CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
TEACHER EDUCATION UNIT

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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE UPRH TEACHER EDUCATION UNIT

INTRODUCTION

The University of Puerto Rico at Humacao (UPRH) was founded in 1962 as the University of Puerto Rico’s first Regional College. Initially, its objective was twofold: to facilitate access to the University of Puerto Rico for the students of the eastern region of Puerto Rico, and to expedite the transfer of our students to other undergraduate units of the UPR system at which they could complete a Bachelor’s Degree. Another goal was to contribute to the social, economic, and cultural development of the eastern region. As a Regional College, UPRH received its first accreditation from the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1965.

In 1973, UPRH became the Humacao University College, which enabled the establishment of various Bachelor’s Degrees at this site. The Bachelor’s Degree in Art with a Concentration in English at the Elementary School Level or the Secondary School Level was established in 1976. The Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education with a Concentration in the Primary Level and Special Education was established in 1978. Both programs offer the courses required by Puerto Rico’s State Department of Education for the certification of teachers.

During 2003-2004, the UPR system established the policy that initiated accreditation procedures for all academic and service programs eligible for accreditation. Up to this point, neither of the programs that focused on teacher preparation at the UPRH had ever made the commitment to submit to external accreditation procedures. This is the first time that these two teacher education programs have agreed to examine their separate course offerings in order to focus on a shared vision and mission that will make them one unit. The UPRH Teacher Education Unit, as an umbrella concept that encompasses both the Education and English departments, is a direct result of identifying this shared vision and of UPRH’s commitment toward seeking NCATE accreditation.

4.1 VISION AND MISSION OF UPRH AND TEACHER EDUCATION UNIT

UPRH Vision

The UPRH vision and mission reflects the aspirations and goals of the needs of the community that it serves (Manual de la Facultad UPRH, 2006). It is aligned with the vision and mission of the UPRH system. In its vision, the UPRH aspires to:

1. Guide students toward a commitment to excellence so they exemplify values that are based on the principles of social, ethical, moral, and intellectual responsibility. Focus its efforts on instilling within the student body a commitment toward teaching, service, and research as the focal point of university activity.

2. Offer diverse and cutting edge academic programs aimed at the development of a physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally integrated human being.
3. Prepare leaders that transcend the boundaries of the Institution and of the country through nationally and internationally recognized academic offerings; recruiting and retaining the best students, faculty, and non faculty talent.

4. Promote collaboration between all educational levels and public and private sectors.

5. Empower the creative and research capabilities of the students at the undergraduate and the graduate levels in the arts and the sciences so they can contribute to the social, cultural, environmental, and economic strengthening of Puerto Rico and to the transference of knowledge to the world.

6. Be recognized as promoting a culture of excellence in research and service, supported by information technologies.

7. Turn into an innovative center of democratic life, where freedom of thought and expression and divergent criteria are respected. Foster dialogue and the participation of the different university sectors at all levels of institutional life.

**UPRH Mission**

The UPRH institutional mission has three major goals:

1. UPRH endeavors to effectively contribute to the ethical, cultural, and intellectual development of Puerto Rico, in general, and of the eastern region in particular through teaching, aesthetic expression, scientific and humanistic research, as well as the dissemination of knowledge.

2. UPRH endeavors to investigate the principal social, cultural, scientific and environmental problems affecting our society and to affirm ecological balance, diversity and inclusion as principles of change in a democratic society aspiring to justice.

3. UPRH expects to prepare students as professionals and contributors to the quality of life in Puerto Rico through the offering of relevant and innovative undergraduate and future graduate academic programs.

**Teacher Education Unit Vision and Mission**

The UPRH Teacher Education Unit is the main teacher preparation program in the eastern region of PR. The Unit is well aware of its distinctive responsibility to prepare competent teacher candidates in diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation.

**Vision**

The Teacher Education Unit has a deep-seated commitment toward guiding its teacher candidates toward exemplifying best-practices in the educational field. The Unit’s ultimate goal is to form effective and reflective men and women who master pedagogical knowledge and skills within a constructivist paradigm and who demonstrate creativity and leadership in social
transformation as they guide their future students toward becoming well-prepared future citizens of a globally oriented, pluralistic, and democratic society.

1. The Unit prepares highly-qualified teacher candidates who effectively promote life-long learning in a globally oriented, pluralistic society.

2. The Unit contributes to the development of teacher competencies that empower the teacher to be an agent of change with a strong commitment toward creativity and social responsibility. The unit prepares exceptional teachers who have a profound awareness and sensitivity to the needs of the diverse community that they serve.

3. The Unit endeavors to cultivate a life-long love of learning in which the pursuit of knowledge and its application enhances the quality of life for members of our democratic society.

Mission

The mission of the Teacher Education Unit is to promote the development of highly qualified and efficient teaching professionals who are prepared to creatively contribute to the social, cultural, and educational development of a globally oriented, pluralistic, and diverse society. The Unit’s mission is in alignment with the UPRH system mission and vision, as well as that of UPRH. The Unit’s mission integrates the ideals of its vision in order to guide the process of fulfilling its philosophy, purposes, and goals. The UPRH Unit’s mission is three-fold:

1. Satisfy the educational needs of teacher candidates that comprise an ever-widening global community.

2. Create a rich educational environment that promotes and instills within its teacher candidates individual creativity through educational research, technological application, and innovative methodological practices.

3. Attain the excellence and sensibility necessary for teacher candidates to develop competencies that will enable them to assume leadership in social transformation.

4.2 PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSE, AND GOALS

Philosophy

The UPRH Teacher Education Unit follows a constructivist philosophy of education based on the premise that all individuals build their own understanding of the world in which they live by reflecting on their own experiences (Bruner, 1996). Learning is a result of the depth to which learners relate their unique personal experiences and situations to the teaching-learning process. Therefore, the Unit leads its teacher candidates to develop their own higher thinking skills as they guide their students toward the acquisition of similar skills. The use of thought-provoking techniques which increase progressively in complexity and range is a key component of this approach.
Teacher candidates are expected to attain an optimum education in all areas of pedagogy. Our teacher education unit also promotes the formation of professionals who strive to become leaders of social transformation.

In order to guide teacher candidates to attain comprehensive teaching insights, attitudes, and practices, the Unit begins with an essential foundation provided by an underlying system of values and beliefs. The Unit values engaging teacher candidates in learning experiences that will guide them toward understanding and meaning. To this end, the Unit believes that the teacher candidate must become a facilitator that will maximize growth, development, and learning opportunities for each individual.

The Unit believes that teacher candidates should reflect high levels of moral and ethical behavior that are a result of a strong academic knowledge base and professional competencies. The Unit believes that these personal and professional qualities are attainable through a commitment toward a lifetime of continuous learning.

Diversity, to the Unit, is a valued component that must be recognized in order to ensure the enhancement of the teaching-learning process (Gay, 2002). The Unit defines diversity in terms of: 1) Socio-economic level; 2) Geographic region; 3) Gender; 4) Sexual orientation; 5) Ethnic/cultural background; 6) Religion; and 7) Special needs/Disabilities and Gifted & Talented.

The Unit believes that teacher candidates must be prepared to work with students from all socio-economic levels that reside in urban as well as rural geographic regions. Teacher candidates need to also be sensitive to differences in gender, sexual orientation, ethnic/cultural background, and religion in order to ensure that the educational process takes place in an environment of tolerance and respect.

The Unit recognizes the importance of teacher candidates having the ability to work with students who have diverse learning needs. This includes having the skills and disposition to meet the needs of students with learning differences across the entire educational spectrum from slow learners to gifted and talented.

The numerous characteristics that respond to the Unit’s definition of diversity require teacher candidates to enter the teaching profession possessing myriad multi-dimensional methodological skills that are the foundation of educators’ best practices. Education, as viewed from a globally-oriented perspective, also involves recognizing that parents and community stakeholders are essential to the teaching-learning process.

These beliefs, that the Unit acknowledges as the best practices within the educational field, have guided the design of the Teacher Education Unit, the teaching practices of the faculty, and the academic and professional development of all teacher candidates.

**Purpose**

The Teacher Education Unit prepares teacher candidates in kindergarten through third grade with a minor in special education and English in elementary and secondary education. The Unit’s purpose, based on its philosophy, is two-fold. The Unit aspires to guide teacher
candidates in toward adopting a constructivist educational vision. Within this constructivist paradigm, teacher candidates will become facilitators in guiding their future students toward constructing their own knowledge. The Unit provides the experiences and environments necessary to enable teacher candidates to tap into their own creativity based on the knowledge foundations they have acquired from this paradigm and put it to the service of their students.

The Unit also aspires to guide teacher candidates toward reflectively assessing their pedagogical practices in order to envision limitless possibilities. This reflection is the basis for constructing meaning from what teacher candidates have learned. Teacher candidates are empowered to guide students toward reflecting on their own learning experiences as they engage in metacognitive processes that lead to the construction of their own knowledge. This in turn will guide teacher candidates toward becoming creative leaders in social transformation.

Goals

The Teacher Education Unit’s philosophy and purpose are reflected in a set of goals that promotes competence in diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation in teacher candidates.

Goal 1: To develop teacher candidates who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to put into practice the pedagogical knowledge they acquire to create the opportunities through learning experiences that foster diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation.

Goal 2: To prepare teacher candidates, through field experiences and clinical practice, so that they will become creative facilitators and active leaders who will provide ample opportunities and learning experiences in constructivist scenarios to satisfy the diverse needs of their students and community.

Goal 3: To develop teacher candidates who effectively use technology and constructivist methodologies that will enhance classroom learning opportunities for their students.

Goal 4: To prepare teacher candidates who will engage in actively reflecting about and assessing learning that facilitates effective decision-making within the classroom and the community which mirrors understanding and ownership of the dynamic vision of the Unit’s constructivist philosophy.

The Unit’s philosophy, purpose, and goals reflect its overall commitment toward preparing teacher candidates who are ready to meet the challenges within the educational environment of the 21st century.

4.3 KNOWLEDGE BASES

The UPRH Teacher Education Unit has adopted an educational perspective that is consonant with the philosophical principles of constructivism in order to effectively meet the challenges of the evolution of new educational scenarios. Developments in the field of science, economic globalization and profound social transformations, among other factors, have changed the traditional way in which the UPRH Teacher Education Unit interprets reality. This emerging
A paradigm shift has radically modified the purposes of education for the Unit. This perspective suggests that educational purposes focus on processes that enable the Unit’s teacher candidates to assimilate new ideas, perceive new theoretical and practical structures, solve problems that are only minimally conventional, and construct new knowledge to face the contingencies of a complex and diverse world.

Under constructivism, teacher candidates are trained to experience education as an internal process where they can obtain their own particular vision of reality and build their own knowledge schema. The Unit promotes this educational model that stems from the epistemological principles derived from cognitivism inside the school of psychology. According to Ferreiro (1996), cognitivism is interested in mental representations of reality, and also how these representations are generated or constructed. The Unit promotes this exercise through the study, design, and implementation of models of action, reaction, and critical sense. In other words, the Unit affords the teacher candidates the experiences that enable learning that takes place constructing own knowledge from personal experiences (Ormrod, 2003).

According to Bruner (1996), the teacher acts as a facilitator that motivates students to discover principles on their own and to construct their knowledge working on authentic problem solving usually in collaboration with others; a social constructivist view of knowledge. Vygotsky (1962) concurs by posing that human action, by definition, uses mediating instruments, like tools and language, and these provide the essential form to that action; and therefore the mediated action is more important than the action.

Hein (1991) provides an effective summary of the fundamental principles of constructivism. He contends that: (1) the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values is a process in which the student learner uses the sense and previous information to construct new meanings; (2) learners learn as they learn; (3) mental action is essential to the construction of meanings, but physical action might be necessary to the acquisition of knowledge, especially in children; (4) cognitive development is a social activity; (5) the acquisition of knowledge is contextual; (6) knowledge is needed in order to learn; (7) learning takes time; and (8) motivation is an essential element in the process of education.

The sound knowledge bases provided by the UPRH Teacher Education Unit’s programs’ theoretical foundation, designs and development, its faculty, and the impact of these on the teacher candidates’ learning processes facilitate the conceptualization, evolution, and activation of their knowledge foundation around four core areas of endeavor. Diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation derive from that knowledge and permeate the understanding and practice of these teacher candidates.

**Diversity**

Cultural diversity is defined by the culturally responsive teaching perspective which encompasses the use of characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching more effectively (Gay, 2002). Diversity, for teaching, is considered more than knowing general characteristics and knowledge about some cultures; it includes, but is not limited to, cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relation patterns (Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994; Pai, 1990; Smith, 1998;
Gay, 2000). In the area of learning, the concept of diversity focuses on how to teach and how to build upon levels of knowledge within a diverse cultural population.

The Teacher Education Unit strongly believes that field experience and clinical practice are essential components of the three programs that prepare teacher candidates to teach in public and private systems. These experiences allow the teacher candidates to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions acquired through their educational development. Since a majority of teacher candidates begin the Unit’s teacher preparation programs coming from schools that are based on traditional methods of teaching, to become a constructivist teacher requires that the Unit guides them through field experiences in which they will learn by constructing their own knowledge in real scenarios (Ormrod, 2003). In a social constructivist field experience, teacher candidates are engaged in experiences, reflection, and self-examination which allows the construction of their own understanding and meaning of the world; and, at the same time, helps them to aid the construction of ideas in their students (Eggan, P., & Kauchak, D., 2001). Through this paradigm shift toward constructivist field experience, the Unit expects that teacher candidates become student-centered and that they recognize that students have to be taught in the diversity of environments in which all children’s voices are heard, respected, and trusted (Desjean-Perrotta, 1996).

Diversity and how to prepare students to teach conveys five essential elements: (1) development of a knowledge base for diversity; (2) inclusion of the concept of diversity within the curriculum; (3) the demonstration of how to care and build learning communities; (4) communication with students who represent diverse groups; and (5) delivery of sound and effective instruction (Gay, 2000; Gay, 2002, Cortés, 2000).

Various approaches on how to teach diversity are consonant with the constructivist philosophy that the Unit espouses. Teaching diverse groups entails using a collaborative strategy within the classroom. This facilitates providing experience in which students have the opportunity to analyze situations together and arrive at a consensus on how to work out solutions that will give the best results (Cortés, 2000; Banks & Banks, 1995; Spring, 1995).

As a centrally located point in the Caribbean, Puerto Rico has become a rapidly growing and culturally diverse island nation. The immigration of Central and South Americans, a growing Arab and Asian community, and most recently, the second home to people from the Dominican Republic, have changed the island’s school landscape. The Teacher Education Unit’s curriculum emphasizes the contribution of diverse cultures to Puerto Rico and how the Unit has to provide for the incorporation, appreciation, and significance of diverse cultures within the everyday activities at the UPRH. Emphasis is given by the Unit to contributions in literature, religion, economics, politics, and community development by the island’s culturally diverse population.

Within this scenario, careful consideration is placed on services to meet the needs of special populations. Special needs students, especially those at the elementary level, are identified at an early age. Careful consideration is given to those processes teacher candidates need to follow for early identification of learning problems in students and how to interpret behaviors related to cultural diversity. Learning together is paramount within the Unit’s teaching-learning model. Culturally different students are challenged to find new and common meanings to situations and problems that will lead to effective learning and understanding. A main idea is to help students expand their own perceptions, views, and mental processes through culturally diverse teamwork.
Teacher candidates learn how to adapt curriculum and learning strategies that will help achieve cultural diversity within each subject matter and curricular activities.

Diversity is also reflected for today’s teacher candidates in the technological advances that have become available and accessible, for the most part, at the UPRH Teacher Education Unit’s facilities. Technological resources may include PC and laptop computers, software programs, overhead and LCD projectors, digital and film cameras, and access to the Internet. Activities that can only be carried out using technology and by their nature promote diversity that is cultural and contextual include communicating through e-mail, accessing databases, preparing assignments and research using word processing, designing spreadsheets, conducting simulations, and conducting primary research that may be otherwise difficult to access using the world wide web (Internet).

These facilities are a necessary component of the Unit because of the widespread use and access to them in the communities at large. They have become bridges that can help to facilitate the tolerance and acceptance needed to gauge the challenge of diversity and make learning real for our teacher candidates and their students. Students in both public and private schools who are exposed to a wide-range of technological resources and activities exhibit an increase in involvement with complex, authentic tasks (SEDL, 2006). The exposure to this type of diversity and the proliferation of the endless possibilities technology facilitates for our teacher candidates is a most valuable source of the diversity they will need to become familiar with in order to accommodate their learning/teaching scenarios.

Creativity

The UPRH Teacher Education Unit strives to develop creativity in its teacher candidates through the academic and practical initiatives that teacher candidates experience at each level of their candidacy. These emphasize the optimum development of thinking about and for active and direct participation in all educational activities that promote their holistic development which is the backdrop for sound creativity. To this effect, the Teacher Education Unit makes sure that professional content courses are included in the course offerings and that these are geared towards creating teaching and learning experiences that produce results to the effect that they can embody the dispositions and practices that will compel them to become the active participants social transformation requires. This, according to Gardner (1998), is part of the methodology upon which processes that help teacher education emerge and develop.

This dynamic creativity is consonant with the critical and pragmatic perspective exposed in the contributions of great leaders of educational, social, and humanistic tendencies like John Dewey, Eugenio María de Hostos, and Paulo Freire.

From Dewey’s perspective (1982), the very definition of life included the modern concepts of process and self-renovation that depend on action upon the environment. In today’s discourse, this systematic creativity that serves as the basis for self-improvement is the essence of constructivism; the paradigm upon which the Unit guides teacher candidates to explore the limitless possibilities of their personal, academic, and professional growth and development.

Creativity as an element for cognitive and social activity that has the power to form and transform in what Hostos was leading to when he posed that “… reason does not receive already
formed ideas but forms them on their own, and to do so must support itself on the testimony of the senses ...” (translated from Eugenio María de Hostos, 1991). Teacher candidates draw from personal, social, and educational contexts to create and construct new and ever-changing environments that, in turn, set the stage for continuous transformation.

In consonance with Freire’s critical and pragmatic theory exposed in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993), teacher candidates learn to use their own life and learning experiences as the backdrop for the development of a dynamic vision that is receptive to constant change. This receptivity is a crucial disposition for creativity. This disposition for change facilitates and sets the scaffolding teacher candidates need for creating myriad engaging environments that promote learning to learn and learning to help others learn and redounds in the effective transformation of society.

Technology plays a decisive role in this disposition to create for today’s teacher candidates. According to Bagley and Hunter (1992), students become empowered and spend more time in active construction of knowledge when using technology. Technology in constructivist settings provides more resources for student to use in problem solving and critical reflection. Students who are encouraged to use technology for educational purposes also spend more time collaborating with other students and communicating with facilitators. Facilitators then are empowered to embody and promote creativity. Technology, if used correctly within the classroom, is a valid tool for social transformation since it allows for exploration and highly creative and individualized self-expression.

**Leadership**

The Teacher Education Unit promotes the development of teacher candidates as proactive leaders who will work towards social transformation. The Unit is committed to offering a variety of methodology courses to strengthen the knowledge and skills teacher candidates will need to be effective and highly qualified facilitators. Ornstein and Hunkins (2006) contend that “… each individual should choose an approach and definition, a school of philosophy and psychology, development and design models, theory and practice relationships, and curriculum responsibilities he or she wishes to promote.” The Unit concurs and equips teacher candidates with experiences in a repertoire of choices that will serve to inform their practice options so that immersed in learning centered environments, teacher candidates will exercise effective leadership by engaging students through autonomous participation and active collaboration (Senge, 2006).

The Unit promotes the use of creativity that empowers leadership. As life-long learners, practitioners, and facilitators, UPRH teacher candidates are aware of the constant change and demands for excellence in performance and results in today’s world. An integrated vision of a diverse society permits teacher candidates to continually construct, assess, and clarify values that foster leadership within the family, school, and community.

UPRH teacher candidates are capable of putting into practice highly professional and social competence that reflects personal values and ethics which sustains them in their leadership role to effectively capitalize (Kaser, Munday, Stiles, Loucks-Horsley, 2006) on social transformation. This leadership reflects social intelligence (Thordike, 1920, Goleman, 2006) in teacher candidates from classroom experiences through clinical practice. As constructivists and
reflective thinkers, teacher candidates recognize the challenges of social change and lead collaborative efforts to understand and successfully promote transformation within a diverse and technologically oriented society.

Social Transformation

The UPRH Teacher Education Unit prepares its candidates to experience and foment the kind of learning that becomes instrumental for society. In that service to society, learning must be partnered with understanding. Learning is a dynamic construction of understanding which comes from the influence of experiences, interests, and needs. Precise understanding comes from the process of interaction between the subject and the object (Piaget & Inhelder, 1971).

According to Bruner (1996), alternative approaches and methods based on knowledge, gleaned from social and personal experience, as an agent of change is a foundation for what he refers to as the “culture of education”. The Unit makes a significant contribution to that culture by fomenting reflection and analysis in the pedagogical experiences it facilitates for the teacher candidates. It is fundamental that teacher candidates visualize learning as social, cognitive, and a result of the influences of cultural circumstances in which individuals live and its diverse capabilities (Vygotsky, 1962, Gardner, 1983).

A critical agenda for constructivism is to instill within students a sense of confidence that they are capable of shaping their own destinies and reshaping, or transforming, the society in which they live (Lugo Colón, 2007). The aim of this agenda is not to correct misperceptions on the part of the learner, but to empower the learner with the critical faculties necessary to perceive the social/political reality that surrounds them and give them the independence to transform this reality. Habermas (1972) characterizes three fundamental interests, technical, practical, and emancipatory, of which achieving emancipation is the role of constructivism in bringing about social transformation. Achieving emancipation enables students to engage in autonomous, purposeful social action.

Social constructivism, according to Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes education for social transformation and reflects a theory of human development that views students within a sociocultural context. Students are encouraged to engage in individual development derived from social interactions within which cultural meanings are shared by the group and eventually internalized by the individual (Richardson, 1997). In order for social transformation to take place, students need to construct knowledge within a contextual environment, and in the process, both the student and environment are changed.

Schools, in this case, can be perceived as being sociocultural environments (Richardson, 1997). Therefore, to accomplish the goals of social transformation, educators should envision constructivism as a theory of learning, not as a theory of teaching (Wolffe & McMullen, 1996). In this theory of learning, facilitators need to consider two ideas: the extent to which the social is acknowledged as a critical factor in learning and the individual cognitive development within each subject area (Richardson, 1997).

A primary challenge for teaching professionals is to transform social constructivism from a theory of learning to a theory of teaching (MacKinnon & Scarff-Seatter, 1997). Teaching professionals have to understand the knowledge that is required by the different discipline-
specific subject areas and mirror this understanding with the constructivist methods that are found in education courses and practicums. The field experiences and the clinical practice at the UPRH Teacher Education Unit are designed to reflect the Unit’s Conceptual Framework which addresses five basic components: Philosophy and social foundation, methodology, field experience and clinical practice, technology, and assessment. These components address the institutional goal to develop educators that are life-long learners who demonstrate the creativity and leadership needed to empower students to be part of social transformation within the community.

As agents of change, teacher candidates are also expected to instill five basic elements within their students: construction of knowledge, critical reflection, active collaboration, problem solving, and autonomy. Desjean-Perrotta (1996) suggests that any paradigm shift touches one’s belief as educators but teachers have to take risks, experiment, reflect, evaluate professional goals and beliefs, and become life-long learners in the process. It is the goal of the Teacher Education Unit that through field experiences and clinical practice teacher candidates will learn to incorporate a constructivist knowledge base in order to engage in social transformation (Vygotsky, 1978; Cortés, 2000).

Technology can complement constructivism to support increased student engagement, learning, and achievement (SEDL, 2006). For example, simulations are excellent constructivist learning tools, since users can negotiate environmental constraints, solve simulated real-world problems, and witness the effects of changes in variables. Teaching professionals need to model constructivist approaches that engage teacher candidates in diverse methodologies, field experiences, and assessment techniques (Lugo Colón, 2007). In this way, the Unit ensures teacher candidates will be better prepared to engage their future students in construction of knowledge, critical reflection, and active collaboration which will lay the foundation for social transformation. Interactive multimedia software packages can simulate complex work experiences and serve as critical tools to evaluate the kinds of skills that are so often difficult to measure using traditional evaluation methods.

Constructivist methodologies and technology complement each other on many levels. Constructivism is about inquiry, exploration, autonomy, and personal expressions of knowledge and creativity that lead toward social transformation (SEDL, 2006). In this respect, technology has forever changed the face of the educational environment (SEDL, 2006). There is now immediate access to more information and instant global news than a generation ago. Technology has also opened up opportunities for hands-on and real-world learning experiences that facilitate communication with learners around the world. The Teacher Education Unit provides the professional development that is needed for teacher candidates to construct knowledge about pedagogy, content, and technology, as well as strategies for managing changing constructivist classroom environments supported by technology (SEDL, 2006).

The Role of Assessment in Diversity, Creativity, Leadership, and Social Transformation

The UPRH Teacher Education Unit conceives assessment as an integral facet of instruction (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). The four core areas of the Teacher Education Unit’s candidates’ knowledge, skills and dispositions become operational through the process of assessment. They are checked, balanced, and otherwise modified under the guidance of assessment to tailor learning and teaching processes according to targeted results that represent the outcome of best
practices in each area. In this context, assessment is a necessary tool to understand and complement the teaching-learning process and to develop stronger data-based action research that services the learning processes.

Assessment processes are instituted to adapt and create ways to collect information and feedback about student learning performance. Assessment processes focus on results and should be improved to focus on professional development for teacher candidates and to supply new or different instructional resources for learners (Carr & Harris, 2001). Teacher candidates should be able to collect, organize, and interpret information that facilitates reflecting about the teaching/learning process in order to evaluate student performance.

The teacher candidate should study and apply assessment as a tool in service to the learner (Grennon & Brooks, 1999) and as an instrument to analyze experiences, self-assess, and continuously improve his/her educational practices.

4.4 CANDIDATE PROFICIENCIES

In the UPRH Teacher Education Unit, candidate proficiencies represent a common core of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and teacher practices that will guide the initial and continuing professional development of teachers in four core areas:

- Diversity
- Creativity
- Leadership
- Social Transformation.

In these four core areas of competency, teacher candidates are consistently encouraged to construct and take autonomy over their own learning and to create meaningfully diverse learning environments that will help them guide their future students toward engaging in social transformation within a continuously changing and dynamic society. In this way, teacher candidates will be recognized as leaders in social transformation that is needed in a global society in order to provide a better quality of life for everyone.

UPRH Teacher Education Model

The UPRH Teacher Education Model (figure 1) focuses on both the teacher candidates and the students in public and private elementary and secondary schools who are the primary stakeholders for the Unit.
Philosophical and Social Foundations are at the base of the figure, serving as a cornerstone for the Unit’s Education Model which is rooted in the constructivist paradigm. The left square of figure 1 is flanked by knowledge, skills and dispositions needed by candidates in order to become effective and reflective teachers. The circular arrow represents a cycle containing the knowledge, skills, and experiences in four curricular areas that teacher candidates obtain and develop throughout their professional developmental process. These are: Assessment and Research, Methodology, Field Experiences and Clinical Practice, and Technology. This empowers them to become practitioners in the Unit’s constructivist paradigm.

The figure’s right square is flanked by life-long learning for students in schools to become effective and reflective learners. The right square of figure 1 also includes a circular arrow representing a cycle containing knowledge, skills, and experiences in five areas associated with effective and reflective life-long learning. These are Construction of Knowledge, Critical Reflection, Active Collaboration, Problem Solving, and Autonomy. Diversity, Creativity, Leadership, and Social Transformation are at the center of this figure as they link the right and the left squares representing important and essential core areas of proficiencies for both, Teacher Candidates and Students in Schools.
Candidate Proficiencies Focused on Four Core Areas

Area 1: Diversity

1. Teacher candidates are aware and sensitive to the individual needs and rights of the student population in diverse teaching scenarios.
2. Teacher candidates master and continuously review their language communication skills and the use of educational technology as a methodological tool to enhance the teaching/learning process within a diverse population.

Area 2: Creativity

3. Teacher candidates demonstrate the disposition to understand, promote, and value a constructivist view of education as a permanent process that is unique, creative, and responsive to the social needs of the community.
4. Teacher candidates select, design, and assess constructivist strategies and methodologies which promote life-long learning through autonomy, critical reflection, active collaboration, problem solving, and construction of knowledge in diverse contexts.

Area 3: Leadership

5. Teacher candidates adopt transformational leadership roles in their field experiences and clinical practice by creating learning environments that promote reflection, assessment, and research.
6. Teacher candidates establish effective connections and maintain open lines of communication with members of the educational community.

Area 4: Social Transformation

7. Teacher candidates develop as integral individuals who demonstrate ethical, civic, and professional competencies in their field experiences, clinical practice, and professional career in order to contribute effectively as educational leaders that promote a culture of life-long learning.
8. Teacher candidates pursue and revise their understanding of social responsibility in a global context by engaging in assessment activities and action research investigations that enrich their educational experience.
## Table 1: Alignment of Proficiencies with Institutional, State, and NCATE Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCATE Standards</th>
<th>INTASC Principles</th>
<th>State Standards (PR Council on Higher Education)</th>
<th>UPRH Teacher Education Unit’s Candidate Proficiencies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Content Knowledge for Teacher Candidates: Initial and Continuing</strong></td>
<td>INTASC 1: Knowledge of Subject Matter The teacher understand the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structure of the disciplines he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful to students.</td>
<td>Section 2.1.1: Teacher candidates understand the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) within the context of a global society and create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.</td>
<td>Area 1: Diversity 1. Teacher candidates have an awareness and sensitivity of the individual needs and rights of the diverse student population within a global and pluralistic context.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>INTASC 6: Communication Skills The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction.</td>
<td>Section 2.1.7: The teacher candidate models effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.</td>
<td>2. Teacher candidates master and continuously review their language communication skills and the use of educational technology as a methodological tool to enhance the teaching/learning process within a diverse population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Pedagogical Content knowledge for teacher candidates: Initial and Continuing</strong></td>
<td>INTASC 7: Instructional Planning Skills The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.</td>
<td>Section 2.1.4: Teacher candidates recognize the importance of long-range planning and curriculum development and develops, implements, and evaluates curriculum based upon student, district, and state performance standards.</td>
<td>Area 2: Creativity 3. Teacher candidates have the disposition to understand, promote, and value a constructivist view of education as a permanent process that is unique, creative, and responsive to the social needs of the community.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>INTASC 4: Multiple Instructional Strategies The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.</td>
<td>Section 2.1.5: The teacher candidate uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.</td>
<td>4. Teacher candidates select, design, and assess constructivist strategies and methodologies which promote lifelong learning through autonomy, critical reflection, active collaboration, problem solving, and construction of knowledge in diverse context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCATE Standards</td>
<td>INTASC Principles</td>
<td>State Standards (PR Council on Higher Education)</td>
<td>UPRH Teacher Education Unit’s Candidate Proficiencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Professional and Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills for Teacher Candidates</td>
<td>INTASC 5: Classroom Motivation and Management</td>
<td>Section 2.1.6: The teacher candidate uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.</td>
<td>Area 2: Creativity 4. Teacher candidates have the disposition to understand, promote, and value a constructivist view of education as a permanent process that is unique, creative, and responsive to the social needs of the community. Teacher candidates select, design, and assess constructivist strategies and methodologies which promote life-long learning through autonomy, critical reflection, active collaboration, problem solving, and construction of knowledge in diverse contexts.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher candidates reflect a thorough understanding of professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards. They develop meaningful learning experiences to facilitate learning for all students. They reflect on their practice and make necessary adjustments to enhance student learning. They know how students learn and how to make ideas accessible to them. They consider school, family, and community contexts in connecting concepts to students’ prior experiences and applying the ideas to real-world problems.</td>
<td>Area 3: Leadership 5. Teacher candidates adopt transformational leadership roles in their field experiences and clinical practice by creating learning environments that promote reflection, assessment, and research.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>INTASC 9: Professional Commitment and Responsibility</td>
<td>Section 2.1.9 Teacher candidates are reflective practitioners who continually assess the effects of choices and actions on others. They actively seek out opportunities to grow professionally and utilize assessment and professional growth to generate more learning for more students.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>INTASC 10: Partnerships</td>
<td>Section 2.1.10 Teacher candidates foster relationships with school colleagues, parents, and educational partners in the larger community to support student learning and well-being.</td>
<td>6. Teacher candidates establish effective connections and maintain open lines of communication with members of the educational community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students’ learning and well-being.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCATE Standards</td>
<td>INTASC Principles</td>
<td>State Standards (PR Council on Higher Education)</td>
<td>UPRH Teacher Education Unit’s Candidate Proficiencies</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D. Student Learning for Student Candidates: Initially and Continuing</strong></td>
<td><strong>INTASC 2:</strong> Knowledge of Human Development and Learning</td>
<td>Section 2.1.2 Teacher candidates understand how students learn and develop, and provide learning opportunities that support the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students.</td>
<td><strong>Area 2: Creativity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher candidates accurately assess and analyze student learning, make appropriate adjustments to instruction, monitor student learning, and have a positive effect on learning for all students.</td>
<td>The teacher understands how children learn and develop and can provide opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.</td>
<td><strong>INTASC 3:</strong> Adapting Instruction to Individual Needs</td>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Teacher candidates have the disposition to understand, promote, and value a constructivist view of education as a permanent process that is unique, creative, and responsive to the social needs of the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INTASC 3:</strong> Adapting Instruction to Individual Needs</td>
<td>The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.</td>
<td>Section 2.1.3 Teacher candidates understand how students differ in their approaches to learning and create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.</td>
<td><strong>Area 4: Social Transformation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.</td>
<td>Section 2.1.8 Teacher candidates understand and use formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.</td>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Teacher candidates develop as integral individuals who demonstrate ethical, civic, and professional competencies in their field experiences, clinical practice, and professional carrier in order to contribute effectively as educational leaders that promote a culture of life-long learning.</td>
<td><strong>8.</strong> Teacher candidates pursue and revise their understanding of social responsibility in a global context by engaging in assessment activities and action research investigations that enrich their educational experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By focusing on the four areas of diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation, the Unit ensures that the candidate proficiencies are in alignment with the Unit’s philosophy, purpose, and goals. The Unit is founded on constructivist principles that focus on maximizing the growth, development, and learning opportunities for each individual that are reflected in a commitment toward a lifetime of continuous learning. This commitment is reflected in each teacher candidate through a demonstration of a high degree of proficiency in the four key areas of diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation.

**Alignment with SPAs**

The candidate proficiencies are also in alignment with the corresponding specialized professional associations (SPAs): National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for the B.A. in Education K-3 program and the Association for Teachers of English to
Students of Other Languages (TESOL) for the B.A. in English program. The core areas of diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation are reflected throughout the standards of these two SPAs, and therefore, align themselves closely to the high degree of proficiency that teacher candidates are expected to attain.

4.5 ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Description of the Assessment System

The UPRH Teacher Education Unit Assessment System includes four transitions: entry level, pre-clinical practice, clinical practice, and follow-up after graduation. Each of the transition levels aligns with the candidate competencies providing a coherent foundation within the conceptual framework to facilitate development of the effective and reflective teachers the Unit endeavors to form.

Assessment Model

The model for the UPRH Teacher Education Unit assessment system reflects a spiral sequence that is initiated with the teacher candidate entry level and progresses through pre-clinical practice, clinical practice and post graduation. On the right hand side of the model, each rectangle names the respective assessments that are used to evaluate each level of transition.

At the entry level, teacher candidates must meet admissions requirements. Once admitted into their respective programs, a teacher candidate is profiled. Starting with information based on key assessments such as IGS scores, a written essay, and an interview, candidates’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions are assessed. This level also provides the Unit with data to inform its curriculum and activities in order to meet the needs of its teacher candidates.

At the pre-clinical practice transition, teacher candidates are administered a pre and post test in the core education course at this level. This is a key assessment which marks the starting point for collecting information about the Unit’s process to form teacher candidates’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions through the teaching portfolio and the teacher work sample.

During clinical practice, teacher candidates will continue to be assessed. At this level the assessment will continue using the professional portfolio and the teacher work sample. The process now incorporates faculty and student evaluations, as well as the evaluation of the site cooperating teacher. The data is used to track progress and affect the process in order to provide additional experiences to teacher candidates if needed.

The post graduation level is also a key component to assess the Unit. Data is collected using alumni surveys, employer surveys, and student surveys.

The arrows to the left of the transition points indicate the flow of the unit key assessments in their progress from one transition point to the other. Each of the assessments provides information about the attainment of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for the candidates to become effective and reflective teachers at the different levels. These assessments are vital to inform decisions about remediation, changes in strategy and methods that can ensure highly qualified teachers.
The model incorporates the four core areas of candidate competencies that are the foundation for assessment in rectangles that surround the diagram. These core areas: diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation frame the processes included in the rest of the diagram. The core areas are connected by arrows that flow in a continuous cycle to represent the fact that the Unit considers each one vital to the formation of effective and reflective teacher candidates.

**Figure 2**

**Assessment System Based on Four Transition Levels**

1. **ENTRY LEVEL**

   The first transition of the Unit’s assessment system focuses on the entry level requirements for prospective teacher candidates. Each of the two programs in the Teacher Education Unit establishes the entry level admissions requirements for its first-year teacher candidates. A Teacher Candidate Profile is then established by each program based on the teacher candidates who attain admission. These entry level teacher candidates are the foundation of each of the respective four-year teacher preparation programs.
Admission Criteria to UPRH

The admission criteria for all entering first-year students at UPRH is based on an *Indice General de Solicitud* [General Admission Index or IGS]. The Teacher Education Unit has the following IGS: B.A. in English with a minor in Elementary or Secondary English – 2.50; and B.A. in Education K-3 – 2.82. This IGS is determined through the application of a formula in which 50% is obtained from students’ high school grade point average and 25% is obtained from each, the verbal and mathematics sections of the College Board Entrance Examination (CEEB).

Upon admission, UPRH places students in the appropriate course level for Spanish, English, and mathematics based on the College Board academic test results for each of these parts. The English BA Program also requires that teacher candidates admitted to the program have a minimum score of 580 in the English portion of the CEEB.

**Teacher Education Unit Admission Criteria**

The Teacher Education Unit receives from the Admissions Office the names of those students who have applied to the respective programs. Once the student has completed all the admission requirements, the Unit Admissions Committee schedules a formal meeting in which students are interviewed and required to write an essay. The interview and essay focus on the following areas: (1) philosophy of education, (2) direct experience with children, (3) work experience, (4) students’ dispositions and interests and (5) travel experiences. This interview and writing sample ensure that incoming students have the minimum literacy standards to successfully complete their respective programs and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become effective and reflective practitioners.

In the case of those students who meet the IGS requirements but need additional support to increase their literacy competence, the Admissions Committee determines the type of referral for remedial support based on the results of these two assessments.

2. **PRE-CLINICAL PRACTICE**

The second transition begins with the core course for both of the programs in the Teacher Education Unit, Participant Observation (EDFU 3045) that is offered to teacher candidates beginning the first semester of the second year in their studies to complete the requirements as teacher candidates. This level includes both formative and summative assessment of candidate performance and development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Formative and summative assessments include: a pre and post test, action research projects, on-site observation, and hands-on experiences associated with the teaching career. These assessments are used by the faculty members teaching this core course and the results are reported to the respective program coordinators and the directors.

**Pre and Post Test in the Core Course EDFU 3045**

The Unit uses a Pre and post test to assess the teacher candidate’s progress in the pre-clinical setting. It is administered at the beginning and at the end of the course. The purpose is to assess the extent to which the pre-clinical experience has affected the knowledge, skills, and
dispositions of teacher candidates in the core areas of competencies: diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation.

The results of the pre-test provides information about the teacher candidate’s ability upon entering the pre-clinical experience and provides baseline data to benchmark a teacher candidate’s achievement level. Differences between the pre-test and post-test will reflect the acquisition of knowledge and the degree of disposition that a teacher candidate has attained. The results of this analysis are used to identify areas of skill deficiency and to track improvement within the assigned time frame that this course is offered.

Professional Portfolio

Teacher candidates are required to evidence their teaching experiences beginning at this level in a professional portfolio that contains evaluation and assessment samples, meeting and interview forms, group profile, and a case study. The professional portfolio is reviewed by the course professor during the pre-clinical practice using an assessment rubric to ensure that teacher candidates are engaged in meaningful teaching activities that focus on diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation.

Teacher Work Sample

The Teacher Work Sample (TWS) is also initiated as a requirement at this level. It is primarily used to guide teacher candidates in the constructive reflection of the teaching practices based on their observations in this course.

3. CLINICAL PRACTICE

The third transition is designed to be a culminating pre-graduation experience in which teacher candidates make the transition from theoretical knowledge obtained in pre-clinical practice, foundation and methodology courses to the application of this knowledge in real-life teaching scenarios. The teacher candidate engages in extensive clinical practice during one semester at a practice center that can be either in a public or accredited private elementary or secondary school. The performance of the teacher candidate is assessed by the practice coordinator and cooperating teacher through a professional portfolio, teacher work sample, and formative and summative evaluations of lesson planning and teaching performance.

Professional Portfolio

Teacher candidates are required to evidence their teaching experiences at this level in their professional portfolio that contains lesson plans, evaluation and assessment samples, meeting and interview forms, group profile, case study, and special project. In addition, teacher candidates are asked to write a series of reflections this time on their philosophy of teaching and individual teaching experiences. The professional portfolio is reviewed by the practice coordinator and cooperating teacher four times during the clinical practice using an assessment rubric to ensure that teacher candidates are engaged in meaningful teaching activities that focus on diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation.
Teacher Work Sample

The Teacher Work Sample is required to evidence that teacher candidates under the guidance of their practice supervisor and their cooperating teachers are fully immersed in the learning process. The TWS is evaluated through assessment rubrics by the practice supervisor in three stages as the semester progresses, and is designed to help the teacher candidate assess his or her own teaching in terms of student performance. Teacher candidates are required, through the TWS, to continuously assess and analyze student learning, make appropriate adjustments to instruction, have a positive effect on learning for all students, and engage in reflection and self-assessment (The Renaissance Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality, 2002). The final evaluation of the Teacher Work Sample provides evidence of the degree to which the teacher candidate guided his or her students toward fulfilling the expectations in the areas of diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation within a constructivist paradigm.

Faculty and Student Evaluations

The Teacher Education Unit’s practice supervisors and cooperating teachers are also engaged in continuous evaluation of teacher candidates’ lesson planning and teaching performance. The practice supervisor conducts an exploratory visit and a minimum of three formative evaluations based on observations for the purpose of helping the teacher candidate in designing, implementing, and evaluating lesson plans as well as engaging in a group profile, case study, and special project reports.

The cooperating teacher meets on a daily basis with the teacher candidate, and also conducts formative evaluations based on observations to ensure that lesson planning and teaching performance reflect a constructivist approach. The practice supervisor and cooperating teacher conduct one final evaluation that is both collaborative and summative at the end of the clinical practice. These summative evaluations focus on evidencing that teacher candidates have obtained the highest level of proficiency in the areas of diversity, creativity, leadership, and social transformation.

4. POST GRADUATION

The fourth and last transition follows up on the teachers that graduate from the programs through the administration of surveys to the three primary stakeholders of the teacher preparation process: the alumni, the employers, and the students.

Alumni Surveys

The UPRH Teacher Education Unit administers an alumni survey to collect information about the alumni’s continuing pursuit of professional and personal growth such as the attainment of teacher certification, academic and professional accomplishment, academic and professional activity, and the evaluation of the programs they graduated from through the perspective of the experience of practicing their profession.
Employer Surveys

The Unit administers an employer survey to collect information from these stakeholders that can provide data to inform the teacher preparation process itself such as the degree of satisfaction with the general, professional and practical performance of the teachers under their supervision that graduated from the Unit, and the perception of possible areas for improvement of their preparation as teachers in the system for which they work.

Student Surveys

The Unit administers student surveys to collect information from the students who are the responsibility of the teachers that graduate from the Unit. This information revolves around students’ perception of the strengths and weaknesses of their teacher with respect to mastery of the subject area they teach and their pedagogical expertise, as well as their effectiveness.

All three types of surveys are administered every two years. The data collected from these surveys is tabulated and presented at a faculty meeting. Then it is included in the operational plans and processes of the standing committees that work with program revision, the faculty that works with seminar and/or practicum courses, and the faculty teaching courses that are directly related to the data collected.

Implementation of the Assessment System for the UPRH Teacher Education Unit

The assessment system is designed to be implemented on a two-semester basis. It is an ongoing process that has been incorporated into the Assessment Plan of both the Education Department and the English Department. By the end of the first academic year of the implementation of the system, the Teacher Education Unit will have the data from three semesters based on each transition level. The report will be presented to the faculty and submitted to the Dean for Academic Affairs to be included in the UPRH Annual Assessment Report. The report will also be used by the directors of each department as the basis to prepare the Annual Work Plan and Assessment Plan for the Unit.

Table 2: ASSESSMENT SYSTEM FOR THE UPRH TEACHER EDUCATION UNIT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition Points</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Candidate Proficiencies (4.4)</th>
<th>Key Assessments</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Admission</td>
<td>1st year in Program</td>
<td>1, 3</td>
<td>1. IGS</td>
<td>1. Admissions Office</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Written Essay</td>
<td>2. &amp; 3. Unit Admissions Committee</td>
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<td>3. Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Pre-Clinical</td>
<td>1st-4th year in Program</td>
<td>2, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>1. Pre and Post Test in Core Course</td>
<td>1. – 3. Course Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Professional Portfolio</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Teacher Work Sample</td>
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</table>
Intervention: Helping Candidates Meet Expectations

At the entry level, teacher candidates who do not perform within the expected standards on the essay will be required to seek the aid of the Communication Competencies Center (CCC). The Teacher Education Unit will develop a work plan in conjunction with the CCC to ensure that our teacher candidates develop the language and communication skills necessary for their professional development. Also, at this initial stage, the interview will provide information on the disposition of candidates. Those candidates who do not demonstrate the necessary dispositions will be referred to their advisors for follow-up and counseling. Professional courses will address dispositions so candidates will have the opportunity to reflect upon their role as future teachers and to develop the dispositions that will ensure their commitment to the profession.

At the pre-clinical level, a pre and post test in the first education course taken by all candidates will also provide data on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of prospective teachers. Again, if necessary, intervention will entail follow-up by the advisor and the participation of the candidate in scheduled seminars and workshops.

At other levels, the portfolio and the teacher work sample, which are incremental and developmental in nature, allow for immediate intervention giving teacher candidates the opportunity to perform within expected standards.

Also, teacher candidates must follow a progressive sequence of courses which are required for academic progression: Participant Observation, Methodology, Seminar (this requirement for the K-3 program is integrated in the Practicum), and Practicum. Candidates that do not pass any of these courses must repeat them in order to graduate.
By monitoring the prospective teachers’ academic progress and by surveying their needs, the Practice Supervisor, the Academic Advisor, and the Department Chair can determine topics to be covered in seminars and workshops to ensure that candidates will develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for their success in the programs as well as in their teaching profession.

**Accuracy and Consistency of Assessments**

The Unit engages in continuous assessment of the rubrics that are used in evaluating each transition level, as well as in assessing the documents that are used to evaluate lesson planning and teaching performance at the practice centers. The personnel responsible for the assessments will work together to ensure that these instruments meet the requirements of inter-rater reliability and validity and that the instruments are free from bias. Each assessment rubric is evaluated every two years by the Unit Assessment Committees in consultation with the director of the Institutional Assessment Office.
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