community.

History of Development of the Conceptual Framework

The “To Know,” “To Do,” and “To Be” principles were first embraced by the Professional Education Unit faculty in 1996. During fall 1999, the faculty critically examined the Conceptual Framework, refining the meanings of “To Know,” “To Do,” and “To Be” and condensing the descriptors of each principle several times until there was agreement on three descriptors for each of the principles. Further discussion led to a more encompassing theme, “Preparing the 21st Century Teacher,” that incorporated the reflection and decision-making abilities necessary for successful mediation in a culturally diverse world and provided a knowledge base and a set of field experiences that would enable an educator to adapt effectively to a changing and technologically advanced society, to new and innovative teaching pedagogy and resources, and to the continuing diverse needs of learners. Faculty members approved the new theme and revised Conceptual Framework in late fall 1999.

In March 2000, the Unit reviewed the theme of the Conceptual Framework again with input from an outside consultant. Critical attention was given to the global dimensions of the theme, “Preparing the 21st Century Teacher”—a theme that created difficulties in defining what it meant in general, what it meant in terms of the Mercer graduate, and what outcomes could be delineated succinctly. Reflecting again on the visions and missions of Mercer University and the Professional Education Unit, faculty members re-examined the faith-based heritage of the institution, the Paideia ideal, and the principles of Jesse Mercer, the founder of the University. Combining their understanding and knowledge with the realities of what Unit faculty members believe and with the strengths and characteristics of Mercer University graduates, faculty members moved toward a more specific Conceptual Framework that would describe the uniqueness of educators prepared at Mercer University. Rich reflection and discussion led to the theme, “**The Transforming Practitioner.**” Review then was made of the outcomes of the Conceptual Framework. Having further condensed the outcomes in fall 1999, the faculty revisited a prior list of more specifically written and demonstrable outcomes. The faculty discussed and approved the theme and the outcomes at its faculty meeting in March 2000. The faculty revised the framework in 2005 to make more explicit the professional dispositions it values. Following the faculty’s articulation of a set of seven dispositions and the piloting of a dispositions assessment, the faculty approved the addition of an eighth disposition in Spring 2006, based on the recommendation of an ad hoc committee that studied the data, the assessment process, and recent literature on the topic.

In Fall 2011, the Unit reviewed the Conceptual Framework, and the standing committee recommended the articulation of the theme, which now includes specification of advocacy within the theme and changed “The Transforming Practitioner” to “The Transforming Educator.” In 2012 and 2013, the Framework was revised to ensure that the language and meaning of the Framework continue to have application for the formation of school counselors, teachers, and all educational leaders.

As the Conceptual Framework is a living document, it is often revisited and richly discussed by Unit faculty members and students, faculty members from various departments across the University, and members of the Site-Based Councils on Professional Education. Research on transformative educators has expanded in breadth and depth during the past five years, and the Professional Education Unit has thoughtfully integrated more current research into the Conceptual Framework’s knowledge base.

Visual Model of the Conceptual Framework



The Transforming Educator

Above is the visual model that the Professional Education Unit has adopted to depict the major facets of the Conceptual Framework. The black and orange colors of the model reflect the heritage of Mercer University, Tift College of Education, and Penfield College. The model is framed and supported by an outer black circle containing the words “Understanding,” “Practicing,” and “Reflecting.” Teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors who are Transforming Educators must embrace the processes of *understanding*, *practicing*, and *reflecting* as vital components of transformation. The black circle serves to illustrate the infinite and interconnected nature of these crucial processes.

The three principles of the Conceptual Framework—To Know, To Do, and To Be—serve to define the vertices of the orange triangle. The triangle, known to be the strongest polygon and thus frequently employed in the construction of bridges and buildings, was chosen to depict three important characteristics of classrooms and other school settings—“Engagement,” “Diversity,” and “Collaboration.” The Transforming Educator must appreciate, honor, and nurture these characteristics by demonstrating engagement of students in learning, the ability to work with a diversity of students, and the ability to be involved in effective collaboration with students, other educators, parents, and the community. In order for a triangle to remain strong, all three sides must remain strong. In a similar fashion, in order for a Transforming Educator to remain strong, he or she must continually become stronger in the areas of engagement, diversity, and collaboration. Doing so will not only cause Transforming Educators to become more effective educators, but it will also enable them to effect transformation in their students.

In the center of the visual model, so as to depict the theme and the “heart” of the Conceptual Framework, is the word “Transforming.” Written in a circular fashion to indicate a sense of infinity, “transforming” is viewed as a continuous and lifelong process; indeed, transformations often lead to other transformations. Tift College of Education faculty members expect that candidates completing initial and advanced programs in teacher education, as well as programs in educational leadership, will seek to transform—to grow, to change, to develop, to enrich themselves—throughout their careers and lives, while also continually making humanistic and concerted efforts to effect transformation within P-16 students.

Vision and Mission of the Institution and Unit

Mercer University Mission Statement

Mercer University's mission is to teach, to learn, to create,
to discover, to inspire, to empower and to serve.

In fulfilling this mission, the University supports undergraduate, graduate, and professional learning as well as basic research and its application in service to others. As a university committed to excellence and innovation, Mercer challenges members of its community to meet and exceed high standards in their teaching, learning, research, scholarship and service.

Founded by Baptists in 1833, Mercer is an independent university that remains grounded in a tradition that embraces freedom of the mind and spirit, cherishes the equal worth of every individual, and commits to serving the needs of humankind. As a reflection of this heritage:

- We encourage our students to discover and develop fully their unique combination of gifts and talents to become leaders who make a positive difference in the world.
- We seek to inspire members of our community to live virtuous and meaningful lives by using their gifts and talents to serve the needs of humankind as an expression of their love for God and neighbor.
- We seek to enrich the mind and spirit by promoting and facilitating an open and rigorous search for truth and understanding, including an examination of the moral, religious and ethical questions of this and every age.
- We affirm and respect the dignity and sacred worth of every person and celebrate both our commonalities and our differences.

Mercer University Vision

One of the finest private universities in the Southeast, Mercer University will be nationally renowned for providing a dynamic, diverse, and rigorous education where every student matters and learns to make a difference.

Mercer is held together in conversation by a love of learning, our respect for each other, and excellence within our disciplines. We celebrate our Baptist heritage, a tradition that insists on an open search for truth, religious freedom, and service to others.

Achieving this vision will take widespread collaboration and responsible stewardship as we:

- Foster a lively and inclusive intellectual, social, and spiritual community;
- Engage students in challenging, holistic, and transformational learning throughout the University;
- Infuse liberal learning in professional programs and connect undergraduate students to graduate and professional programs;
- Cultivate the virtues of practical wisdom and civic leadership;
- Emerge as the premier source of professional leadership in the Southeast;
- Attract and nurture outstanding staff and creative educators who are also first-rate scholars and educators;
- Make contributions on the frontiers of knowledge through distinctive research agendas;

- Transform communities locally and globally through University-community partnerships, service-learning, and volunteerism; and
- Become an international center for dialogue and inquiry about faith perspectives.

Tift College of Education Unit Mission

The Tift College of Education's mission is built upon Mercer University's mission as well as the Conceptual Framework theme. The Transforming Educator embodies and carries out the guiding principles of the University's mission: search for truth, independence of thought, diversity of viewpoints, and ethical and moral decision-making. The Transforming Educator also embodies the Unit's mission: blending theory with practice.

Tift College of Education, established in 1995 as the School of Education, was renamed in 2001 to honor the legacy of Tift College and the Tift family. The College is committed to preparing candidates to serve as teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors in the schools of our state, nation, and world, and is committed to the pursuit of excellence in every aspect of educator preparation.

The mission of the Tift College of Education is to prepare candidates to blend theory with practice, to think critically, and to interact effectively in a technologically complex, global society. To accomplish this mission, the Tift College of Education offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs and educational services designed to meet the needs of diverse students and of the professional education community. The following Tift College goals support the mission:

- Reflect an understanding of education as a broad and lifelong process undergirded by the tradition of liberal learning.
- Provide and promote academic programs that will respond effectively to geographic, professional, and cultural communities.
- Cultivate a community of learning characterized by tolerance, compassion, mutual respect, and personal, social, and environmental responsibility.
- Provide an academic environment that enhances the ability of faculty to synthesize theory and practice.
- Develop a knowledge base and skills that enable students to interact effectively in a diverse, technologically complex society.
- Create an environment for the development of critical thinking skills.
- Consider viewpoints other than one's own, including viewpoints associated with other cultures and traditions.
- Commit to live as an engaged and informed citizen.
- Reflect on one's life and learning experience.
- Develop a respect for intellectual and religious freedom.

Tift College of Education Unit Vision

At Mercer University, the Tift College of Education (the Professional Education Unit) envision the preparation of effective teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors who are willing to grow and to change—to *transform*—continually throughout their careers, while also seeking to stimulate and facilitate transformation within their students. Teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors who appreciate the importance of personal and professional development

view transformation as a vital and exciting part of living, and such teachers and leaders have the power to effect change in students, thereby transforming them and helping them to become life-long learners who can apply their knowledge meaningfully and responsibly in a continually changing world. Needs of students are increasing and becoming more varied. Additionally, knowledge is not stagnant, but is forever increasing. An educator who knows only what is known today, who cannot adapt to the changing world, and who lacks the abilities to reflect, collaborate, and think critically will be unable to provide transformational learning experiences that will allow students to respond to tomorrow. The education process should provide the means for transforming students to be responsible learners who continue to grow and change and use their knowledge in meaningful ways in society. In short, Tift College of Education faculty members share a vision that the most effective teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors are “Transforming Educators”; they seek not only to effect transformation within themselves, but also to link the student and the learning process and to transform the lives of all students.

The Unit’s Philosophy, Purposes, and Goals

Philosophy

Within the context of its general mission and vision, Tift College of Education’s philosophy is based upon a shared view of preparation of teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors. The Professional Education Unit at Mercer University views teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors as Transforming Educators who are changing through *understanding*, *practicing*, and *reflecting*, processes that are infused in and richly woven throughout the principles of the Conceptual Framework: To Know, To Do, and To Be.

The Transforming Educator embraces personal and professional transformation continually throughout his or her career, while also seeking to stimulate and facilitate transformation within his or her students. Furthermore, The Transforming Educator appreciates and nurtures *engagement* in the teaching/learning process, strives for meaningful *collaboration* with a variety of stakeholders, and appreciates and honors *diversity* in people.

The Transforming Educator must **Know** the foundations of the education profession, content bases for curricula, characteristics of diverse learners and barriers that can impede learning. The well prepared candidate possesses knowledge that will allow for effective facilitation of learning at the appropriate grade and cognitive levels. If learning potential of students is to be maximized, an educator’s knowledge base must be comprehensive and should include understanding of the characteristics of diverse learners; historical, philosophical, sociological, legal, and developmental foundations; and a rich body of strong content knowledge. If educators and educational programs are to provide for meaningful learning that enables students to link information to prior knowledge and to other knowledge, content knowledge must be an integral part of the program of study and should build on a comprehensive liberal arts background. Research indicates that Transforming Educators must value, possess, and have understanding of a variety of types of knowledge. Knowledge of the foundations of education, content, pedagogy, and characteristics of diverse learners serves as a basis for becoming a Transforming Educator and provides the impetus for planning for and engaging students in transformational learning experiences. Indeed, a critical base of knowledge is necessary as a foundation for making the choices and decisions that are required in today’s schools (Reagan, 1993; Reagan, Case &

Brubacher, 2000; Schulman, 2004; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2011). A deep understanding of methods, strategies, and techniques developed through the study of appropriate pedagogy and participation in field experiences enables the Transforming Educator to adapt materials, technology, curriculum, and instruction as necessary to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

The Transforming Educator must **Do** the work of a professional educator in providing and supporting developmentally appropriate, research-based, and culturally responsive learning experience to prepare students for future success. Through the use of data driven decision making, professional educators examine existing policies and procedures and create new opportunities for increased student achievement. Thus, the candidate is an effective communicator who is able to create an environment that is responsive to a diverse student population and that promotes active learning, positive self-concept, and an appreciation for diversity. Knowledge of and ability to use strategies, materials, and technology appropriately are critical for educating a diverse student population, for encouraging students' engagement in learning, for facilitating students' construction of knowledge, and for addressing the changing needs of students, curricula, and learning outcomes. Modeling, role-playing, and appropriate and varying field experiences provide opportunities for learning, developing, and enhancing these abilities and skills. The Transforming Educator is a competent leader of learning who considers a primary responsibility of the educator to be that of building upon prior knowledge and experiences of learners and who, in the spirit of Dewey (1944) and Vygotsky (1978), uses approaches that capitalize on learners' knowledge and experiences for effective learning. The Transforming Educator grows in his or her abilities to blend theory and practice and to plan, implement, and assess curricula and instructional practices through an interweaving of courses and practical experiences that are carefully planned and delivered by Tift College of Education faculty.

The Transforming Educator must **Be** a reflective, collaborative, and responsive decision-maker, facilitator, role model, and leader within the classroom, school, community, and global environment. Professional educators work toward equity, access, and academic, social, and career achievement for all students. The most effective educators believe in their own efficacy; that is, they consider themselves to have the power to effect meaningful learning. They believe that all students can achieve when provided with proper support and guidance from knowledgeable and caring adults. Metacognitive, reflective, collaborative, and responsive abilities are crucial in order for the Transforming Educator to make appropriate and effective decisions related to the application of pedagogical knowledge (Ambach, 1996; Cochran & Jones, 1998; Shulman, 2004; Benson & Chik, 2014) and to plan, implement, and assess appropriate and stimulating curricula (Goodson, 2003; Posner & Rudnitsky, 2006; Shulman & Shulman, 2004; Ellis, 2014). The Transforming Educator utilizes critical thinking and reflection that allow for responsiveness to and collaboration with students, colleagues, administrators, parents, schools, business representatives, and community members. Teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors are continually called upon to make responsive decisions; to reflect on, analyze, and evaluate their performance and effectiveness in planning for instruction, implementing lessons, and assessing learning; and to reflect on and critique their knowledge base and their performance as role models.

Truly, Transforming Educators are role models who are respectful of the thoughts and beliefs of others and display **dispositions** associated with the calling and service of educating. Research has indicated that among such dispositions are attitudes that focus on the achievement of diverse

learners (Suarez, 2003), grounded in an appreciation for diversity and an advocacy for students (Dee & Henkin, 2002). *Advocacy begins with caring for others and a commitment to the common good which extends far beyond the realm of the school and into the far reaches of society. Such care is especially important toward individuals who have been marginalized by society and need a voice to help protect their human dignity.* Research supports the relationship and need for both care and competency as necessary for both educators and learners (Ayers, 2004, 2001; hooks, 2010, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Noddings, 2001). Noddings (2001) asserts that academic achievement cannot be attained with success unless students learn to care about others and believe that others care about them. Moreover, advocacy charges practitioners, educational leaders, and counselors to proactively remove barriers to learner success academically, socially, and culturally in all areas (praxis, career development, planning, etc.) to assure that the needs of all learners are being met. In doing so, advocacy becomes a praxis of intellectual care for transforming educators and learners (Dantley & Tillman, 2006). Educators, counselors, and leaders are individuals who *advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth.*

Other dispositions that educators consider to be relevant include intrinsic motivation, passion for teaching and learning, desire to form and maintain helping relationships with students, commitment to social justice, creativity, problem solving, and divergent thinking (Mullin, 2003). Furthermore, caring teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors engage in and promote collaboration and positive social interaction (Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002) and are disposed toward reflection, integrity, and self-improvement (Ertmer, 2003). Teacher educators are responsible for serving as role models and providing feedback that attempts to shape the professional dispositions of candidates, engaging in what Sockett (2006) refers to as “a process of moral education” (p. 9).

Certainly, dispositions of effective teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors are quite numerous and are addressed directly and indirectly throughout the Professional Education Unit’s Conceptual Framework. Desirable dispositions are carefully and inextricably associated with understanding, practicing, and reflecting (processes in which Transforming Educators are continually involved) as well as with engagement, diversity, and collaboration (characteristics of classrooms and other school settings that are honored, appreciated, and nurtured by Transforming Educators). However, in order to streamline the list of desired dispositions and to facilitate the assessment process (Dottin, 2006; Diez, 2006), Tift College of Education faculty members synthesized and consolidated their research to develop a discrete list of dispositions that seem to be most closely connected with transformation:

- respect,
- responsibility,
- flexibility,
- collaboration,
- reflection,
- commitment to life-long learning,
- belief in teacher efficacy, and
- effective communication.

Transforming Educators demonstrate strong content knowledge and are open to expanding their **understanding** of knowledge through continual learning and professional development.

Development of understanding facilitates educators' abilities to be adaptive and continually transforming, thus leading them to provide opportunities and means for students to transform in ways that will enable them to apply their learning to life meaningfully, responsibly, and with character and integrity. Indeed, understanding of the foundations of education, content, pedagogy, and characteristics of learners serves as a basis for becoming a Transforming Educator and provides the impetus for planning for and engaging students in transformational learning experiences.

As schools are evolving organisms, Transforming Educators must be able to teach, lead, and counsel in manners that ensure success for all students. This demonstrates the Framework process of **practicing**. For this continuous interaction of teaching, learning, and assessment to occur, educators must develop abilities to plan and implement appropriate learning experiences that reflect philosophical and pedagogical theories of learning. Educators' belief systems that focus on active student participation are essential if deep learning is to occur (Sfard, 1998, 2010). When standards-based planning is connected with lessons that promote active learning, the stage is set for effective and meaningful educational practice.

Guided by the Framework process of **reflecting**, Transforming Educators view teaching and leading as reflective processes (Brookfield, 1990; Mezirow, 1990). To be reflective, one must be willing to think about (reflect upon) one's own actions and activities systematically and actively (Moallem, 1997) and use information learned to improve the teaching and learning process (Brophy & Evertson, 1976) as well as the function of the organization as a whole. John Dewey (1933) defined "reflection" as "the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it" (p.6). Candidates are encouraged through their coursework and field experiences to engage in the process of reflection by (1) considering the actions taken in their teaching, leadership, and counseling practices, (2) critically examining the consequences of those actions, (3) evaluating and analyzing their beliefs upon which they base their behaviors, and (4) taking an active role (a proactive approach to teaching, leading, and counseling) in acquiring new knowledge that will not only help them to modify and adapt their methods but will inform their overall practices in teaching and leading (Eby, 1998; Pollard & Pollard, 2014).

Candidates are also encouraged to take time to reflect on their experiences in educating and ask themselves challenging questions about the appropriateness and success of those efforts. By doing so, teachers, school leaders, and counselors are being thoughtful and critical of their own work (Parker, S., 1997). It is the goal of the Unit faculty that, through self-examination processes, Transforming Educators will use reflective knowledge to bridge the gap between teaching and learning and adjust content, teaching practices, counseling, and leadership efforts to meet the individual needs of learners and the goals of the organization.

Transforming Educators honor, appreciate, nurture, and demonstrate **engagement** of students in the learning process. To facilitate engagement, teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors make use of a variety of strategies that provide guidance to students as they construct their own knowledge and develop a sense of ownership of learning. Engagement promotes in learners the processes of critical thinking, problem solving, inquisitiveness, and development of character. Transforming Educators endeavor to design learning environments in which students' beliefs are exchanged, defended, converted, and assessed. Such environments provide dynamic contexts for engaged learning.

Transforming Educators honor, appreciate, nurture, and demonstrate *collaboration* through positive interaction with both the internal and external community. Collaboration is evidenced through engagement with fellow candidates, faculty, students, school-based educators, parents, and the community. Collaboration between and among individuals is an essential ingredient in teaching and learning and is at the heart of the transformational process.

Transforming Educators honor, appreciate, nurture, and demonstrate the ability to address *diversity* in schools. The Transforming Educator is knowledgeable and sensitive to diverse groups, creates environments, designs curricular goals, and plans for and employs instructional and assessment methods and resources.

Belief and Action Statements: Professional Commitments

As a part of its philosophy, the Professional Education Unit has agreed upon the following Belief and Action Statements, which serve to focus the faculty on the needs of candidates in the curriculum and instruction, school counseling and educational leadership programs, as well as the needs of learners whose care and education are entrusted to these candidates. Faculty members are professionally committed to bringing these Belief and Action Statements to fruition.

1. Transformation is a holistic process unique to each individual.
2. Effective teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors provide for transforming learning experiences that actively engage students in their own learning.
3. Educators are effective facilitators of learning based on what they believe, what they know, what they are able to do, and how they think and act.
4. Effective teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors understand schooling and the educational process.
5. There is a base of content knowledge all teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors must learn. This knowledge is built on prior knowledge, is expanded appropriately, and is linked to all other knowledge.
6. In order for an educator to build on prior knowledge, to link specific knowledge to other knowledge, and to expand current knowledge, he or she must have a content knowledge base greater and broader than that of his or her students and a comprehensive knowledge base that includes a broad liberal arts foundation and more advanced study in one or more academic disciplines.
7. There exists a current and expanding set of effective materials, strategies, methods, and technology for facilitating learning by all students. Effective teaching occurs when content, materials, strategies, methods, technology, and communication are congruent with and responsive to the developmental levels of students, to characteristics of learners, and to the cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender characteristics of students, and are effectively utilized.
8. Teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors make critical decisions continuously and in every facet of the educational process. Reflection, problem solving, and critical thinking abilities are crucial for effective decision making.
9. Teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors are role models for others and as such are professionals who effectively collaborate and contribute to the education profession at various levels: classroom, school, community, state, and nation.

Purposes

The purposes of the Professional Education Unit at Mercer University stem from its vision, its mission, its philosophical beliefs, and its professional commitments. The Professional Unit collaborates with other departments across Mercer University, as well as with partner school systems and practicing professionals in the field, with the aim of preparing teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors who are Transforming Educators. Through the interwoven processes of understanding, practicing, and reflecting, **The Transforming Educator comes To Know** the foundations of the education profession, content bases for curricula, and characteristics of diverse learners; **To Do** the work of a professional educator in providing and supporting developmentally appropriate, research-based, and culturally responsive learning experience to prepare students for future success. Through the use of data driven decision making, professional educators examine existing policies and procedures and create new opportunities for increased students achievement; **and To Be** a reflective, collaborative, and responsive decision-maker, facilitator, role model, and leader within the classroom, school, community, and global environment. Professional educators work toward the equity, access, and academic, social and career achievement for all students.

Through the interwoven processes of **understanding, practicing, and reflecting**, The Transforming Educator embodies the following principles:

- **To Know** the foundations of the education profession, content bases for curricula, and characteristics of diverse learners.
- **To Do** the work of a professional educator in providing and supporting developmentally appropriate, research-based and culturally responsive learning experience to prepare students for future success. Through the use of data driven decision making, professional educators examine existing policies and procedures and create new opportunities for increased student achievement.
- **To Be** a reflective, collaborative, and responsive decision-maker, facilitator, role model, and leader within the classroom, school, community, and global environment. Professional educators work toward the equity, access, and academic, social and career achievement for all students. Additionally, these purposes incorporate goals of preparing teachers, counselors, and school leaders to honor, appreciate, nurture, and demonstrate three essential characteristics of Transforming Educators: the ability to engage students in learning; the ability to be involved in effective **collaboration** with students, other educators, parents, and the community; and the ability to work with students of diverse backgrounds.

Goals

Embodied within the Professional Education Unit's Conceptual Framework, the following goals for The Transforming Educator are defined:

- I. **TO KNOW the foundations of the education profession, content bases for curricula, and characteristics of diverse learners.**
 - a. Demonstrates knowledge of the philosophical, historical, sociological, legal, and psychological foundations of education.

- b. Demonstrates expertise in the content bases for curricula, the appropriate use of technology, good communication skills, and effective pedagogy.
- c. Shows understanding of and respect for the characteristics, cognitive and social developmental stages, emotional and psychological needs, and learning styles of diverse and special needs learners.
- d. Facilitates the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school and academic community (Educational Leadership).
- e. Leads in the promotion of student success by understanding the foundations of the profession, the philosophy, techniques, and the theories of counseling, and the barriers to learning that are faced by a diverse student population by professional school counselors.

II. TO DO the work of a professional educator in providing and supporting developmentally appropriate, research-based, and culturally responsive learning experiences to prepare students for future success. Through the use of data driven decision-making, professional educators examine existing policies and procedures and create new opportunities for increased student achievement.

- a. Plans, implements, and assesses well-integrated, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive lessons that are well grounded in pedagogical and psychological theory.
- b. Individualizes, differentiates, and adapts instruction to meet the needs of diverse and special needs learners.
- c. Uses a wide variety of teaching methods, strategies, technology, and materials.
- d. Ensures management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective academic environment. (Educational Leadership)
- e. Works proactively to remove barriers to student success academically, socially, and in the area of career development and planning to assure that the career planning needs of all students are being met. (School counselors)

III. TO BE a reflective, collaborative, and responsive decision-maker, facilitator, role model, and leader within the classroom, school, community, and global environment. Professional educators work toward equity, access, and academic, social and career achievement for all students. Believes in his or her own efficacy as an educator and uses feedback, reflection, research, and collaboration to enhance teaching performance, revise and refine instruction, make decisions, develop and modify instruction, and grow as a professional.

- a. Models understanding, respect, and appreciation for diverse educational, cultural, and socioeconomic groups; a willingness to consider diverse opinions and perspectives; and concern for community and global awareness.
- b. Models positive and effective interpersonal skills when interacting with learners, parents, other educators, and members of the community.
- c. Acts with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- d. Collaborates with community members, responds to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizes community resources.
- e. Builds effective teams that work toward equity, access, and academic, social, and career achievement for all students. (School counselors)

***The Transforming Educator:
Changing Internally through Understanding, Practicing, and Reflecting***

The Professional Education Unit's Conceptual Framework theme, "The Transforming Educator," is supported by a strong knowledge base grounded in solid research. As discussed by Henderson and Hawthorne (2000), willingness and ability to transform are crucial components of the educational process. The most effective educators, including teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors, are those who consider transformation to be a natural and exciting aspect of living. They honor and appreciate growth, change, and continual personal and professional betterment. As they progress through their careers, they effect transformation within themselves continually; such transformation is supported by a cornerstone of knowledge. Knowledge, a source of action, is required to actualize practice, and is embedded in practice, which should lead to reflection on the part of the educator (Giroux & Shannon, 1997).

To Know

Transformative teaching and learning have as their focus a curriculum organized around powerful ideas, meaningful and interactive teaching strategies, purposeful student involvement, and lessons that require students to participate in personal, social, and civic action to make their classrooms, schools, and communities more just and democratic (Banks, 2001). Additionally, according to Caldwell (2004) and Caldwell and Spinks (1998), transformation occurs as a result of uses of technology in schools. Therefore, educators of today and tomorrow must demonstrate strong content knowledge and must be open to expanding their own understanding of knowledge through continual learning and professional development. Such development of understanding facilitates educators' abilities to be adaptive and continually transforming, thus leading them to provide opportunities for students to transform in ways that will enable them to apply their learning to life meaningfully, responsibly, and with character and integrity.

Research indicates that Transforming Educators must value and possess understanding of a variety of types of knowledge. Knowledge of the foundations of education, content, pedagogy, and characteristics of learners serves as a basis for becoming a Transforming Educator and provides the impetus for planning for and engaging students in transformational learning experiences. Indeed, a critical base of knowledge is necessary as a foundation for making the decisions that are required in today's schools (Reagan, 1993). Courses in the foundations of education, such as history and philosophy of education, are viewed by Brubacher, Case, and Reagan (1994) as being significant to the development of higher-order thinking skills in educators. Teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors need to understand the psychological processes involved in teaching and learning (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Schunk, Pintrich, Meece, & Pintrich, 2008; Snow, Corno, & Jackson, 1996) as well as the relationships between human development and learning (Meece, 2002; Sprinthall, Neiman, & Theis-Sprinthall, 1996). They also need to acquire a content knowledge base appropriate to their areas of certification, with understanding of how this knowledge reflects contributions of diverse populations (Chen & Ennis, 1995; Lipson, Mosenthal, Mekkelson, & Russ, 2004; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). To facilitate learning effectively, teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors must also construct bases of pedagogical knowledge (Ambach, 1996; Cochran &

Jones, 1998; Shulman, 2004). Our advancing, technology-rich society demands educators who are diversified in their knowledge of methodologies and are prepared to juggle a myriad of roles in educational settings (Igoa, 1995).

To Do

Transforming Educators are competent leaders of learning who consider a primary responsibility of the educator to be that of building upon prior knowledge and experiences of learners and who use approaches that capitalize on learners' knowledge and experiences for effective learning. Dewey (1944) discusses taking learners where they are and using that knowledge to construct learning environments that are active and provide for cognitive and social activity enhanced with personal interaction. Transforming Educators assess the prior knowledge and experiences of students and, based on such information, know when, where, and how to provide the supportive "scaffolds" in what Vygotsky (1978) called "the zone of proximal development" and to remove them appropriately as students become more confident and independent in their own learning.

To take students where they are and provide for effective scaffolding, competent Transforming Educators progress through their own process of transformation. According to Shulman (2004), this transformative process involves five elements:

- 1) Preparation—examining and critically interpreting materials of instruction in terms of the educator's own understanding of the subject matter;
- 2) Representation—identifying alternate ways of representing ideas of text or lessons to students;
- 3) Selection—the embodiment of representations in instructional forms or methods (selected from a variety of teaching methods and models);
- 4) Adaptation—the process of fitting the represented material to the characteristics of the students—ability, gender, language, motivation, culture, prior knowledge, skills; and
- 5) Tailoring—fitting the adaptations to specific students.

The Transforming Educator and Technology. Dewey's ideas of prior knowledge and experiential learning are grounded in the culture and social contexts in which students live. Today the culture and social contexts incorporate technology in various forms. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) (Brooks-Young, 2002) sets forth the beliefs that in order to facilitate transformational learning, all teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors should have certain competencies related to technology. These competencies include basic computer/technology operations and concepts, personal and professional use of technology, and application of technology in instruction. A firm foundation in technology provides a basis from which the Transforming Educator can make appropriate decisions when selecting, modifying, and implementing socially active learning environments that provide for meaningful learning.

Furthermore, Vygotsky's beliefs in situated learning support the need for and utilization of technology in instruction. Active learning experiences require students to work in groups to explore and analyze, think and reflect, and propose and act within a context of learning that links new learning with prior knowledge and experiences as well as life outside of school. Transforming Educators have an obligation to incorporate technology that can support the learning environment while engaging students in problem solving and critical thinking and providing tools of expression that are useful to students (Harley, 1993). Maddux, Johnson, and

Willis (2001) explain how four principles of a Vygotskian classroom support meaningful integration of technology in learning opportunities.

- 1) *Learning is a social, collaborative activity.* This suggests that using technology to enhance communication, contact, and interaction would be beneficial.
- 2) *The Zone of Proximal Development can serve as a guide for curricular and lesson planning.* Students do not simply know something or not know it. They may arrive at a particular learning experience without knowing something but be ready to master the task if they have appropriate support. In addition to assistance offered by caring, nurturing adults, appropriate support may include electronic information resources such as databases for research, software such as grammar checkers, and electronic brainstorming software that supports group problem analysis.
- 3) *School learning should occur in a meaningful context.* Technology can be used to place learning in context.
- 4) *Students' school experiences should be related to out-of-school experiences.* Technology can facilitate the application of academic subjects to life outside school.

In order for the learning environment to be culture-relevant and for students to link prior knowledge and experiences to new knowledge, Transforming Educators should ensure that a variety of learning opportunities incorporate technology.

To Be

Dixon-Krauss (1996) discusses the role of the educator in light of Vygotsky's beliefs. While interacting with the student, the teacher, educational leader, or school counselor determines strategies the student is applying to construct meaning and then decides on the type and amount of support to provide. If educators are Transforming Educators, they are able to make judgments along a continuum about the appropriate instructional mediation levels to use with students. Such judgments require that teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors reflect meaningfully and deliberately as they apply pedagogical knowledge (Ambach, 1996; Cochran & Jones, 1998; Shulman, 2004) and as they make efforts to plan, implement, and assess appropriate and stimulating curricula (Goodson, 2003; Posner & Rudnitsky, 2006; Shulman, 2004). Additionally, because appropriate technology is required to accomplish learning objectives and to meet the diverse needs of students, educators must reflect on their own competencies in the use of technology, as well as areas in which they need to improve (Clark, 1995; Clark & Salomon, 1986; Cooley, 1997; Copley, 1992; Harrington, 1992). Reflection, in addition to effective communication, is also crucial if teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors are to be successful when working with students, colleagues, parents, and administrators (Griffin, 1989).

Dispositions. It is important that candidates in teacher education and educational leadership embody and display certain dispositions that are viewed as indicators of effective and successful teaching (Ginsberg & Whaley, 2003). Among such dispositions are attitudes that focus on the achievement of diverse learners (Suarez, 2003), grounded in an appreciation for diversity and an advocacy for students (Dee & Henkin, 2002). Transformative educators pursue their vocations with sincere passion (Mullin, 2003), operating from the belief that all students can learn and being willing and eager to provide the support that is necessary to facilitate learning (McCombs, 2003). Teachers, school leaders, and school counselors have the power to nurture decency in learners through communicating patiently, acknowledging contributions of students, and providing opportunities for students to care for and serve others (Swick, 2001). Furthermore,

transformative educators engage in and promote positive social interaction, recognize and encourage positive growth in others, and see value in the integration of service learning throughout the curriculum (Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002). Transforming Educators are educators who are disposed toward reflection, integrity, and self-improvement (Ertmer, 2003).

Growing in the Profession (Advanced Programs). Studies have indicated that as transformative teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors become older and move further into their careers, they develop larger knowledge bases of subject matter and pedagogy, organize knowledge more efficiently in more complex interconnected schemas, and utilize their knowledge more effectively (Borko & Putman, 1996; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1994, 2007; Sternberg & Horvath, 1995; Strauss, Ravid, Magen, & Berliner, 1998; Sweller, Van Merriënboer, & Paas, 1998). Transforming Educators must continue to grow and develop professionally to guard against automation (Sternberg & Horvath, 1995) and to deal effectively with changes that come with time and the expanding knowledge base of the world. The keenest and most effective teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors continually extend and enhance not only their bases of knowledge but also their effectiveness in educational settings and their reflection and decision-making skills. By bringing all of these together, experienced educators are in positions to contribute richly and meaningfully to the educational process. Advanced study that includes components of research provides teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors with additional abilities for contributing to the scholarship of the profession and for effecting transformation not only in students but also in schools and institutions. Fueyo and Koorland (1997) indicate that there exists a strong link between educational research and school reform. Research requirements of linking prior knowledge to new information, posing significant and sound questions, finding answers in a systematic manner, and basing answers and decisions on sound evidence place accountability on Transforming Educators and enable them to participate effectively in site-based decision making and to effect change.

Transforming Educators continue to grow through the promotion of diversified learning, lifelong learning, and inquiry, and this growth leads to informed learning behaviors that nurture democratic citizenship, equity, and civility (Banks, 2001; Brandt, 1994; Goleman, McKee, & Boyatzis, 2002; Henderson & Hawthorne, 2000; Palmer, 1998; Parker, 1997; Perkins, 1993, 2009; Scherer, 1997, 2003; Schneider, 1996; Spady, 1995). As Tift College of Education candidates progress through the advanced programs, they are moving toward mastery as Transforming Educators who also provide leadership in curriculum, teaching, and learning transformation (Burns, 1978).

Engagement

Transforming Educators demonstrate *engagement* of students in the learning process. To facilitate engagement, teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors make use of a variety of strategies and different modes of operation that provide guidance to students as they construct knowledge and understanding (Jackson, 2002). Discussion, demonstration, and argumentation are examples of activities that positively engage students in learning experiences that nurture ownership of learning, inquisitiveness, and character and moral development. Transforming Educators implement curricula by designing learning environments in which students' beliefs are exchanged, defended, converted, and assessed. Such environments serve to provide dynamic contexts for learning in a multicultural society (Walkling, 1980). Furthermore, transformative learning experiences encourage exploration of controversial issues and alternative explanations for important events, as well as the development of appreciation of divergent opinions.

Collaboration

Transforming Educators demonstrate effective *collaboration* with students, educators, parents, and the community. Meaningful collaboration requires and strengthens a variety of intellectual, moral, and critical thinking abilities (Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000) and advances Educators' abilities to become responsive facilitators, effective decision makers, and role models.

Dewey (1933) states, "Reflection is an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds supporting it and future conclusions to which it tends" (p. 6). Reflection requires deep and purposeful thinking, through which one can analyze and critically process differing levels of intuition, knowledge, and information. Building on that premise, if teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors are to respond, problem solve, make decisions, and collaborate effectively in a constantly changing world with varying challenges, they must continually strive to strengthen their abilities in reflection (Dewey, 1944; Goodman, 1989). Those who are skillful at reflection tend to be open-minded and to possess observational, empirical, analytical, and problem-solving skills (Argyris & Schon, 1992; Dewey, 1933; James, 1899; Schon, 1987). Transformative educators must listen attentively and give serious consideration to alternative views and to views divergent from and opposed to their own. They also must be willing to question others' beliefs and be willing to have their own beliefs questioned (Dewey, 1933).

Diversity

Transforming Educators demonstrate the ability to address *diversity* in schools. The transformational approach to multicultural education, through which the structures of curriculum and teaching are changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, is one of the more effective means for curriculum reform (Banks, 2002). Moreover, hooks (2003) believes that educational settings are where successful mediation between racial groups might be optimally achieved. Thus, teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors who are aware of and sensitive to the diversities and needs of students and who are able to choose appropriate materials, strategies, methods, and techniques will create environments for success and for understanding of others.

Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators

"The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Professional Standards Commission has adopted

standards, which represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, ensures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession, and defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction.”

The Code of Ethics for Educators, Georgia Professional Standards Commission (October 15, 2009). Retrieved August 13, 2012, Code of Ethics for Educators
<http://www.gapsc.com/Rules/Current/Ethics/505-6-.01.pdf>

Transformation of Students

According to Jackson (2002), the most effective teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors seek *transformation*, an altered state of being or condition, not only for themselves, but also for the students with whom they work. In the society of today, basic skills, while necessary, are simply not sufficient. Teachers, counselors, and leaders are charged with stimulating learners to demonstrate deep understanding by testing and applying ideas, questioning and critiquing, analyzing and evaluating, solving problems, and thinking critically (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2000, 2001). Transformation must occur in the classroom, and teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors who are prepared as Transforming Educators are in positions to facilitate such transformation.

Transformation of a student involves a personal and intense relationship between the educator and the student (Jackson, 2002). In order for transformation to occur, learners must examine and question, must challenge the known and the given, must think critically, and must reflect deeply. At the same time, teachers, educational leaders, and school counselors are required to establish appropriately stimulating and challenging sets of learning outcomes and contexts for learning and to mediate thought processes and learning. Human educators, rather than theories of learning or pedagogical methods, are living links in the educational process (Palmer, 2003). As such, educators—teachers and leaders alike—play critical roles in providing appropriate learning environments that allow for and promote transformation within students.

Living Links in the Educational Process

As the link between students and learning, The Transforming Educator provides rich, caring, and nurturing environments that allow students to engage in learning without risk. According to Noddings (2001), adequate academic achievement cannot be attained with success unless students learn to care about others and believe that others care about them. Moreover, Noddings asserts that caring and competence are closely and carefully connected. When educators design educational environments in which human beings are cared for and nurtured, they are able to link students with learning such that the students transform from egocentric beings to ones who care “for self, for intimate others, for strangers and global others, for the natural world and its nonhuman creatures, for the human-made world, and for ideas” (1995, p. 675).

Stones (1994) expressed the importance of the human educator, the *living link*, in effecting change in learners:

No teaching method can convey information ready-made. The human brain is neither a jug to be filled nor a letterbox to receive a delivery. Teaching depends on the interaction between human beings, not one-way traffic. Skilled teaching involves structuring learners’ environments so that change will occur, thus enabling learners to do what they could not do before the teaching (pp. 311-312).

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