A Guidebook for the Professional Semester

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Conceptual Framework for Education Programs at Western Connecticut State University

Conceptual Framework

Shared Vision and Theme of the Education Unit

A conceptual framework captures the shared vision of the Unit, guides the activities of faculty and candidates, and becomes the vehicle through which the Unit's goals are articulated to the broader community. A conceptual framework promotes cohesion within the Unit and becomes a base from which "continuous improvement, renewal and change can occur" (Dottin, 2001, p. 3).

The vision of the Western Connecticut State University (WestConn) Education Unit is reflected in the term EDUCATOR (Expertise in content knowledge, Diversity, Unity, Classroom and school leadership, Attitudes, Technology, Organize knowledge and facilitate learning, Reflective practitioner) and the theme Preparing teachers and counselors to facilitate student growth and achievement in the 21st Century. The components of our Conceptual Framework underscore our belief that teachers and counselors in the new millennium must understand how to use information technologies and how to work effectively with the diversity of students found in public schools in order to prepare all students for success in a technological, multicultural, global society.

Teachers and counselors must know how to work collaboratively with colleagues and communicate with a variety of constituencies in order to be classroom and school leaders capable of effecting change and ensuring quality educational programs for all students. They must be reflective practitioners who continually evaluate and modify their practice, not only to meet the learning and developmental needs of students, but also to keep pace with a rapidly changing society and world.

The term EDUCATOR embodies the components of our Conceptual Framework and serves to remind us that we, the faculty, are first and foremost responsible for preparing the educators of the future. (See www.wcsu.edu)
The Education and Educational Psychology Department's Mission Statement and Objectives (Revised Fall 2003)

The mission of the Education and Educational Psychology (E&EP) Department is to prepare candidates for careers in teaching and counseling professions. We believe in initiating and maintaining professional relationships with the broader educational community and are committed to the continuous support and development of cooperative projects and services with area schools and community agencies. We embrace the broader mission of Western Connecticut State University to empower students to "…attain the highest standards of academic achievement…personal development, and ethical conduct". Candidates in our teacher and counselor preparation programs must achieve the following objectives:

1. demonstrate academic competence in their selected fields,
2. complete a general program of studies (in Education) in addition to a recommended content area major other than Education,
3. know the historical, social, economic, political, comparative and philosophical foundations of education or school counseling,
4. understand the variety of patterns of human growth and development
5. value and infuse cultural diversity,
6. demonstrate a proficiency in and working knowledge of the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (with the embedded Connecticut Competency Instrument), Connecticut Common Core of Learning, Curriculum Frameworks K-12, the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility, and effective practices in the profession,
7. demonstrate a spirit of inquiry, the use of critical thinking skills, and the habits of the reflective practitioner, and,
8. demonstrate the ability to incorporate appropriately the use of technology in instructional practices.

What is the Professional Semester?
The Professional Semester takes place during the semester immediately preceding student teaching. While participating in the Professional Semester, you will be taking the following five courses: ED 425 Teaching Elementary School Social Studies, ED 360 Teaching Reading, ED 415 Teaching Elementary School Science, ED 440 Integrated Language Arts, and EPY 405 Introduction to Special Education. Integrated into your program during the Professional Semester is Fieldwork in PDS Schools ED 320 a 10-day experience designed to acquaint you with a classroom environment so that you can observe and participate in daily elementary school life prior to student teaching. This is a time to learn first-hand about classroom management, assess student needs, improve your repertoire of teaching skills, learn about school culture, and experience the collegiality of working with exceptional teachers.

For each of the 10 days, you will be present at your assigned school for the entire teaching day. This typically includes preparation prior to the time when students arrive at the beginning of the day. Schools have different schedules and the principal at your school will provide you with your starting and ending times.

**Who makes the Professional Semester assignments?**

Schools collaborate with WCSU during each Professional Semester. These schools are referred to as Professional Development Schools (PDS). WCSU has one PDS Coordinator who assigns students to specific schools, usually based on class cohorts. The principals at each school place the students with a mentor teacher according to teacher availability and willingness to participate in the program. PDS sites will have varying numbers of student placements from one semester to another based on the number of student teachers assigned to a particular school and other activities taking place in the school at that time.

**What do I do during the Professional Semester experience?**

It is expected that you will participate at the assigned PDS site for the entire school day and typically for a planning period prior to the beginning of school. You should be involved at all levels of school activities, including those inside and out of the classroom (for example- lunch and recess duty). Naturally, you will want to speak with your mentor teacher to find out when and how you can best fit your ideas into his or her class schedule. There will be many opportunities for you to learn.

To give you ideas for possible activities during this experience, the following examples are taken directly from your course requirements for ED 425 Teaching Elementary School Social Studies, ED 360 Teaching Reading, ED 415 Teaching Elementary School Science, ED 440 Integrated Language Arts, and EPY 405 Introduction to Special Education. Needless to say, the integration of any of these activities into your Professional Semester experience will need to be agreed upon between you and your assigned teacher. As early in the semester as possible, discuss these ideas with your course professors and mentor teacher. Also be mindful of what you could
do to display the behaviors indicated on the evaluation form.

ED 425: Teaching Elementary School Social Studies K-6

1. Prepare lesson plans that meet selected objectives and demonstrate effective teaching strategies.
2. Use technology to create a community based presentation that will demonstrate knowledge of social studies areas.
3. Create and implement a social studies bulletin board.
4. Develop classroom management strategies that are conducive to an interactive social studies classroom.
5. Maintain a reflective journal of the PDS experience.
6. Prepare a social studies portfolio that includes lesson plans, student work samples and a culminating activity. At least one lesson plan will be presented during the PDS experience.

ED 360: Teaching Reading K-6

1. Develop a lesson plan for the reading curriculum and teach the lesson.
2. Maintain a reading journal.
3. Maintain an observation log.

ED 415: Teaching Elementary School Science K-6

1. Develop and teach a lesson plan for a topic in science.
2. Manage a center for materials students will use to perform an investigation.
3. Create a Learning Center.
4. Present a discrepant event.

ED 440: Integrated Language Arts K-6

1. Conduct an author’s chair presentation on a topic of educational value.
2. Present an oral author’s study (with an infographic handout).
3. Design a tote/backpack literacy project for linking school and home (with an infographic handout).
4. Develop a living textbook.
5. Prepare a literacy based holiday thematic party (with an infographic handout).

EPY 405: Introduction to Special Education K-6

1. Observe in a special education classroom.
2. Interview special education teachers and/or support personnel (i.e., psychologists, social workers, occupational and physical therapists), regarding their roles and functions.
3. Observe the modifications made on behalf of special learners in the classroom in which they are placed.
4. Assist the mentor teacher in providing appropriate modifications, accommodations, and specialized instruction for inclusion students with disabilities.

ED 320: Fieldwork in PDS Schools K-6

1. Participate in a 10-day experience designed to acquaint you with a classroom environment so that you can observe and take an active role in daily elementary school life prior to student teaching.

2. Course material learned at the university level will be implemented in the areas of classroom management skills, student needs assessment, teaching skills, school culture, and through the collegiality of working with exceptional teachers.

How will I be evaluated?

Your mentor teacher must complete the following evaluation by the end of your PDS experience. Please keep an evaluation sheet as your guide and note when and how well you think you have accomplished specific competencies. Provide a copy of this form to your mentor teacher as soon as possible, so he or she knows how you are to be assessed. You should meet with your mentor teacher both during and at the end of the PDS experience to compare ideas and discuss your performance. When your mentor teacher has completed the evaluation form, please return it to your professor for ED 425 Teaching Elementary School Social Studies.

As a guide, on the section of this form, your goal should be to have 8 out of 9 categories at the average to above average level. Regarding the second section, there should be 10 out of 15 checks indicating “yes” with no more than 1 blank per section. Refer to the form on pages 6-8. Once this form is completed, it will be placed in your student file in the office for the Department of Education and Educational Psychology.
(Adapted from earlier PDS Guidebook version: Delcourt in1996, pp.3-5, 9-13)
Western Connecticut State University Elementary Education

Professional Development Schools (PDS) Student Evaluation Form

WCSU Student_______________________________ School_________________
Teacher______________________________________ Grade Level_____________

WCSU requests mentor teachers to evaluate the professional semester candidates, according to the following NCATE Professional Development Schools (PDS) standards and dispositions included in the Unit’s Conceptual Framework. Please use the following scale.

**Rating Scale**

4 = Excellent  
3 = Above Average  
2 = Average  
1 = Below Average  
0 = No Evidence

The PDS student, during the course of the 10 days in my classroom,

**Learning Community**

_____ 1. Created learning experiences that were grade level appropriate with measurable objectives and assessment criteria aligned with local, state, or national curricular standards.

_____ 2. Demonstrated the belief that all students can learn.

**Accountability and Quality Assurance**

_____ 3. Showed a passion for teaching and a commitment to learning.

_____ 4. Demonstrated ethical and professional behavior.
Collaboration

_____ 5. Communicated with mentor teacher on a regular basis and exhibited effective rapport and interaction with students.

_____ 6. Demonstrated the belief that teachers bear responsibility for children’s cognitive, social and emotional development.

Diversity and Equity

_____ 7. Demonstrated the value and respect for children of diverse backgrounds.

_____ 8. Supported various learning needs, performance styles, and interests.

Structures, Resources, and Roles

_____ 9. Implemented appropriate classroom structures/settings, technological resources, and sufficient materials to assist with learning.

Student’s performance during the PDS days included

Experience with student academic abilities:
1. Oral Reading…………………………………………………Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
2. Writing……………………………………….Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
3. Mathematics…………………………………………………Yes_____ No______ N/E_____

Noting and Responding to:
4. Use of student names in the class…………………………Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
5. Students questions……………………………………Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
6. Students behavior……………………………………Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
7. Classroom organization and routines…………………Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
8. Groupings of students……………………………………Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
Conducting a lesson or activity that involved:

9. Literature based reading…………………………………..Yes _____ No _____ N/E_____
10. Small group skills lesson………………………………..Yes _____ No _____ N/E_____
11. Process writing…………………………………………….Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
12. Creating a project, learning center, unit or bulletin board….Yes_____ No______ N/E_____ 

Participating in other activities:

13. Visited a special needs class……………………………..Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
14. Completed an extra-duty task……………………………..Yes_____ No______ N/E_____
15. Visited a different grade level .................................Yes_____ No______ N/E_____ 

PDS Student ________________________ _________________________ _______
(Print Name)    (Signature)    (Date)

PDS Classroom Teacher ________________________ _________________________ _______
(Print Name)    (Signature)    (Date)

PDS Course Professor ______________________________________________________ _______
(Signature)    (Date)
Professional Development Schools (PDS)

King Street Primary School

General Information:
King Street Primary School
151 South King Street
Danbury, CT 06811
Grades K-2, approximately 355 students
Regular School Hours: 8:25 am - 3:00 pm; PDS Hours: 8:00 - Dismissal
Principal: Mrs. Jackie Bacon
Phone: 203.797.4744
Fax: 203.830.6596
Directions: Take I-84 to Exit 5 and turn left onto Clapboard Ridge Road. Stay on Clapboard Ridge Road for approximately 3 miles. At a 7-11 convenience store, turn left onto King Street. Take the second left onto South King Street. The school will be approximately ½ mile on the left.

Mill Ridge Primary School

General Information:
Mill Ridge Primary School
49-A High Ridge Road
Danbury, CT 06811-5215
Grades K-2, approximately 350 students
Regular School Hours: 8:25 am - 3:00 pm; PDS Hours: 8:00 - Dismissal
Principal: Dr. Mary Cronin
Phone: 203.797.4781
Fax: 203.830.6583
Directions: From the WCSU West Side Campus, make a left onto Lake Avenue, take a left onto Mill Ridge (where the Dunkin Donuts is located), take your first left and proceed up the hill and around the bend (you will see a sign for Mill Ridge School Intermediate Unit- DO NOT TAKE THIS LEFT), at the top of the hill go left onto High Ridge Road, turn left into the first driveway on your left and drive straight into the Mill Ridge Primary School parking lot.

Parking: If there are no parking spaces left, do not be tempted to park on the grass, in front of the school, or in residential areas marked with no parking signs. The police ticket these areas regularly. Of course, other specialized parking (Handicapped) areas are out of the question. You can double park and park someone in if you tell the secretary that you have had to do this and tell her where you will be in the building in case you need to move your vehicle.
Roberts Avenue Elementary School

General Information:
Roberts Avenue Elementary School
11 Seventh Avenue
Danbury, CT 06810
Grades K-5, approximately 309 students
Regular School Hours: 8:55 am - 3:30 pm; PDS Hours: 8:30 - Dismissal
Principal: Mrs. Anna Rocco
Phone: 203.797.4740
Fax: 203.830.6527
Directions: Roberts Avenue Elementary School is on the Main Campus of WCSU, in back of the Student Center. Since parking is often a problem, park in the WCSU parking lot and walk across the street to the school.

Stadley Rough Elementary School

General Information:
Stadley Rough Elementary School
25 Karen Road
Danbury, CT 06811
Grades K-5, approximately 445 students
Regular School Hours: 8:25 am - 3:00 pm; PDS Hours: 8:00 - Dismissal
Principal: Mrs. Linda Siciliano
Phone: 203.797.4774
Fax: 203.830.6520
Directions: From the WCSU West Side Campus, make a left onto Lake Avenue, go Westbound on Interstate 84, take exit 7, make the first right, make a left at the second stop light (Federal Road), continue on this road until you get to the Arby’s, make a right and go up the hill, at the top of the hill, go left, make the first right onto Karen Road, Stadley Rough Elementary School will be on your left.

Who can I contact if I need help?

Your PDS Liaison is a member of the WCSU Department of Education and Educational Psychology. This individual does not formally evaluate you, but will check on how you are doing during your 10-days at your PDS site. His or her role is to coordinate your placement, making the program run smoothly between the university, you, and your assigned class at the PDS site.

If you have any questions during your PDS experience, please feel free to contact your PDS Liaison or Dr. Marsha Daria, the Coordinator of the PDS Program.
What do I do if I have to be absent on a scheduled PDS day?

Call your PDS site and leave a message for both the principal and your mentor teacher explaining why you are absent. You should also leave a message with your PDS liaison at WCSU. Your make-up day for missing a class should be the following Monday after your absence. **Please contact the principal and mentor teacher at your PDS site in order to make certain that this is an acceptable make-up day.** This arrangement is not automatic. Naturally, if you are not able to make-up your absence on the following Monday, please schedule your make-up day as soon as possible and alert your liaison to the day.

Also be aware of the radio station to tune into in the event of a weather-related school cancellation. The make-up day for this type of closing will be the following Monday.

Do I need to receive permission for anything that I do?

Please consult your mentor teacher or the school principal about specific guidelines regarding photocopying, laminating and using school materials. There are specific school budgets for these activities and all school personnel have the priority for using school equipment and supplies.

There is no doubt that you will want to record and reflect upon the many activities you will have during your Professional Semester. If this documentation includes taking pictures or making a videotape, you should be aware that some parents or guardians have prohibited these activities regarding their children. This is a personal decision and often a safety precaution on the part of the parents or guardians. You should find out if this request pertains to any of the children in your classroom.

Regarding this issue, policy in the Danbury Public School System requires that all parents be asked to sign a form if their children should **NOT** be included in any photographs or videos or any activity where the child’s likeness is duplicated. Typically, each school sends this form home to parents at the beginning of the year. When unusual activities take place during the school year, such as the addition of Professional Semester students in the school, individual school administrators prefer that an additional form be sent to parents. Please check on this policy at your PDS site by speaking with the principal. For example, this form is required for all students assigned at the Mill Ridge Primary School. The form on the following page can be sent to parents or your PDS site may also have this form on letterhead stationary.
Picture/Video Permission Slip

Dear Parents/Guardians:

My name is __________________________ and I am a student at Western Connecticut State University, working at ______________________. As part of my
studies, I will be presenting a curriculum lesson for the class. The activity/project will utilize photos and/or video. Unless otherwise notified, all the students in class will be participating in this special activity.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IF YOU DO/DO NOT WISH TO HAVE YOUR CHILD PARTICIPATE. Thank you.

________________________________________________________________________
WESCONN Student/Teacher Name

________________________________________________________________________
Activity Date

________________________________________________________________________
CHILD’S NAME: __________________________
_____ I do not wish to have my child participate in this activity.

________________________________________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there anything else that I have to do to be admitted to the Professional Semester?

Yes, you must be interviewed by Education and Educational Psychology Department faculty.

Who sets up the interview?

We do. The Department secretary will notify you of the time and place of the interview

What will I be asked at the interview?

You will be asked questions about your education courses, your essay, your experience working
with children, and your attitudes about teaching, and current educational issues.

What happens after the interview?

Once final grades have been posted, your professional semester file will be reviewed again to determine if requirements have been met. If you are a transfer student, all grades from previous institutions will be aggregated in with your WCSU grades to calculate one grade point average.

How will I know if I have been accepted to the Professional Semester?

You will receive a phone call and told that you have been accepted, as well as an acceptance letter from the Education & Educational Psychology Department chair.

How do I register for classes?

The Education & Educational Psychology Department has its own registration procedure for the professional semester. When you receive your phone call, you will be asked to come to the Education Office (WS 249) to get a letter giving you permission to register for the Professional Semester courses. You will take that letter to the Registrar's Office to register.

History of the Education Department

Selected Events in the History of the Education and Educational Psychology Department

DANBURY STATE NORMAL SCHOOL

1903 Danbury State Normal School is established for the purpose of preparing “teachers in the art of instructing and governing in the public schools of the State….”

1904 41 students are enrolled on September 6th in the first classes “to train teachers… Enrollments climb to 362 students by 1912, dropping to 66 in the post World War I academic year of 1920-21.

1925 Extension courses are offered at the School

1931 Formation of a Commercial Department for training business education teachers occurs. This program remains until 1935.

1932 & All courses are extended for three-year durations in 1932, and three years later a

1935 “special third year” is offered.

DANBURY STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
1937  Danbury State Normal School for the training of teachers becomes Danbury State Teachers College. The CT State Legislature authorizes the granting of a Bachelor of Science degree.

1941  The College becomes accredited by the American Association of Teachers Colleges.

1954  The College becomes accredited by several groups:

- New England Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
- National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)
- American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE)

1955  Effective as of September, new certification requirements are mandated by Connecticut State for Connecticut teachers to “work toward a Master’s Degree.”

1958  16 teachers are awarded the first graduate Masters of Science degree.

**DANBURY STATE COLLEGE**

1959  The College’s name is changed, omitting the word “Teachers” from the title.

1961  A four-year secondary education program is introduced at the College, leading to a Bachelor of Science degree.

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGE**

1967  Danbury State College becomes Western Connecticut State College. The first time, full-time master’s degree students are accepted to the College.

1968  A sixth year program is offered at the College for teachers interested in becoming Reading Consultants.

1969  Teachers are offered a sixth year program in Elementary Education by the College.
1976 The Board of Trustees of the College noted that less than 50% of undergraduate degrees were now in Education. There is an academic curriculum shift in emphasis to the service sector.

1977 The College offers a Master of Science degree in Guidance and Counseling.

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

1983 The four state colleges become “universities” under the Connecticut State University System with the College being renamed Western Connecticut State University

1986 Students preparing for a career in teaching learned that they no longer can “major” in education after 1990.

1990 During the spring semester of 1990, the Education Department participated with other departments in a “test trial” of an Advanced Technology Classroom constructed by IBM. This classroom was the first of its kind in the USA.

1993 The Connecticut State regulated that Elementary Education undergraduate students needed to major in an Arts and Sciences academic subject area, replacing the earlier stipulation that students could be Elementary “majors.”

2000 The M.S.T. degree program is approved.

2001 The University begins the State approval process for its first doctoral degree program, the Ed.D. degree in Instructional Leadership

2002 In September, the University is site visited by Connecticut Department of Higher Education for approval of the Ed.D. degree and in December the University received final approval from CT Board of Governors to institute the Ed.D. Program in Instructional Leadership.

2003 In September, the EdD Program in Instructional Leadership admitted its first class of doctoral students.

2004 In September, all WestConn’s Teacher Preparation Programs formally received full reaccredidation from the Connecticut State Department of Education.


A new MS degree program in Reading Certification and Cross Certification Program in Early Childhood Education are anticipated in the near future.

Submitted by:
Dr. Leah G. Stambler, Professor of Education
With the assistance of: Cheri Jowdy, B.S. Elementary Education Alumnus (2002)
Meg Moughan, Haas Library Archivist

Additions August 2003, 2004, 2006 by Dean Lynne W. Clark

WCSU Important Telephone Numbers
• Dr. Marsha Daria  
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  Office #: (203) 837-9359  
  WS 108  
  dariam@wcsu.edu

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