



California State University, Long Beach
College of Education and Affiliated Programs


Conceptual Framework


Summary of Key Ideas and Knowledge Base


The educational ideals and ideologies of the United States reflect two important and often conflicting currents of thought. Our educational images are rich with individualistic themes, but our practice and rhetoric often reflect socially-based constructions transcending the individual. Part of the challenge facing programs that prepare professionals for work in schools is to reconcile these disparate ideals while rendering comprehensible a complex, contradictory conceptual terrain. Our theme--Teaching for Life-Long Learning, Professional Growth, and Social Responsibility--reflects this tension and states our vision. We honor the individual, but no less do we value and honor the society that transcends the individual. Six key ideas, enumerated in our mission statement, undergird our vision and define the essentials of our knowledge base.


 **Growth and Learning.** Theories of human growth and learning are central to our practice, but no one theory adequately encompasses the full range of processes and dynamics involved in what we call "education." Different theories offer different perspectives on behavior, development, thinking, feeling, motivation, and competence. Critical thinking and life-long learning are fundamental to our conceptions of growth and learning. Education from preschool to graduate school must help prepare students for challenges and changes throughout their lives.

 **Social Responsibility.** Learning institutions must be communities that promote and support social responsibility that nurtures equity, democracy, nonviolence, and caring. Leadership is a necessary ingredient in communities where members take responsibility for themselves and for others. Social responsibility and leadership are particularly important when we consider the role of information technologies in education since they are having such a marked impact on so many aspects of our society.

 **Diversity** has always been a fact of life among humans. The challenge for educators is to provide optimal growth and dignity for all students. Numerous inclusive models exist, all pointing to ways of accomplishing this important goal. Amidst the diversity, there is also commonality. While celebrating and building on the richness of our social mosaic, we must also help students develop--to the best of their abilities--a common core of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that open social, economic, intellectual, and cultural opportunities. An ultimate goal of the educational process must be personal empowerment, a theme particularly important for students who too often have been dis-empowered by educational institutions.

 **Service and Collaboration.** Students must have tools to facilitate their thinking about how they can contribute to creating a society oriented toward partnership and collaboration rather than domination and intolerance. We support the concept of "service learning," where students learn content and skills integral to their professional preparation while simultaneously serving the community by working in schools and clinics. At the university and within our own programs we use inclusive processes for governance, planning, communication, and assessment. Productive collaboration is at the heart of organizational improvement and renewal.

 **School Improvement.** Effective practice must be the cornerstone of our knowledge base and professional practice. The unprecedented wave of educational reform we are witnessing is predicated on the assumption that we have and can deploy effective practices in all our schools. We must be committed to change--not for its own sake, but to make a positive difference in the lives of our students and our students' students. Themes of care and social and civic responsibility must also provide part of the framework for K-12 educational reform.

 **Research, Scholarship, and Evaluation.** Research and scholarship are integral to the work of higher education faculty. Our practice is enhanced when we actively contribute to the community of scholars in our respective disciplines. Teaching and scholarship complement each other. Through program evaluation, another aspect of scholarship, we also bring disciplined tools of inquiry to bear on significant social and professional questions, such as how well our programs are helping to prepare education professionals.