

AVILA UNIVERSITY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

PREFACE:

The Avila University Conceptual Framework for Education Programs was originally developed by School of Education faculty, the Education Advisory Council, K-12 teachers from the TEXT (Teaching Excellence) Team, education alumni and candidates in Avila's education programs. These members of the professional community continue to aid us in revising the document as research and practice in the field of education evolves.

Seven outcome statements serve as the foundation for the document. These are linked to the Missouri Quality Indicators for Beginning Teachers. All Avila professional education programs are based on the tenets articulated in this Conceptual Framework.

The Avila University Conceptual Framework for Education Programs compliments the School of Education mission and purpose statements. These are as follows:

Education Mission Statement

The School of Education at Avila University is committed to educating innovative, adaptable, and involved professionals and to providing service to a diverse and ever-changing population. Through value-based learning and authentic experiences, our graduates will be qualified, ethical, and responsible contributors to the greater society.

Education Purpose Statement

Avila teachers--reflective practitioners prepared to impact a changing world.

OUTCOME 1: Students will demonstrate strong basic skill competencies in the communicative arts, quantitative concepts, and technological communications. (Quality Indicators 1, 2, 7, 11)

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE/PURPOSE:

There is a consensus among educators, business leaders, and accrediting agencies as to what skills students leaving university programs should possess. These include excellent written and oral communication skills, technological proficiency, a growing capacity for critical thinking, and the ability to work in teams (Bollag, 2005). Various professional associations such as the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) have also outlined what teachers should know and be able to do. These bodies agree that teachers must use (a) verbal, (b) nonverbal, (c) mathematical, and (d) technological communication skills to facilitate most learning experiences in the classroom.

Mastering fundamental skills is necessary in order for teachers to develop higher levels of learning. These skills are also necessary for teachers to amass the pedagogical content knowledge required to teach across disciplines and grade levels. Thus, excellent teaching is rooted in strong content knowledge (Kolis & Dunlap, 2004).

The United States will see student enrollment increase by three million in the years to come while half of the teaching force retires (Recruiting New Teachers, 2002). Our nation will need over two million new teachers who will be responsible for preparing students with the communication, quantitative and technological literacies required for success in a changing society that is increasingly influenced by globalization (Aust, et.al, 2005). Yet, many educators possess only a limited understanding of how to use information technology in their teaching. Teacher education must address this challenge by preparing teachers to be life-long learners who consistently integrate new knowledge and technologies into their classrooms (Tatkovic et. al., 2006).

It is vital for teachers to exhibit competency in all three basic skills areas in order to teach these skills to students, assess students' mastery of these skills, interpret assessment data, remediate weaknesses, and communicate effectively with parents and colleagues.

Sungur & Tekkaya (1999) predict that students will need communication, quantitative, and technological skills to solve the problems of the future. Specifically, students will need strong written and oral language skills to clearly and succinctly communicate with others. Students will need to be able to read printed text with a high degree of comprehension. Students will need to use mathematical, scientific, and technological skills with the same proficiency they

exhibit with a pencil. If Sungur & Tekkaya's predictions are accurate, educators must be prepared to help students meet these demands.

OUTCOME/ASSESSMENT MEASURES:

Entrance and exit assessments and overall grade point average (GPA) are used to evaluate this outcome. Traditional age freshmen are required to demonstrate completion of the ACT with a score of 20 or higher or its equivalent on the SAT. Freshmen are required to earn a 2.5 cumulative GPA. However, a 3.0 GPA is required for all education courses.

Prior to being admitted to the School of Education students cannot earn a letter grade below a C in any education course. In addition, students must earn a grade of C or higher in each of the following courses: (a) Composition I, (b) Composition II, (c) Fundamentals of Communication, (d) a college level mathematics course, and (e) a technology course, if it is required for core.

All degree-seeking students in elementary, special, middle and secondary education must pass each section of the C-Base, a state mandated criterion-referenced test, prior to admission into the School of Education. This test includes five sections: (a) grammar, (b) writing, (c) social studies, (d) scientific reasoning, and (e) mathematics. Students are allowed three attempts to pass all sections of the C-Base.

All students must demonstrate writing proficiency in ED 185 and 585 Practicum before they are admitted to the School of Education. Students who demonstrate weaknesses are provided with a plan for remediation.

All students seeking certification are required to pass the specialty area of the Praxis exam, and those seeking teaching certification in the state of Kansas must achieve the required score on the Principles of Learning and Teaching section (PLT) of the Praxis exam.

Avila University requires communication intensive (CI) courses which develop competencies in five areas: (a) reading, (b) writing, (c) listening, (d) speaking and (e) group processing. All degree seeking students are required to have an upper division CI course in their major as well as a capstone CI course.

Basic skill competencies in communication, quantitative concepts, and technological communications are evaluated during ED 495/595/596/597/598 Student Teaching/Internship. Specific questions concerning verbal communication skills, communication with parents, and technological skills are included on the assessment instruments.

Basic skill competencies in communication, quantitative concepts, and technological communications are evaluated again by K-12 principals once students have been employed in a K-12 school. The education alumni follow-up survey asks specific questions concerning verbal communication skills, communication with parents, and technological skills.

Avila requires all teacher education students to be technologically competent. Students in elementary education, special education, and middle school education fulfill this requirement by earning an acceptable grade in ED 320/520 Technology in Education. Secondary education students fulfill this requirement by earning an acceptable grade in CS 110 Understanding Computers or in a content-area technology course.

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OUTCOME 2: Students will exhibit higher level thinking skills, including critical thinking, reflective thinking, evaluative thinking and problem solving in university classrooms and clinical experiences. (Quality Indicators 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10)

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE/PURPOSE:

Teachers are reflective practitioners who acknowledge that teaching is decision-making. Teachers must make daily, critical decisions which will be constantly changing as the world changes. These decisions impact what should be taught, how information should be organized and presented, how students should be engaged, how learning should be assessed, and how difficult situations should be handled. The ability to make good decisions and the propensity to reflect upon one's teaching decisions and practices have been recognized as key elements in teaching success since the writings of Dewey (1933/1974a) and reinforced in subsequent twenty-first century writings (Marzano, 2000). Thus, it is essential for teachers to have time and many opportunities to make decisions, examine those decisions, and problem solve on the basis of those decisions.

It is necessary, in order for teachers to make an impact, to think critically (Dinkelman, 2003) about four levels of teaching: the complexities of the content, the complexities of the ever changing children, the complexities of the changing environment, and the complexities present within themselves (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005).

According to Loewenberg-Ball (2000), the first level of teacher reflection is technical. At this level, the teacher, as practitioner, must reflect upon the content itself emphasizing the application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of vital disciplinary concepts and topics present in the ever changing classroom. Teachers must also learn to reflect upon the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of their teaching strategies and change accordingly. They must be able to accurately assess whether learners have achieved the objectives. They must accurately reflect upon the quality of student work.

Second, as reflective practitioners, teachers must recognize how children think about their experiences (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). Teachers must acknowledge the values, beliefs, attitudes, and special knowledge students bring to situations. Reflection at this level is guided by concerns for esteem building, justice and equity. Teachers must recognize sources of new ideas and understandings and be willing to let diverse learners try out possible courses of action.

Third, teachers must be able to think on their feet within the multifaceted, unpredictable, changing and simultaneous classroom environment (Kellner, 2005). They must problem-solve on the spur of the moment and yet be able to make sound decisions, respectful to all involved, which requires awareness of diversity in thinking as well as cultural sensitivity.

Additionally, teachers need to understand themselves to be able to think critically about their own actions and the actions of others (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). Jersild (1955) asserts that teachers' understandings of others can be only as deep as the wisdom they possess when they look inward. If they cannot reflect upon how they think, feel, and behave and upon how they have grown, changed, and matured as teachers, they present hollow models for students and colleagues. Rather, as Ferraro (2000) asserts, it is the teachers' capacity to self-reflect about the moral and ethical dimensions of the practice, which differentiates the practitioners from mere technicians. Teachers must consciously and continually reflect upon their own biases, their values surrounding global issues, and the outcomes of their decisions and then make adjustments for changing situations.

OUTCOME MEASURES:

As documented on course syllabi, every class in the education curriculum has designated thinking outcomes. These outcomes are specifically taught and evaluated. Many education courses require journaling, self-analysis, scenario analysis, case analysis, self-reflection, and reflective logs to help students hone their critical thinking process.

In addition, there are many opportunities for students to apply the decision making process in campus and clinical courses. These include: ED 185 and 585 Practicum; ED 230 Children's Literature; ED 245 and 545 Tests and Measurements; ED 287 and 587 Educational Foundations; ED 315/515 General Methods; ED 337/537 General Methods II; ED 341/541 Foundations of Literacy; ED 370/570 Assessment and Remediation of Reading Problems; ED 375/575 Reading in the Content Area; ED 386/586 Reading Practicum; ED 454/554 Middle School Teacher Skills/Knowledge/Attitudes; ED 455/555 Special Methods; ED 494/594 Student Teaching Seminar; ED 495/595 Student Teaching; and ED 596/597/598 Internship.

A comprehensive, reflective paper outlining skills learned and problem-solving approaches used is required at the conclusion of ED 185 and 585 Practicum.

Each lesson observed by the Avila supervisor during ED 495/595/596/597/598 Student Teaching/Internship must include a reflection paper outlining the student's understanding and analysis of the lesson taught. The Teacher Work Sample also includes a substantive reflective section. In ED 494/594 Student Teaching Seminar, students are given time and a safe environment in which to orally process the happenings in their clinical experiences.

Students also have numerous opportunities to demonstrate their thinking abilities throughout the assembly of their certification portfolios. Assignments include critical thinking, problem solving, evaluation and reflections. Students must include a reflective analysis of the Quality Indicators met with each portfolio

artifact submitted.

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OUTCOME 3: Students will demonstrate professional dispositions toward self, parents, children, colleagues, and administrators that respect diversity and foster positive human relationships in clinical experiences. (Quality Indicators 9, 10)

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE/PURPOSE:

Teacher education candidates report that the diverse experiences they encounter in clinical placements are instrumental in helping them frame their understanding of teaching (Mueller, 2006). Research also indicates that teachers who are well prepared for the challenges they will face in multifaceted teaching environments are more likely to be retained in the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The rapidly changing demographics of school-aged children and youth suggest that the enrollment of students who are different from the mainstream will continue to increase. These students may differ in culture, ethnicity, language, schooling, and socioeconomic background (Au & Raphael, 2000). Hence, every teacher candidate must be prepared to reach across lines of differences in order to teach and mentor all children and youth. Clinical experiences must therefore provide many opportunities for teacher candidates to learn about and work with diverse students and parents.

Teacher candidates must use their clinical experiences to learn how to communicate effectively and interact appropriately with all constituents on a daily basis. They must be provided with on-going opportunities to develop professional relationships with students, parents, families, administrators, colleagues, and community partners. They must be willing to explore multiple points of view regarding age, gender, culture, lifestyle, and socioeconomic status since the children and youth they teach, and their parents, will represent a host of backgrounds. Increased experiences with children who function at different skill and ability levels will also lead pre-service teachers to a deeper understanding and acceptance of diversity (McDonald & Randolph 2004).

Additionally, teachers must understand the powerful and pervasive nature of school cultures so that their individual teaching philosophies are not automatically subsumed into the existing culture. Rather, they must be able to effectively communicate their ideas and beliefs in such a way that they have the opportunity to influence school culture for the good and shape the school's future (Goodman, 2006).

Teachers must also exhibit appropriate professional dispositions toward self and others because, as representatives of the teaching profession, they will be dealing with constituents who will look to them as models of flexibility and tolerance. Teachers must be able to look beyond their own actions to appreciate the understandings and experiences of others. They must understand the differences in perspectives represented in the classroom, school and community and use those perspectives to enhance learning in this ever changing world. Teachers must create experiences that cultivate curiosity, encourage open-

mindedness, and prepare students to participate in the democratic process (Jenlink & Jenlink 2006). Finally, teachers must exhibit nurturing and respectful dispositions and behaviors to all school constituents they encounter in any setting.

OUTCOME/ASSESSMENT MEASURES:

In several courses education students are formally evaluated by practicing teachers and Avila supervisors through clinical placements. These include: ED 185 and 585 Practicum; ED 230 Children's Literature; ED 337/537 General Methods II; ED 386/586 Reading Practicum; ED 455/555 Special Methods; ED 495/595 Student Teaching; ED 596 Internship; ED 597 Beginning Internship; and ED 598 Advanced Internship.

Formal assessment of students' professional dispositions begins with ED 185 and 585 Practicum. A second formal assessment of professional dispositions is required in ED 386/586 Reading Practicum for elementary and special education candidates or in ED 455/555 Special Methods for middle and secondary school candidates. During ED 495/595 Student Teaching or ED 596/597/598 Internship, candidates are again assessed on professional dispositions. A section of the lesson observation form and summative evaluation is dedicated to professional behaviors. An assessment of teacher dispositions may also be completed by instructors and staff who have concerns about any student. These assessments are voluntary and random, rather than required of all students. The School of Education also sends an assessment instrument to random liberal arts instructors asking them to rate the professional behaviors and attitudes of education students who are enrolled in their classes. This instrument helps assess students' professional behaviors outside the School of Education.

As a part of methods course work and clinical experiences, students are required to observe and/or teach in several different types of classrooms including public, private, urban, suburban, rural, and alternative settings.

Additionally, in ED 229 Developmental Education Psychology, students may take the Myers Briggs personality inventory or participate in other activities which help them better understand their own thinking as well as the thinking of others. As a part of ED 315/515 General Methods, students often take the Learning Styles Inventory to determine their modality strengths and better recognize the strengths of others. As part of ED 364/564/365/565/366/566 Parent Conferencing, students participate in simulation activities to aid them become more sensitive to issues of diversity among parents and guardians.

As a part of the certification portfolio, education students must document their ability to work with children, parents, colleagues, administrators and other school constituents in diverse settings.

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OUTCOME 4: Students will use research-based teaching techniques to differentiate instruction and effectively manage the classroom. (Quality Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11)

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE/PURPOSE:

Teacher preparation programs must ensure that teachers have a sound grasp of research-based instructional strategies appropriate for the grade levels and content areas they will be teaching. It is well documented that subject knowledge is important to teaching; however, research also indicates that pedagogical knowledge has a strong effect in terms of learning outcomes (King-Rice, 2003; Cross & Rigden, 2003; NCATE, 2006; and Darling-Hammond, 2006). Teachers who possess extensive subject knowledge, employ many differentiated teaching strategies, and skillfully manage the classroom, are the highest rated practitioners among students (McKenzie, 2003).

Effective teachers must use a wide repertoire of teaching models, depending on the learners' abilities and traits, instructional situations, previous assessment data, and goals to be accomplished. Consequently, it is vital for teaching candidates to see many different teaching strategies modeled in university classrooms. It is also necessary for them to have many opportunities to see and use differentiated teaching strategies in their clinical experiences. Research findings indicate that using a variety of teaching methods increases the probability that student interest will be maintained and that higher achievement gains will be made (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Teacher candidates must experience this for themselves as they work with students in K-12 schools.

Educational research identifies stress related to classroom management as the most influential factor in failure among novice teachers (Athanasos & Achinstein 2003). Even with a strong foundation of content knowledge and differentiated teaching strategies, teachers will be unable to facilitate learning unless they are able to effectively manage the classroom. It is vital that teachers provide a safe, orderly and positive classroom environment in which students learn to their fullest potential. Hence, it is necessary to provide teaching candidates with training to use a wide repertoire of prevention strategies as well as behavior and classroom management techniques. It is essential to help prospective teachers base their approaches on research-based practice and responsiveness to individual and cultural differences (Weinstein & Curran, 2004).

OUTCOME/ASSESSMENT MEASURES:

In education courses, students watch instructors model many differentiated instructional techniques. Teaching candidates are provided with information about these techniques for their teaching files then encouraged to take these into their own classrooms. For example, they see cooperative learning exercises, creative projects, debates, demonstrations, dilemmas, discussions, gaming, guided inquiry, internet exercises, interviews, lectures, micro-teaching, mock

teaching, open inquiry, poster presentations, role playing, sensory/perception exercises, simulations, student presentations, VCR/DVD presentations, and web quests.

As part of most education courses, students will be evaluated on their ability to demonstrate various teaching techniques, match teaching strategies to different audiences, write lesson plans, develop units, and teach lessons.

Classroom observations, hands-on clinical experiences, and student teaching/internship, provide teaching candidates with many opportunities to work in diverse settings. ED 185 and 585 Practicum includes a multicultural component. Students in this class are placed in settings with teachers chosen by Avila for their teaching excellence skills. The goal is to place students in settings, which are different from the experiences the students have already encountered in their own schooling in order to transform them and enhance their experience working with diverse student populations. For example, someone who attended urban schools would be placed in suburban or rural settings.

In ED 341/541 Foundations of Literacy; ED 386/586 Reading Practicum; ED 670 Advanced Assessment & Remediation of Reading Problems; ED 671 Advanced Techniques of Secondary Literacy; ED 697 Practicum in Elementary Remedial Reading; and ED 698 Practicum in Secondary Literacy, students work in an actual school environment to teach reading lessons. During field experiences in ED 315/515 General Methods; ED 353/553 Analysis and Characteristics: Cross-Categorical; ED 358/558 Methods and Curriculum Cross-Categorical; ED 386/586 Reading Practicum; ED 650 Language & Culture; ED 652 Methods of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages; ED 654 Materials, Design, & Assessment for English Language Learners; ED 670 Advanced Assessment & Remediation of Reading Problems; ED 671 Advanced Techniques of Secondary Literacy; ED 672 Literacy Research Seminar; ED 673 Evaluation of Abilities & Assessment; ED 695 ESOL Practicum; ED 697 Practicum in Elementary Remedial Reading; and ED 698 Practicum in Secondary Literacy, students learn a variety of teaching methods, strategies, and techniques for adapting curricula and teaching subject matter to meet the diverse instructional needs of all students. Also students in ED 375/575 Reading in the Content Area; ED 650 Language & Culture; and ED 671 Advanced Techniques of Secondary Literacy must adapt content area reading materials to meet the needs of all learners.

All students seeking initial certification are required to take ED 419/519 Behavior Management, in which they write personal discipline plans and apply techniques, which represent various classroom management theories. Graduate students can take ED 617 Advanced Behavior Management to learn additional strategies for managing the classroom. Students demonstrate knowledge of pedagogy and classroom management by successfully completing the Praxis exam and maintaining a 3.0 in their education classes.

All evaluation forms for the student teaching/internship experience are tied to the Missouri Quality Indicators for Beginning Teachers. The performance assessments used in these courses ask practicing teachers and university supervisors to rate teaching candidates on their demonstration of differentiated instructional and classroom management techniques.

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OUTCOME 5: Students will use theoretical knowledge and research about learning and human behavior to orchestrate effective learning experiences and respond appropriately to classroom events. (Quality Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE/PURPOSE:

In order to be reflective practitioners prepared to impact a changing world, prospective teachers need to be knowledgeable of current learning theories (Gredler, 2001) and understand how to apply the core tenets of these theories as they facilitate learning in the classroom (Washburn-Moses, 2006). Pre-service teachers must also be able to use current research in order to “know what works, how it works, and under what circumstances it works” (NRC, 2002, p. 67).

Teachers must understand the importance of putting students at the forefront in the learning process. They must encourage students to construct their own understandings and experiment with their own learning (Rakes, Fields & Cox, 2006). Teachers must be masters at reading students’ behaviors and seeking out and reflecting on the causes for it. Further, they must understand that motivation is critical for learning (Schweindle, Meyer & Turner, 2006) especially when working with diverse students (McCabe, 2006).

Teachers must understand that new learning depends on prior experiences and background knowledge. What is already known has much to do with what and how much will be learned (Gredler, 2001). Teachers must effectively tap into this storehouse of prior knowledge and build upon it to enhance learning. Teachers must realize that especially in this quickly changing world, learning is enhanced when students find relevance in the material and methods and have some way to directly apply the information to their own lives.

Teachers must also realize that learning is enhanced by social interaction. Thus, they must strive to make classrooms comfortable and stimulating places to learn-places where diverse groups of students become a community of learners. They must orchestrate educational situations where students feel safe and assured that their ideas will be considered, accepted and valued. Thus, teachers must be well versed at incorporating cooperative learning principles into the classroom and be skilled in preparing students to handle changing experiences (Utley, 2006).

With the increase of diverse populations in American schools, teachers must understand how individual differences and abilities impact learning. They must understand the specific learning challenges that exceptionalities, (Ervin, et. al, 2006; Yell, Shriner & Katsiyannis, 2006) ethnic diversity, language diversity (Godley, et. al, 2006), and socioeconomic diversity present for students (Nieto, 2006). They must be skilled in reading signs of distress as well as recognizing

and affirming successes. They must use well-rounded and multifaceted strategies which meet the learning needs of all students.

Teachers must understand that student learning is increased when students are empowered. Thus, teachers must create environments in which young people serve as communicators of knowledge. Students need to be afforded opportunities to make choices, to be “experts” on topics, and to teach others what they know well.

Finally, teachers must actively encourage students to consider the learning strategies that work for them. They must promote metacognitive reflection about all that happens in the classroom. Effective teachers understand that these elements are critical to enhancing student learning (Gredler, 2001).

OUTCOME/ASSESSMENT MEASURES:

Students demonstrate understanding of effective teaching decisions by successfully completing class assignments and exercises which ask them to analyze scenarios (ED 229 Developmental & Educational Psychology; ED 235 and ED 535 Psychology of the Exceptional Child; ED 341/541 Foundations of Literacy; ED 419/519 Behavior Management) by observing classroom teachers in action and evaluating their decisions and techniques (ED 235 and 535 Psychology of the Exceptional Child; ED 315/515 General Methods; ED 343/543 Language Arts Methods), by teaching demonstration lessons in methods courses (ED 229 Developmental & Educational Psychology; ED 235 and 535 Psychology of the Exceptional Child; ED 287 and 587 Educational Foundations; ED 315/515 General Methods; ED 419/519 Behavior Management; ED 454/554 Middle School Teacher Skills, Knowledge, & Attitudes), and by taking exams which present classroom dilemmas to which they must respond (ED 229 Developmental & Educational Psychology; ED 235 and 535 Psychology of the Exceptional Child; ED 245 Tests & Measurements; ED 341/541 Foundations of Literacy). These activities and exercises are documented on course syllabi. Students also demonstrate understanding of effective teaching decisions by successfully student teaching in an approved classroom during the last semester of training (ED 495/595/596/598 Student Teaching/Internship). Student teaching observation and evaluation forms reflect success in this area on several different standards. The observation instruments, Observation Form E and Form E-C, used during student teaching/internship are also tied to the quality indicators. Achievement of the indicators during a student teaching/internship lesson is evidence of the pre-service student’s ability to respond appropriately to classroom events. Also the student teacher videotapes her/himself teaching a lesson then evaluates the lesson using the same form (Form E) used by the Avila supervisor. This allows the student to reflect on his/her own abilities to apply knowledge and problem solving skills to the actual teaching of a lesson. Part of this assignment also includes analyzing the classroom students’ response to the lesson and reflecting on the effectiveness of what was done (Teacher Work

Sample). Students are also asked to write reflection papers analyzing their decisions in lessons as part of the student teaching experience. All supervisors also complete Form I with the student teacher during the placement. This form requires that the students reflect on the ways in which they are applying theoretical knowledge from college classes to the school classroom. These requirements are evidenced on the syllabus for student teaching/internship. In addition, the final evaluation forms completed by both the cooperating teacher (Form A) and the Avila supervisor (Forms A and B) which are included in the portfolio provide further evidence of the accomplishment of this goal.

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OUTCOME 6: Students will fully grasp the realities of classrooms by applying principles, theories, and methods learned in university classrooms to clinical experiences. (Quality Indicators 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11)

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE/PURPOSE:

Clinical experiences in K-12 schools are vital in a teacher preparation program for many reasons. Too frequently novice teachers encounter reality shock when they leave the university and take on full responsibilities in a classroom. They often fail to recognize the connections between their course work and what they must do on a daily basis. For this reason, on-site clinical experiences need to be woven throughout all stages of the teacher preparation program; and students need opportunities to reflect upon and process experiences at clinical sites in order to make connections between theory and practice. Teaching candidates need to be able to apply what they have learned in an authentic setting, to gradually take on the full responsibilities of teaching, and to process their experiences with able mentors. Only then will they leave the university feeling confident and ready to face the changing and challenging realities of the classroom.

Early clinical experiences prepare teacher candidates for employment by giving them chances to observe first-hand how master teachers behave in the classroom, with parents, and in relationships with colleagues. These experiences permit students to observe principles, theories, and methods being practiced by seasoned professionals (Corcoran & Leahy, 2003). Early clinical experiences also aid students in knowing whether they wish to pursue teaching as a career before they are required to engage in actual teaching experiences (Rozycki, 2003). Early clinical experiences also help teaching candidates transition from the role of student to the role of teacher. For these reasons, clinical experiences must be required early in a teacher preparation program.

As teacher candidates move further into their programs of study, sustained and frequent clinical experiences are necessary. Later clinical experiences allow teaching candidates to take on instructional responsibilities with individual students, with groups of students and with the whole class. They provide chances to design curriculum, to try out instructional techniques, to implement classroom and behavior management strategies, to practice administering various assessments, to make decisions based on data, to reflect upon performance and to obtain feedback from students and professionals. Additionally, clinical experiences completed with diverse learners help prospective teachers implement techniques they have learned for differentiating instruction. They are able to practice teaching students of different ethnic, language, socioeconomic, gender, and religious backgrounds (Kunzman, 2003; Obidah & Howard, 2005; Moir, 2006; Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, Minnici, & Carpenter, 2006).

Culminating clinical experiences are critical in helping teaching candidates bring together their knowledge of content, curriculum, child development, classroom management, assessment, and professionalism in an authentic environment. By assuming full responsibilities in the classroom, prospective teachers are able to make connections, see developmental progress and make adjustments in the same manner as a traditional classroom teacher. As well, pre-service teachers are able to participate in meetings, conferences, and auxiliary duties of teachers. Finally, they encounter the less tangible, but equally important, ethical, moral, and character-driven obligations and standards of the profession (Harris, 2003; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). This knowledge is crucial to their success as educators.

Experienced teachers, seeking advanced certificates, also need the opportunity to practice what they have learned. They can benefit from action research and structured opportunities to practice and reflect upon their uses of new techniques in their own classrooms.

OUTCOME/ASSESSMENT MEASURES:

At Avila University clinical experiences are included throughout the teacher preparation process. In early on-site experiences, pre-service teachers observe classroom teachers and students, work with individuals or small groups under close supervision, and reflect upon their experiences. Syllabi, project formats, scoring scales, papers and projects from early education classes provide evidence of this. Early clinical experiences include: ED 185 and 585 Practicum; ED 229 Developmental Education Psychology; ED 230 Children's Literature; and ED 235 and 535 Psychology of the Exceptional Child. As an important part of ED 185 and 585 Practicum, the university supervisor and the mentor teacher complete a professional dispositions form for every student placed in the field.

In clinical experiences arranged throughout the later education courses, students are required to assume teaching responsibilities, work with struggling learners, differentiate instruction, use subject-specific tools, try various pedagogical techniques, design and evaluate curriculum, demonstrate learning, influence student learning, reflect upon performance and obtain feedback from others. Syllabi, project formats, scoring scales, papers and projects from these classes provide evidence of this. Later clinical experiences include: ED 315/515 General Methods; ED 337/537 General Methods II; ED 341/541 Foundations of Literacy; ED 343/543 Language Arts Methods; ED 353/553 Analysis and Characteristics of Cross Categorical Special Education; ED 358/558 Methods and Curriculum for Cross Categorical Special Education; ED 370/570 Assessment and Remediation of Reading Problems; ED 375/575 Reading in the Content Area; ED 386/586 Reading Practicum; and ED 455/555 Special Methods.

During the culminating clinical experience, ED 495/595/596/598 Student Teaching/Internship, students have full responsibility for the classroom. They

bring together their knowledge of content, curriculum, child development, classroom management, assessment, and professionalism. They engage in all meetings, conferences, and auxiliary duties of a teacher. As well, they must demonstrate ethical, moral, and character-driven standards of the profession. The Avila supervisor and the cooperating teacher observe, document, and determine the student's degree of growth toward maximal responsibility in the classroom. Several forms are used to document growth and final mastery. Classroom observation forms (Form E, Form E-C) and final evaluation forms (Form A, Form B, Form F) are used for these purposes. In addition, students and supervisors complete forms that require reflection on the ways students apply theoretical knowledge from university classes to clinical experiences (Form D, Form I).

In advanced, certificate, clinical experiences in ED 650 Language & Culture; ED 652 Methods of Teaching ESL; ED 654 Materials, Design, & Assessment for ESL; ED 670 Advanced Assessment & Remediation of Reading Problems; ED 672 Research on Literacy Seminar; ED 673 Evaluation of Abilities & Assessment; ED 671 Advanced Techniques of Secondary Literacy; ED 695 ESOL Practicum, ED 697 Practicum in Elementary Remedial Reading; and ED 698 Practicum in Secondary Literacy, students complete a variety of field-based assignments intended to help them learn new techniques and explore new roles as teachers.

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OUTCOME 7: Students will establish a foundation for continuing professional development. (Quality Indicators 9, 10, 11)

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE/PURPOSE:

Teachers need to plan for and engage in continuing professional growth and life-long learning in order to be prepared to impact a changing world. Professional development activities that present new ideas and help teachers learn new skills and abilities are important in all stages of career development (Kunzman, 2003; Corcoran & Leahy, 2003). Thus, prospective teachers need to be exposed to and involved in professional development activities in their clinical experiences and student teaching/internship. They must have opportunities to collaborate and reflect with colleagues who participate in professional development activities so they may establish an appreciation for these opportunities. This disposition toward life-long learning begins in teacher preparation and must be continued throughout the induction process.

Novice and veteran teachers must view professional development as a continuous process of refining and developing skills as well as a means for keeping abreast of changing trends in the field of education. As American society becomes increasingly dependent on electronic information sources, the needs and advantages of being comfortable and competent with technology have become clear. Therefore, teachers need to keep up with this widening information superhighway for a number of reasons. First, they must aid students with their learning in these areas. Second, they must incorporate new technologies into their repertoire of teaching methods. Educational technology requires the assistance of educators who integrate technology into the curriculum, align it with student learning goals, and use it for engaged learning projects (Rodriguez & Knuth, 2000). Finally, teachers must be able to use technological tools to complete administrative tasks within the school environment. Hence, participating in professional development aimed at increasing one's knowledge and experiences in the use of data and technology will become more critical with time (Stiggins, 2002).

Teachers also need to take advantage of professional development opportunities to prepare them for the leadership roles they will assume as team members, veteran teacher, and mentors in schools. Most teachers will, at some point, be part of professional learning communities, facilitate in-service programs, order and manage materials and equipment, conduct action research and assessment activities, and participate in the accreditation/evaluation process. Thus, they must be receptive to learning new skills and trying out new and changing roles in these professional arenas. Teachers who become leaders experience personal and professional satisfaction, a reduction in isolation, a sense of instrumentality, and new learning which spills over into their teaching (Barth, 2001). Participating in professional development in these areas is also important and beneficial for new and novice teachers.

Finally, teachers must realize that forces both inside and outside the teaching profession have mandated continuous learning. Many states have legislated continuing education programs for teachers. In many states, it is no longer possible to gain permanent certification. Thus, continuing education is a requirement for continued employment and advancement. Many districts encourage and/or mandate graduate level study for teachers. Banner (2004) suggests that broadening the instructor's intellectual horizons does much to improve the quality of teaching thus supporting the importance of persistent continuing education for quality teaching.

OUTCOME/ASSESSMENT MEASURES:

The Avila School of Education encourages and enhances learning and development in the field of pedagogy by utilizing teachers (including Avila alumni) in its TEXT (teaching excellence) Mentoring Program. This allows teachers in the field opportunities to pass on their knowledge and experience to teachers of the future, as well as further define their own philosophies of teaching. All TEXT mentors are eligible to take one credit hour, free of charge, in the undergraduate or graduate program. Many TEXT mentors take advantage of this opportunity to continue their education through the Master's program or by taking a course in technology at the undergraduate level. Avila students are exposed to these mentor teachers who are highly engaged in professional development. Avila students have the opportunity to hear from them and learn to appreciate their effort at life-long learning.

Many Avila graduates return to the campus to speak in education classes and at Avila Education Association (AEA) and Kappa Delta Pi (KDPI) meetings. Avila education students and graduates use various structured and unstructured opportunities to continue their professional development (i.e. taking graduate classes, attending in-service workshops, participating in follow-up sessions provided by the Avila School of Education, involving themselves in professional education organizations, attending Kansas City Regional and Professional Development Center (KCRPDC) workshops, and engaging in personal reading and self-study).

In education courses, Avila faculty encourage students to join professional organizations so they can begin to network professionally, dialogue with practitioners, and receive the literature these organizations produce.

A follow-up survey, sent out by the Avila School of Education, assesses whether professional development has begun within a year of graduation. The School of Education provides opportunities for its students to continue to develop professionally by offering workshops at Avila and in the region, by providing personal visits to the students' schools if requested, and by inviting the students back to campus for conferences and advising.

Avila University is a member of the Kansas City Regional and Professional Development Center (KCRPDC). One of the goals of this consortium is to aid teachers in their first few years of teaching by offering free seminars. Each year the programs and workshops offered by the KCRPDC are shared with the first and second year alumni so they can attend and receive support from fellow educators.

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