



## **Southwest Minnesota State University**

### **Teacher Education Conceptual Framework**

*Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching*  
Marshall, Minnesota 56258

***The Vision:*** Communities of practice investigating learning and teaching.

***The Mission:*** The mission of the Professional Education program at Southwest Minnesota State University is to create communities of practice where each learner is an active participant in the investigation of learning, teaching, and leadership processes. Teachers and learners will engage in educational theory, research, inquiry, critical reflection, and application in pursuit of excellence in education.

### ***Description of the Conceptual Framework***

The School of Education at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) is comprised of the undergraduate and graduate faculty and the Dean of Business, Education, Professional and Graduate Studies responsible for teacher licensure programs. Undergraduate and graduate teacher (licensure) demonstrate the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice and the standards of the SMSU framework *Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching*. The non-licensure graduate students demonstrate the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and the standards of the SMSU conceptual framework *Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching*. The framework illustrates a relationship between learning and teaching in the context of participation in communities and globally.

## *Communities of Practice*

Communities are social units where people live and work together in a variety of ways and places. In communities people participate in communication, negotiation, ownership, values definition, and socio-cultural interactions. Communities of Practice provide opportunities for educators to experience authentic, caring relationships. Participation in purposeful, inquiring, inclusive communities is critical for effective learning. (Banks & McGee Banks, 2003; Boyer, 1995; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Jalongo, Jalongo, & Elam, 1991; Peck, 1987; Palloff, R.M. & Pratt, K. 1999; Senge, Kleiner, Cambron-McCabe, Smith, Lucas, & Dutton, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1994; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Wald & Castleberry, 2000; Wenger, 1998; Garrison, 2011; Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, & Stillman, 2016).

Community members are continually involved with collaborative projects, resulting in practices that reflect these efforts and social relationships. Practice involves experiencing global communities constructing meaning out of participation. Wenger defines “practice” as a “way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that sustain mutual engagement in action” (1998, p.5). Learners and teachers reflect upon their practices, make decisions as they implement instruction, and interact with peers. As professionals reflect throughout their practice, theories are examined to inform practice. Members of Communities of Practice experience successes and failures, chaos and order, harmony and conflict (Senge, et al., 2000; Wheatley, 2001; Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, & Stillman, 2016). Engagement is a process driven by values and active learning, which guides instruction. Practice and community unite when people are engaged in actions and relationships.

## *Investigating Learning and Teaching*

Learning and Teaching are linked through intentional instruction that guides students. Effective teaching provides resources and opportunities for meaningful participation in the context of learning.

Constructivism, a theory about knowledge and learning, emerges as a foundation for understanding the teaching and learning process (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Dewey, 1997, 1938; Girod, 2002; von Glasserfield, 1996; Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, & Stillman, 2016). Investigating is the study of conditions necessary for learning and teaching (Dewey, 1997, 1916). Teachers provide learning environments where learners search for meaning, appreciate uncertainty, and inquire responsibly. Together, teachers and learners support socio-cultural interactions, cooperative learning, and interdisciplinary curricula.

Faculty creates opportunities for students to understand relationships between learning and teaching. Communities of Practice are formed to engage learners in the teaching and learning process through collaboration, assessment, and reflection.

## ***The Seven Core Values***

To accomplish the mission of the School of Education at Southwest Minnesota State University, *Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching* include the core values of (1) inquiry, (2) human diversity, (3) socio-cultural interactions, (4) learning environments, (5) belief, value, and knowledge structures, (6) democracy, and (7) leadership.

Inquiry involves the use of research and reflective processes for learning. Affirming human diversity helps to support inclusive Communities of Practice. Socio-cultural interaction requires understanding and applying cultural and social learning theories in context. Positive learning environments nurture and enhance learning. Belief, value, and knowledge structures guide learners to organize and construct meaning, which informs their practice.

Leadership involves participatory learning opportunities in which all members share responsibility.

## ***The Conceptual Framework Model***

The Conceptual Framework is illustrated by a modified Yin Yang model. This model illustrates balance among factors that reflect natural parts of the dynamic learning process in *Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching*. In the colored model, tan represents the diversity of communities, with green illustrating growth through practice. The light blue represents the continual movement of the professional education process.

## ***Concluding Statement***

Under the guidance and support of the School of Education, teacher candidates form connections using the Communities of Practice Investigating Learning and Teaching, the Seven Core Values, and the Conceptual Framework Model to become effective practitioners.

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