

TEACHING & CURRICULUM PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

At the Warner School, we are committed to educating teachers and researchers who have the courage and conviction to lead struggles for social justice. We prepare teachers who have in-depth knowledge of the subjects they teach, and the skills and understanding of teaching and learning needed to help all students develop their potential. Our students learn to approach curricular and pedagogical decisions as thoughtful practitioners with knowledge of the social, cultural, historical, and political contexts of schooling and curriculum. It is our ultimate goal to prepare teachers who can become agents for change in schools and who are committed to higher standards in teaching and learning. Our doctoral students (PhD, EdD, and Accelerated EdD) develop deep understandings of the complex relationship of ontology, epistemology, and theoretical frameworks to research design and interpretation. This rich preparation promotes the construction and use of knowledge for the benefit of human society.

More specifically, Teaching and Curriculum teacher preparation programs are characterized by the following elements:

Integration of content and pedagogy.

Effective teachers need to have a solid understanding of the subject matters they teach. They need to confront the fundamental questions of what they should teach, why they should teach it, how it should be taught, and for what purpose. In addition, future teachers need to know what is appropriate for the age/grade level they teach and for the children, families, and communities in which they teach. Therefore, “teaching methods” are not taught in isolation, but grounded in a research-based understanding of the relationship between content and pedagogy and child development. At the core of each of the Warner School teacher preparation programs are two or more courses that emphasize reflection on the nature of the subject matter to be taught, the goals for teaching it, and the assumptions and implications of choosing specific teaching methods at varying levels.

Integration of theory and practice.

At the Warner School, we believe that theory and practice are deeply and inseparably intertwined. We believe that future teachers should be able to use knowledge gained through both research and practice to construct environments where quality teaching and learning can take place. Warner pre-service teachers have a unique opportunity to understand the relationship between theory and practice throughout their course of study, as field experiences and student teaching take place concurrently with the courses about the teaching and learning of specific subjective matters mentioned above. While more challenging for both students and faculty, this approach encourages students to bring insight and questions from their classroom experiences into their course, and vice-versa, and to develop the habits of a reflective practitioner.

A commitment to social justice.

Underlying all of our teacher preparation programs is an understanding that social justice concerns are related to processes and relationships that privilege particular groups and marginalize others. Warner School candidates understand that social justice is an ideology and a goal; that is, it is both theoretical and practical. Teacher candidates come

to see learning as a social practice that is ideological (Street, 1995) in that social meanings and power relationships are enacted through constructing meaning and knowledge. We believe that there is a knowledge base that one needs to have access to in order to be effective as an agent for social change (social justice requires more than will and good intentions). In addition, our candidates understand their role in the maintenance or transformation of social and educational practices that engender inequality. We strive to encourage candidates to develop a sense of social responsibility through reflections about themselves as raced, classed, gendered and abled individuals. Through their interactions with others whose background is different from their own, candidates develop cross-cultural understandings of the construction and discourse of difference. Courses across our curricula develop candidates' recognition of the connections between power/knowledge, education, and teaching and learning and understand that all forms of difference are interrelated, interlocking, and interactive; that is, they are not isolated variables. Coursework promotes the understanding of difference described above and actively engages candidates in understanding difference and explicitly exposes candidates to pedagogical theory and practices designed to promote meaningful student learning.

A commitment to inclusion of students with disabilities.

We believe that all teachers should be prepared to recognize the diverse needs of their students, and they should have strategies to differentiate instruction so as to meet those needs. We believe that all students bring rich and meaningful experiences to school and that those experiences should be resources for curriculum development. Warner School graduates lead efforts to advocate for the full inclusion of all students, particularly students with disabilities, as part of their efforts to reform schools. We view inclusion as a commitment to the education of all students in heterogeneous schools and classrooms within environments that value the various backgrounds and experiences all students bring to the classroom and maintain high expectations based on students' individual strengths, needs, and interests. Inclusion promotes and requires collaboration among school, family, and community while providing students and teachers the necessary supports and services. All our teacher preparation programs include at least one course designed to develop knowledge of how to facilitate the learning, participation, and belonging of students with disabilities and an understanding of meaningful inclusion. We also make deliberate efforts to offer all pre-service teachers the opportunity to conduct their field experiences and student teaching in inclusive settings.

A sociocultural-historical perspective on learning and human development.

The Warner School holds a deep commitment to understanding the diversity of human development in order to maximize student learning in schools. We believe that children and youth learn through active engagement in culturally organized activities involving knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Rogoff, 1990, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wertsch, 1991). Communities of practice or communities of learners emerge as organizational systems within which learning is achieved in the context of social relationships. Learning (knowledge) is thus socially constructed. Thus, learning involves more than acquiring new knowledge; it also involves participating in communities through which knowledge and the processes of generating it are built and negotiated collectively. We see children as active agents who are not only constructed by social and cultural practices and institutions, but whom also construct and change the world.

Learning involves more than receiving knowledge; it involves constructing new knowledge, in both the declarative sense (knowing that) and the procedural sense (knowing how). Course assignments and experiences model the construction of a community of learners within which candidates develop an understanding of how to construct meaningful contexts for learning and development.

Assessment in context of multiple forms of continuous assessment and the role of assessment in informing instruction.

Warner School candidates explore assessment as an integral part of meaningful instruction that maximizes student learning and supports development. Candidates learn that assessment should be embedded in authentic learning activities that are for real audiences and real purposes. Assessment should also be tailored to the specific purposes and contexts of learning, so as to support student expression, inquiry, and meaning-making processes. Candidates interrogate the climate of high-stakes testing, and the limitations of using single-point-testing instruments to make decisions about student aptitudes and abilities. In response, they develop a variety of assessment modes, including formal and informal, summative, formative, and cumulative. Candidates explore assessments as ways to both develop curriculum and better meet student needs, as well as to provide students a variety of ways to demonstrate learning, risk-taking, and growth. Student self-assessment and critical reflection are integral to this model. Carefully crafted assessments should provide both guidelines and feedback for students. Candidates will learn the importance of multiple forms of continuous assessment and the role of assessment in informing instruction.

A commitment to enhance student learning through technology.

At the Warner School we believe that a variety of technologies have to be an integral part of students' pedagogical content knowledge in the 21st century. In our courses, technology is viewed and used in distinct ways to enhance students' understanding of the themes and concepts inherent in each of the disciplines and across the curriculum. Candidates interrogate the ways in which technology can both transform and reproduce traditional pedagogical practices and unequal distribution of resources and knowledge. Thus, we view technology as a social practice that has the potential to change social and power relations in classrooms for good or for ill (Lankshear, Snyder, & Green, 2000). Through experiences focused on communicating, collaborating, conducting research, solving problems and disseminating information and knowledge with technology, candidates learn to use and problematize the various technologies available to support content-specific and cross-curricular learning while enhancing their ability to effectively integrate technology into their teaching. Candidates also become familiar with both the various technologies used to facilitate learning and technology integration strategies that support inclusive practices that draw on varied resources students bring to bear and that recognize our responsibility to provide access to participation and communication in service of a community of learners that benefits from all students' contributions. Candidates must be prepared to promote ethical, equitable, legal, literate and humane uses technology resources among their students as means of empowering learners as active citizens in a global society.

A commitment to use our research and service to improve education.

As a teacher preparation program within a research institution, we believe that research, teaching, and service are intertwined and reinforce each other in the work for social change. We define these mutually constituted practices as our *praxis*. The faculty conducts basic and applied research that builds new knowledge within each of our fields. This research includes ethnographic studies, qualitative studies, experimental and quasi-experimental studies, and non-empirical or theoretical research. All the above-described characteristics of our conceptual framework are embedded in our research, teaching, and services activities.