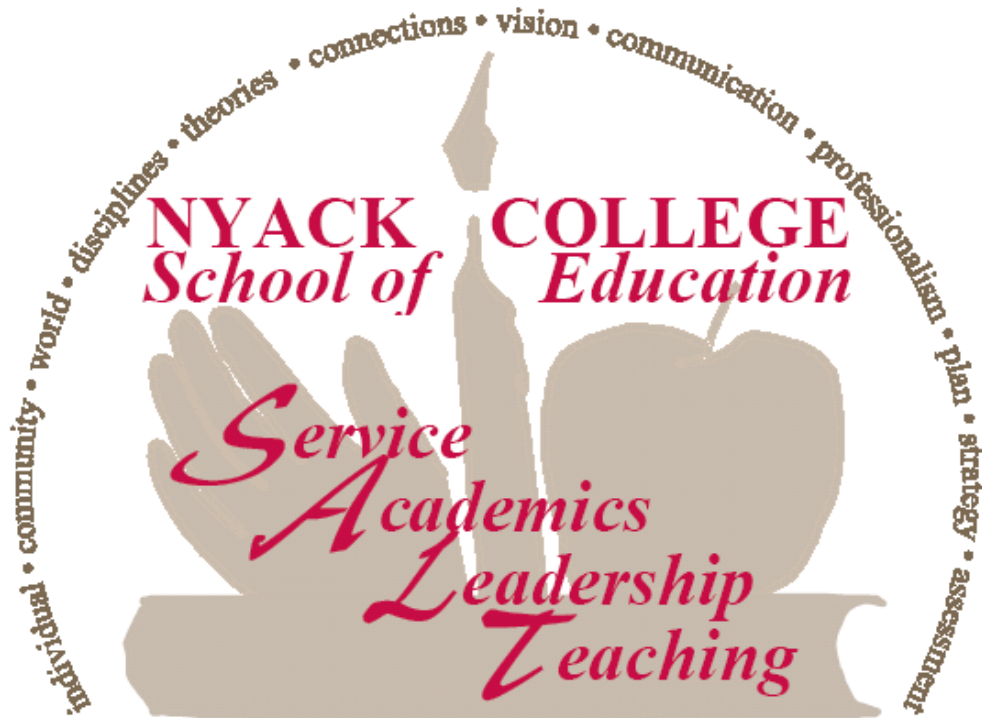


# Conceptual Framework



Our conceptual framework guides the curriculum, instruction, structure and assessment for the undergraduate professional education programs in the School of Education. The framework, based on the SALT acronym representing Service, Academics, Leadership, and Teaching, is comprised of a standards-driven, student-centered, assessment-based, collaborative approach that values the preparation of educators who can become connectors between their Christian, academic, and professional preparation.

## The Professional Education Unit and its Mission

Nyack College aspires to foster intellectual development, social responsibility, and spiritual growth, as represented by the college motto *Pursuing Truth and Preparing for Service*. To fulfill these aspirations, the unit is committed to the preparation of professional educators who are knowledgeable of professional standards, devoted to their faith, skilled in assessment, pedagogically competent, life-long learners, and capable of working effectively with diverse populations in a constantly changing global community.

Therefore, it is the mission of the School of Education to prepare and equip teacher candidates spiritually, intellectually, and socially to provide ethical, exemplary, equitable instruction to a diverse student population in a variety of cultures, contexts, and communities.

## Conceptual Framework Design

*“You are the salt of the earth...” (Matthew 5:13)*

The conceptual framework of the School of Education reflects a set of beliefs and expectations that guide our professional education program, and is represented by the SALT conceptual framework that focuses on the central aspects of the college goals and this unit’s mission statement. Our conceptual framework is organized around four strands of competence for teacher candidates: understanding the impact of culture—**service**; acquisition of a knowledge base—**academics**; a vision for improvement—**leadership**; and development of pedagogical skills—**teaching**. At the center of the four strands of the conceptual framework is a deep concern on the part of the faculty for the spiritual, intellectual and professional development of the teacher candidate.

The unit’s conceptual model reflects both content and process. Each strand represents an essential component of the professional education model and is further refined through the identification of indicators of competence within each strand. The **Service** component addresses the importance of the individual and group in a variety of cultures, contexts and communities. **Academics** emphasizes professional teacher preparation in disciplines, theories, and connections. **Leadership** links the teacher candidates’ shared vision, effective communication skills, and professional development, as they serve communities. **Teaching** stresses the preparation and equipping of teacher candidates to demonstrate reflective planning, collaborative teaching strategies, and effective assessment practices. Each component of the conceptual framework informs and defines the others. These four components are girded by our underlying philosophy regarding the development and application of the conceptual framework.

Matthew 5:13 provides the inspiration for the SALT acronym used in the conceptual framework. Teacher candidates are instructed to be “the salt of the earth.” This summarizes the belief that candidates and professional faculty in the School of Education strive to become, by God’s grace, individuals who reflect the properties of salt. They are to season and enrich the lives of others. They are to become the preservative of hope and encouragement to others. They are to become a healing agent serving others who need help overcoming the difficulties of life. The SALT acronym reflects the Nyack College theme through its emphasis on pursuing truth (academics) and preparing candidates for service (service, leadership and teaching).

## Shared Vision and Underlying Philosophy

The unit shares the vision of the college to develop candidates who pursue truth and are prepared for service. The core value of the college to emphasize the integration of faith, learning, and personal transformation is central to the underlying philosophy of the unit. Teacher candidates are prepared using the lens of evangelical Christianity to focus content and pedagogy in order to become capable, caring, reflective professional educators serving communities throughout the world or around the corner.

The core values of Nyack College are present in the philosophy and goals of the unit. The college seeks to exalt Jesus Christ and fulfill its mission by being:

- **Socially Relevant:** Preparing students to serve in ministerial, educational, healing, and community-building professions.
- **Academically Excellent:** Pursuing academic excellence in the spirit of grace and humility.
- **Globally Engaged:** Fostering a global perspective within a multi-ethnic and multicultural Christian academic community.
- **Intentionally Diverse:** Providing educational access and support to motivated students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Personally Transforming:** Emphasizing the integration of faith, learning, and spiritual transformation.

The professional faculty of the unit believes several fundamental values for educators are derived from a Christian worldview. These values are embedded in the SALT conceptual framework.

*Service* expresses the belief that teacher candidates are to be focused on others rather than themselves. This belief moves the candidate from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered model of teaching and learning, one that includes service to family and community. Candidates are called to have servant hearts and to use their knowledge, skills, and dispositions to positively transform their school, community, and world. In this way candidates reflect A. B. Simpson's founding principles for Nyack College in 1882 that are best expressed by Jesus' words found in the Gospel of Mark, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." (Mark 9:35).

*Academics* is the pursuit of truth, which begins with a knowledge and understanding of God and leads to spiritual and moral understandings, as well as values the traditional content and pedagogical knowledge. The School of Education teaches candidates that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 15:25) It follows that teacher candidates must meet a stringent core curriculum and content specialization. This produces a candidate not only well rounded in the liberal arts, but also competent in a variety of disciplines. The candidate also possesses an expertise in a selected field of study, understands the theoretical underpinnings that support educational advancement, and sees the connection, or integration, of content, theory and practice. Education courses build on the footings of content (and theory) and interconnect to provide knowledge and understanding of the teaching and learning process. Foundational to the understanding of both content and pedagogy are the moral and ethical perspectives that inform dispositions. Candidates are

prepared to use the tools of learning and inquiry to integrate strands of technology, and to assimilate pedagogy and content into practice.

**Leadership** in a servant model is by example. Professional faculty and candidates endeavor to model the behaviors and dispositions born of the values and morals of the Christian life. Candidates are encouraged to follow the injunction of St. Paul: “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” (Ephesians 4:16) These values give vision to leadership based on principles of equity and diversity that transform school and community. Candidates follow a higher calling and become agents of transformation upon graduation. They are expected to be role models personally and professionally, communicating by actions and word the values that drive them to serve others before themselves. As educators, they are expected to have a vision to serve a diverse student population and provide students with opportunities to become successful individuals in a global community.

**Teaching** is developing the capabilities of the individual. All individuals are valued as God’s special creation and, as a result, are valued for who they are and what they can become. This is modeled after the concern God has for the teaching of each individual as reported by the Psalmist: “I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go.” (Psalm 32:8) Effective teaching is a thoughtful process that assesses and reflects on past performance and informs future practice. The teacher strategically balances the science of pedagogy with the art of addressing the individual need of each student through appropriately differentiated instruction. Teachers establish a collaborative classroom environment, where success of all students is equally important, and a nurturing climate that reflects high expectations, equity, and compassion.

The SALT conceptual framework clarifies the unit’s values and beliefs, and establishes a standard of excellence for teacher candidates and for ongoing professional program development and improvement.

## **Unit Purposes and Goals**

The purpose of this unit is for its candidates to acquire necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become effective professional educators as described in our mission and philosophy statements. Educators take active responsibility for discerning what and *how* they teach, as well as the broader goals of education toward which they are striving. They take careful responsibility for the development of the critical and creative abilities of their students. As caring practitioners and social agents reflecting Christian values, teacher candidates are expected to demonstrate a respect for the dignity and worth of the individual and the pluralism of community accompanied by compassion and service.

Therefore, it becomes the goals of this unit to:

### ***Service***

- Equip candidates with a competency in working with diverse student groups by the use of effective teaching methods.
- Instill within the candidates sensitivity to individual and cultural diversity as they work within a variety of contexts and communities and understand the benefits of partnering to improve education.

- Guide candidates to an understanding of the impact of teaching on the greater community and the world.

### ***Academics***

- Enable candidates to articulate and apply appropriate competency-based standards and principles addressing teaching, curriculum, assessment, equity, and technology, and to demonstrate the associated ethical dispositions.
- Empower candidates to articulate, demonstrate, and value the interconnectedness of academic standards, dispositions related to academics, and the broad philosophical connections, resulting in well-rounded academic preparedness for the teaching profession.
- Prepare candidates with research-based understandings and skills to create a bridge among educational theory, research, and practice in response to the educational, social and psychological needs of society.

### ***Leadership***

- Develop candidates as transformative leaders as they envision and implement a nurturing, stimulating, inclusive, international environment for students, schools and communities.
- Prepare candidates to effectively communicate with diverse populations in a variety of media and modes, as they voice ethical dispositions regarding issues of justice, access, and equity while employing a filter of a Christian worldview.
- Engage candidates in professional growth activity so they may respond to educational needs of diverse learners, schools and communities with insight, vision and collaborative effort.

### ***Teaching***

- Develop candidates who are able to design, implement, and evaluate appropriateness of instruction and refine practices.
- Prepare candidates willing to work strategically together with professional partners, colleagues and community to facilitate the implementation of collaborative learning environments in professional education and K-12 settings.
- Equip candidates with an understanding of effective ways to utilize appropriate assessment-based approaches for the improvement of student learning and educational practice.

## **Knowledge Base**

The professional education model at Nyack College is premised on the belief that educational growth must be continually refined through ongoing service, learning, leadership, and teaching. Drawing from Michael Fullan (1993), the unit strives to develop a professional education model that will “make a difference in the lives of students, regardless of background, and to help produce citizens who can live and work productively in increasingly dynamically complex societies” (p. 36).

The candidates advance from novice to professional through a continuing interrelated cycle of serving, learning, leading and teaching as they acquire a more refined repertoire of educational practices incorporating the content knowledge, skills, and dispositions presented in professional

education standards. At the same time, candidates develop a social responsibility and spiritual purpose regarding the nature of the profession and the roles and responsibilities of the practitioner within the profession to bring Fullan's (1993) statement to a reality.

### *Service*

Educators must recognize and respect diversity as a strength and, therefore, commit themselves personally and professionally to serve diverse populations within the school and community (Irvine, 1992). For this to be addressed effectively, the approach to diversity must be contextualized; that is, diversity must be embedded in the social and cultural environment of students. Recognizing this essential, Solomon and Levine-Rasky (1996) encourage teacher preparation programs to focus on studying education in its social context, critically examining present curricular practices, integrating studies of multiculturalism, diversity, and social differences into the mainstream of practice, and providing a link between social action and teacher education. Therefore, our paradigm embraces an inclusive approach to learning and teaching that mandates working with all students in a competent and equitable manner, respecting the diversity and special needs of each individual learner (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Learning best thrives where it is supported by community (Carter, 1996; Wink and Putney, 2002). Wenger (2002) elaborates on the importance of the context of community: *collaboration with students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community* that form and surround their classrooms and allows them to put their growing knowledge in practice, *joining theory and practice* to form praxis (p. 10). Therefore, the building and reshaping of a community of learners and stakeholders is critical to the success of our efforts to improve learning and teaching in the schools. This imbues two crucial considerations: first, educators must possess a sensitivity to individual and cultural diversity, as well as equity and social justice, when working within a variety of contexts and communities; and second, the benefits of partnering to improve education must be understood and valued by educators and stakeholders. Gideonse, et al (1993) believes that educators and community stakeholders must see themselves as valued mutual contributors in the development and attainment of a vision, as well as realize the attainment of shared purposes.

### *Academics*

The unit requires that teacher candidates meet a stringent core curriculum and content specialization. Darling Hammond (1997) and Brophy (1986) report that student achievement is significantly affected by teacher knowledge and skill level. Candidates who are both well rounded in the liberal arts and competent in a variety of disciplines will regularly use their knowledge base when designing and assessing learning activities. Teacher knowledge limits what students are able to learn. (Goldhaber and Brewer, 1996). Educators, as described by Vukelich and Wrenn (1996) and Shulman (1986), are transformative intellectuals who take active responsibility for their professional preparation along with the pursuit of truth as lifelong learners. The educator who values lifelong learning recognizes that societal survival is dependent upon the ability and inclination of students to learn and contribute in ways that are life sustaining and enriching. Thus, educators must be knowledgeable about a range of content and also must understand and value the content likely to be a part of their instructional curriculum. Therefore, the candidate possesses expertise in a selected field of study, understands the

theoretical underpinnings that support educational advancement, and sees the connection, or integration, of content, theory and practice.

Foundational to the understanding of both content and pedagogy are the moral and ethical perspectives that inform dispositions. Noddings (1992) expresses this when she proposes that the main goal of the school is not just academic but “should be to promote the growth of students as healthy, competent, moral people” (p. 12). Likona and Davidson (2005) report that there is a national consensus that character is needed; students doing their best academic work as well as doing the right thing and living a life of purpose. Subject knowledge is important but does not stand in isolation of understanding of the purposes of knowledge and the impact on relationships knowledge might impart.

A student-centered professional education model incorporates what Sykes and Plastrik (1993) identify as necessary connections between essential types of knowledge vital to expert teaching: 1) knowledge of other disciplines, 2) characteristics of learners, and 3) authentic problems where such knowledge serves as a resource. A major premise of the unit’s model is that for candidates to develop effective reflective practices, they must be engaged in developmental professional practice in authentic contexts. For this to occur effectively, the integration of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and general knowledge is one of the primary goals of our professional education model. The creation of collaborative schools provides additional opportunities for this type of integration. As candidates work with master teachers in schools, they are developing skills in integrating content knowledge with effective pedagogical practices.

It is important that educators blend theory and practice in order to become effective practitioners. The educator who extends his or her knowledge based on empirical, qualitative, quantitative, and other research efforts is more able to help formulate advancements and developments needed to improve learning and practice (Shulman, 1987; Stronge, 2002; Danielson, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1997). Therefore, the unit has developed programs that rely strongly on content knowledge, skills, and dispositions emphasized in current research on teaching and learning and on theory developed from practice.

### ***Leadership***

A fundamental premise of our professional education model is our realization that today’s institutions of higher education must respond to society’s need for professional educators as leaders with new approaches toward teaching, learning and development. Accordingly, a major focus of our model is to develop transformative educators—our faculty, candidates, and partner schools—who can shift from the more traditional practices of education (e.g., dispensers of knowledge) to learning communities that support active learning.

It is our belief that educators must be visionaries who continually seek and apply new insights, methods, and understandings of content and pedagogy in order for all students to be educated (Darling-Hammond, 1997). An emphasis of our professional education model is to develop candidates as leaders who will help transform school and community. Their role is to plan and implement a nurturing, stimulating, and inclusive environment for their students.

Educators must be effective communicators as they interact with diverse student and community populations in verbal, nonverbal and media modes. The teacher who leads effectively communicates with “local individuals and organizations—families and caregivers, public and private agencies, the business community, and colleges and universities—should not be regarded as competitors, but rather as partners in the education of the community’s children” (Danielson, 2002, p.73). As agents of change, educators effectively communicate and create safe, optimal learning environments that provide for equal access, equity, and social justice.

Sound practice is based on professional judgment, wisdom, and decision-making within often-uncertain contexts. As such, educators must become reflective professionals who rely on best practices and theoretical knowledge. Our professional education model, therefore, emphasizes the preparation of educators as leaders, who, as reflective professionals, are able to address uncertainty, strive toward professional growth, value professional accountability, and commit to a vision of education that strives for academic equity for students of all cultures and contexts. (Danielson, 2002)

### ***Teaching***

The teaching process has become increasingly complex in recent years. Professional, state, and local standards guide classroom instruction, curriculum frameworks shape it, and individual student needs focus it. Therefore, the candidate must be able to effectively plan, strategically implement, and reflectively and appropriately assess the instruction in order for learning to be meaningful.

Effectively planning differentiated instruction, balanced with uniformly high expectations and professional standards, requires educators to possess essential understandings, skills, and dispositions. Candidates must know and use the research related to best practice techniques; understand the relationship between learning and cognition to meet individual student needs. Candidates analyze their own teaching styles in order to implement a variety of methods in teaching. Research shows that effective teachers continually examine their practices for improvement and advancement (Fielstein and Phelps, 2001); understand and use appropriate assessment practices related to teaching methodologies and content (Cochran-Smith and Fries, 2001); and apply the complexities of ethics through attitudes, intent, language, and procedures in order to teach effectively and fairly (Campbell, 2004). Such reflective planning embraces Darling-Hammond’s (1998) belief that teachers should have the ability to analyze and reflect on their practice, to evaluate the outcomes of their teaching, and to hone and enhance their instructional effectiveness.

It is essential that educators be able to strategically establish learning environments that encourage multiple, meaningful, cooperative experiences among children (Vermette, 1998). Such environments project the feeling that everyone has the opportunity to learn and contribute to the collaborative building of knowledge. This learning environment must be a place in which the needs, problems and experiences of the outside world are merged with the content. This allows students to make connections between the school and workplace and learning in the context of real-life applications.

Educators must make numerous daily decisions in designing instruction, interacting with students, and assessing learning performance and pedagogical effectiveness. Such decision-making is strongly dependent on their abilities to assess current performance. Hence, this requires educators to develop expertise in a variety of assessment practices in evaluating student growth and the effectiveness of their own teaching. What then develops is a reflective, evidence-based decision maker who wisely guides an inclusive classroom of students in a learning environment and process that develops into an ongoing pursuit of pedagogical improvement (Peters, 1993).

## **Candidate Proficiencies**

The unit drew from the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Standards Consortium (1993), National Board of Professional Teacher Standards (1991), and revised New York State Standards (2000) to develop a set of professional standards for the professional education programs. Our working definition of standards comes from the INTASC definition of standards (1993, p. 8) as “a set of principles in terms of desired teacher understandings and practices and their related knowledge, dispositions, and performances.” The standards that this unit has developed for candidates prepared within our professional education programs reflect a composite of all three cited professional sets of standards. The key components of our SALT standards reflect the professional standards for beginning teachers cited above.

### ***Service:***

1. The teacher *engages students in meaningful learning tasks and helps them value exploration of important issues in their lives and in the world around them.*
2. The teacher *creates positive relationships and works collaboratively with families, schools, and community agencies to improve schools, support student learning, and secure the well being of all students.*
3. The teacher understands how children from varied cultural backgrounds differ in their approaches to learning and *creates multiple paths to knowledge and uses varied instructional strategies, while instilling in students respect for individual and group differences.*

### ***Academics:***

4. The teacher *understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and the discipline(s)* he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.
5. The teacher *uses an understanding of child development theories and can provide learning opportunities* that support students’ intellectual, social, and personal development.
6. The teacher explores *and integrates important themes and topics that appear within and across disciplines* in order to further strengthen the students’ knowledge and

understanding.

***Leadership:***

7. The teacher *articulates a clear plan* (vision) for establishing a caring, inclusive, stimulating, and safe classroom environment for all students.
8. The teacher *uses knowledge of effective oral, written, and visual communication techniques and technological applications* to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
9. The teacher understands the school environment and structure and actively *engages in professional development opportunities* in order to improve school performance, strengthen professional collaborations, and promote personal teaching effectiveness.

***Teaching:***

10. The teacher regularly *analyzes, evaluates, and strengthens the effectiveness* and quality of his or her teaching choices and actions and views all theory and practice through the filter of a Christian worldview.
11. The teacher *creates a learning environment that exemplifies an understanding of group motivation* and encourages positive social interaction, active engagement, cooperative learning, and risk-taking exploration.
12. The teacher *uses formative and summative measures*, bases his or her instruction on ongoing assessment, and encourages students to monitor their own learning.

Our standards serve to guide the unit in the preparation of teacher candidates. They also serve as benchmarks for program and candidate assessment. The SALT standards provide coherence between programs and articulate professional commitments to knowledge, teaching competence and student learning.

## **Commitment to Collaboration, Competence, and Student Learning**

***Overview***

This commitment reflects the belief that one of the most vital educational operational constructs is collaboration between community stakeholders: the college, schools, agencies, and business community. Educators and networked partners must be skilled in working together to facilitate the development and implementation of collaborative learning environments in professional education and K-12 settings (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Wells, 1998). Such collaboration for this unit imbues: collaborative endeavors across institutional and organizational boundaries, increased achievement and performance among K-12 students, improved learning and professional development among teacher candidates, improved teaching in college and school settings, and continued professional development among educators and partners. Vukelich and

Wrenn (1998) observed that “in quality professional developmental experiences, teams of professionals work collaboratively to develop curriculum, experiment, solve real problems, reflect on pedagogy, and engage in reciprocal observation and feedback.”

### ***Unit and School Partner Collaboration***

In March 2001, the Nyack College School of Education’s Rockland Campus entered into a partnership with the Nyack Public Schools for the purpose of jointly improving the unit’s professional teacher education program and providing a service to K-12 students in the district. In October 2002, the School of Education’s New York City center developed a partnership with the New York City Board of Education (now known as the New York City Department of Education), Evangel School (Queens borough), and Manhattan Christian Academy (Manhattan borough).

The intent was to establish an ongoing educational partnership that would enable the School of Education to improve the quality of its teacher education program and provide an educational outreach through a mutually beneficial collaboration. Ongoing teacher education program improvement is a major focal point for Nyack College’s School of Education at both college sites: Nyack College Rockland Campus (NCRC) and Nyack College New York City (NC-NYC). Through this partnership, a model for teacher preparation and educational outreach to the surrounding community is being implemented on both campus sites.

### ***Purpose and Goals***

The unit and school partnerships developed goals they believe will effectively create the quality of collaboration necessary to fulfill their joint mission statements and effect a positive transformation for K-12 students, teacher candidates, the respective units, and parents and community.

The partnerships reflect a community of educators-learners committed to excellence and leadership in the implementation of best practices in the teaching-learning process and environment, the development of effective educational partnerships in the Nyack community and New York City, and the preparation of committed, capable and caring professional educators. This is done in a way that creates a true collaborative environment. One, it sponsors the development of confident, capable learners at all levels; two, it supports skilled, caring practitioners who are committed to lifelong professional development and successful student learning; and three, it enhances college-school-family-community educational partnerships which support best practices.

### ***Components of the Collaborative Partnerships***

It is the belief of this unit that the following elements are essential components when educators and stakeholders work together to develop a collaborative partnership. First, a collaborative partnership must exist between college faculty and administrators, school administrators, and clinical faculty from public and private schools for the preparation of teacher candidates. Second, there must be opportunity and receptivity for teacher preparation courses to be taught on

site in selected schools that incorporate team teaching, team supervision of Nyack College candidates, and direct classroom experiences and assignments for the candidates. Third, professional development opportunities for partners in mentoring, professional growth, technology, and assessment must be embraced.

It is also our belief that three essential needs exist which require planning and preparation for a successful outcome of this collaboration model. These include establishing procedures for selecting, evaluating and maintaining quality clinical faculty, setting aside time for collaborative planning and professional development activities, and working together to ensure that the needs of both Nyack College candidates and K-12 students are met.

### ***Criteria for Partnership Site Selection***

The successful implementation of a new teacher education model requires a willingness on the part of the college and the collaborative school site personnel to modify traditional roles and practices. The foremost criterion for selection is a desire by both administrators and teachers to influence the preparation of future educators. These collaborative teachers become the site-based clinical faculty that joins with college professors in developing a community of shared learning and professional growth.

Factors for site selection consideration include: evidence of an ongoing school-wide improvement plan, approval and support of the school district, willingness of the majority of school faculty and staff to collaborate and participate as partners and change agents with a shared responsibility for preparing future educators, and evidence of positive responsiveness to student needs with an emphasis on student success.

### ***Benefits for Collaborative Sites***

The intent of the collaboration is to enjoy the benefits of shared ideas on student achievement and teacher candidate preparation, maximize available resources, and create mutual opportunities for shared personal and professional growth. Other benefits include opportunities for staff development and professional growth through collaborative action research, joint external funding proposals, and collaborative conference presentations and participation.

### ***Benefits for Collaborative-site Students***

The effectiveness of this delivery model is an emphasis on mutual benefits for both Nyack College teacher candidates and K-12 students. It is the belief of the unit that more personal attention afforded to students can be emphasized, with enhanced student achievement as an outcome.

Additional factors that contribute to enhanced student achievement include an increased adult-student ratio to support student learning and growth, mentoring (one-on-one tutoring and small-group instruction) by Nyack College candidates who serve as role models for the students, and mutual planning by college and collaborative faculty with a specific focus on increasing student performance.

## **Commitment to Diversity**

### *Overview*

This unit is committed to the respect for and responsiveness to multiple representations of diversity that include racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, gender, SES, age, and exceptionality. Rather than view diversity in its singular components, we see it as a collection of parts that interact with each other as a whole. It is the intercultural whole made up of its many parts that together form a rich cultural fabric, something to be valued. Therefore, as part of the mission of the college and unit, there is a commitment to understanding and teaching students in the context of their own culture and the culture of the community.

The southern area of Rockland County and New York City represent a multicultural, global community at its best. Minorities presently constitute 54.9% in the combined locations. Schools within the areas share equivalent percentages.

The overall student body at Nyack College (Rockland and New York City sites) is composed of 61.6% students of color, and the 2004-2005 minority enrollment in education programs is 48.1%. (See NCATS Fall 2004 Student Demographics Table and the table Candidate Demographics.)

### *Design and Implementation of Curriculum and Experiences*

All professional teacher education courses and field experiences are designed to foster candidate understanding of the importance of diversity in teaching, student learning, collaboration, and service. The context of the professional education program is such that candidates are immersed in a multicultural setting and they work with a diverse professional and clinical faculty, K-12 students, and peers.

Teachers in the 21st century must have appropriate dispositions to work with persons from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. These teachers must have the ability to treat each person in an equitable manner. The under girding of the framework for the preparation of teachers includes three components: development of **knowledge** of diversity; the refinement of **skills** to work effectively with diversity in students, school faculty, parents, and the community; and, the formation of appropriate **dispositions** to foster mutual respect. Most coursework within the professional education program has specific units or strands that enable candidates to grow in all three areas. Additionally, clinical and field experiences are carefully selected and designed for our candidates to foster such development.

Further, several strategies are in place to infuse diversity into the professional education program. Collaborative school partnerships have been established with schools serving diverse student populations, which provide learning opportunities for both candidates and professional faculty. Continued efforts focus on recruiting diverse candidates and professional faculty. Also, ongoing course content revision, in terms of currency of best practices and content quality, to integrate diversity issues into the curriculum remains an important focus. Borrowing from Irvine (1992), we are reminded that “the litmus test for the ability of [schools, colleges, and

departments of instruction] to design culturally responsive teacher education curricula is whether they are successful in providing models of cultural diversity on their own campus” (pp. 86-87).

### ***Experiences Working with Diverse Faculty***

Of the 13 full-time faculty members in our unit, three persons are of color. The proportion of full-time faculty members of color (23%) in the unit is basically equivalent to the college as a whole (37.3%). In addition, several adjunct faculty members of the unit are of color. Over the past four years, the unit has successfully recruited three full-time faculty members of color: an African-Caribbean, a Hispanic, and one who is multiracial (including Native American). The unit and Human Resources Office actively search for minority faculty candidates to fill tenure-track and fixed-term positions. (See Faculty Summary NCATS Fall Term 2004 and Faculty Recruitment Plan)

Candidates have ample opportunity to interact with faculty members on both campus sites and in collaborative schools and other schools’ faculty who represent diverse ethnic, racial, gender, language, exceptionality, and religious groups. Professional education faculty and school faculty members from diverse groups help provide on-campus instruction in content and professional education courses. Additionally, all field experiences and clinical practices in schools throughout the candidates’ professional program provide for ongoing interaction with diverse faculty. In a climate of mutual good-faith effort, collaboration with the school and community, as well as other units, affords quality preparation for candidates to work with a diverse faculty in a variety of educational settings.

### ***Experiences Working with Diverse Peers within Professional Education Program***

Candidates in the unit’s professional education program from the combined college campus sites represent a variety of cultural, racial, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The unit and college, as well as collaborative schools and other schools, are proactive in providing experiences that encourage such participation.

Our professional education program provides opportunity within the curriculum and field-placements for candidates to interact and work closely with candidates with exceptionalities and from diverse ethnic, racial, gender, language, socioeconomic, and international groups on campus, in schools, and in other community educational outreaches.

### ***Experiences Working with Diverse Students in K-12 Schools***

Candidates from our professional education program are fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in settings with a wide diversity of students. All school settings in the southern New York area are characterized by diversity in culture, ethnicity, language, and religion. Inclusion is a widely accepted practice in the area K-12 schools.

Extensive and substantive field experiences and clinical practices have been developed and are designed to provide candidates interactive participation with exceptional and diverse student populations. Field experience requirements are sequenced and are all directly tied to required

courses whose goals and objectives drive field experience assignments. Early field experience requirements include observation and individual tutoring in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, which afford extensive exposure to cultural, language, ethnic, racial, economic, and religious diversity and to exceptional populations. Third year field experience requirements expand candidate participation to include clinical assessment and correction, and small group and whole-class instruction. This is capped by a 16-week student teaching semester, which involves two placements, each at eight weeks, often at these same schools. These experiences provide candidates a deeper level of insight for optimizing learning for all students, as well as strengthening the candidates' effectiveness as teachers.

## **Commitment to Assessment**

### ***Overview***

As New York moves toward a more performance-based assessment of beginning teachers, Nyack College's School of Education has committed to aligning its program standards to reflect these changes. Our unit's professional education programs are evolving toward a performance-based assessment by which programs systematically gather, analyze, and use data for self-improvement and candidate professional development. These data demonstrate candidate pedagogical proficiencies, including positive effects on student learning and growth. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1998) articulates an imperative to establish rigorous standards for what educators should know and be able to do, and to advance related reforms to improve student learning. Further, new NCATE accreditation standards (2000) require documentation of the impact of teacher candidates on the learning of the students they teach.

Consistent with these initiatives, we have developed assessment systems for our applicants and teacher candidates that provide credible evidence regarding the impact of candidate performance on K-12 student learning. Coupled with this, we align ourselves with the guidelines provided by Darling-Hammond, Wise and Klein (1995) that a system for assessing candidate readiness to teach should be selective, that it "should strive to create a few good and useful measures of quality rather than many poor ones" (p. 94). Our professional education programs have developed candidate admissions criteria and assessments specific to its program, NYSED standards and national professional standards, that provide credible, summative decisions about candidate proficiencies across contexts and knowledge, skill, and disposition domains.

Performance indicators of the twelve exit outcomes have been developed, including examples of performance-based assessments that are infused into programs within our unit. Further, our professional education programs have broadened their assessment strategies by incorporating performance rubrics and self-reflection to more accurately reflect these changes.

### ***Qualifications of Applicants***

Selection of candidates for admission into our unit's professional teacher education programs is made with respect to the following criteria:

- Submission of School of Education application

- Completion of preliminary independent 30-hour field experience
- Academic qualifications: applicability of academic course work, satisfactory GPA for coursework (minimum of 2.50 cumulative GPA and 2.75 GPA for education courses and academic concentration)
- Completion of LAST (initial NYS for teacher licensure)

### ***Performance of Candidates***

The nature of our SALT Standards and our candidate-centered professional education model is an assessment approach. Our assessment system is based on the assumption that assessment should be developmental and ongoing. Within this framework, candidates are expected to demonstrate at increasingly higher levels of performance the knowledge, skills, and dispositions set forth in the standards as they progress through each level of the professional education program.

Our assessment system utilizes conventional forms of testing, as well as performance tasks and self-assessments, that are completed in authentic contexts throughout the course and field experience components of our professional education programs. The capstone of our assessment system requires candidates to provide evidence through teaching performance samples, as presented in their culminating teacher work sample, of the impact of their teaching practice on K-12 student learning.

### ***Evaluation and Improvement of the Professional Education Program***

We are committed to the ongoing evaluation and improvement of our unit's professional education programs. The evaluation process is as follows:

- On a semester basis, candidates review the program courses and provide feedback by means of formal course evaluations.
- Each semester, clinical faculty members and college supervisors review candidate performance in field and clinical assignments.
- Each year, collaborative participants meet to review the overall teacher education program.
- Annually, follow-up evaluations are conducted through surveys of graduates.
- Annually, an employer survey of graduate performance is conducted.
- Annually, program evaluations are completed by department heads for the office of institutional research.

The development and continued refinement of our program framework has been achieved in large part through the creation of true partnerships with schools and the larger college community. The faculty in the School of Education collaborates with the professional community in the design and delivery of the teacher preparation program. Meetings are held with teacher education faculty, clinical faculty, and school administrators to provide opportunities for sharing ideas and direction. It is through such assessment procedures that we are able to realize quality program growth and refinement.

## **Commitment to Technology**

### *Overview*

The development of technological literacy and use is vital to teachers for this new century. Therefore, this unit is committed to the integration of technology into the entire professional education program, including the infusion of technology into all areas of the professional curriculum. Our conceptual framework, Service, Academics, Leadership, and Teaching, reflects our commitment to preparing teacher candidates to use educational technology as a tool to assist all students to learn more effectively. The Nyack College School of Education believes that its professors have both an academic and moral responsibility to prepare teacher candidates with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to infuse technology into their classroom planning and presentation. Standard 8 of the SALT standards focuses the candidate to use technology as a tool for communication, and Standard 11 verbalizes the use of media as a strategic instructional resource. Skills related to informational and educational technology are integrated throughout foundational and methods coursework and field experiences, clinical practice, and assessments in our teacher education programs.

### *Design and Implementation of Curriculum and Experiences*

The Education faculty has a shared vision of the important role of technology in the preparation of teacher candidates. Throughout our professional education program, candidates are provided opportunity to develop skills in integrating a variety of instructional delivery systems and technologies, and to learn to utilize technologies to develop, manage, and assess information necessary to advance effective teaching and learning. Knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to technology are addressed directly via two mandatory technology courses and are integrated into the syllabi of all education coursework.

Students are required to use an internet based assessment program throughout the education program. Recently initiated, this system uses LiveText to facilitate on-line submissions and grading of candidate products. The result is an electronic record of their work that culminates in an electronic portfolio submission during student teaching that is centered around a teacher work sample. The unit is using LiveText to begin the standardization of assessments across multiple course sections and locations. Assessments can be evaluated on a class-by-class basis or by a number of other groupings to monitor longitudinal performance of candidates or to compare the performance of candidates in different locations. The end result for the candidate is an electronic collection of products that may be organized into a portfolio for employment or to meet the portfolio requirement for the master's degree programs.

Candidate performance relative to technology knowledge, skills, and dispositions is assessed at multiple stages in the program, including assessments leading to program admission, qualification for clinical practice, and program completion.

The School of Education recognizes that technology has created a shift from a teaching to a learning paradigm. However, the School agrees with Boettcher (1999) that our responsibility in adopting this new paradigm is to provide a balance and support for the learner by offering access

to and equity of technology resources for each candidate, and a supportive infrastructure that offers a comfortable environment for learning. It also believes that learning should be collaborative; the technology rich classroom should be a place of independent learners, a non-competitive learning community.

Dagget and Kruse (1997) confirm Nyack's commitment to technology by noting the vitality of perceiving the future of education with the inclusion of more creative and productive use of available technologies. Lew (1998) corroborates the aforementioned by saying that our experience is one of historic change in the nature of learning as resources in digital multimedia technology enter our world.

Nyack's professors have recognized the change in role of teachers to facilitators. Teacher candidates are trained to expand their student perspective on the power of technology as a learning tool.

### ***Linkage Between Technology and Conceptual Framework***

Technology is a valuable resource to prepare teacher candidates with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for Service, Academics, Leadership, and Teaching. Van Dyk (1997) suggests that Nyack's philosophy of a collaborative classroom environment is consistent with teaching "Christianly." Properly infused technology can be a significant contributor to teaching Christianly and collaboratively, especially if used by moral and ethical educators.

Finally, teaching with technology creates a new role for teacher candidates. Healy (1998) writes that the successful integration of this technology inevitably changes educational philosophy, classroom management, and curricular goals by a large magnitude. The unit agrees with Sulla (1999), who comments on the opportunities never before available to humankind that technology now provides. Nyack teacher candidates are prepared to infuse technology into their curriculum in a way that reflects the biblical values of this Christian institution. Nyack teacher candidates are fully prepared to effectively and appropriately infuse technology into the school curriculum in a way that reflects professional academic standards, as well as the biblical values of this institution.