

School of Education

Mark Kiselica, *Interim Dean*; Delsia Fleming, *Assistant Dean*

Creating Agents of Change

Creating Agents of Change is the conceptual framework for professional education at The College of New Jersey, guiding all programs in the School of Education and throughout the College. Based on current thinking, research, and practice regarding the nature of learning, teaching, schooling, and leadership, the framework supports the creation of an informed, active, and reflective educator and practitioner who is effective in influencing positive change in multiple academic, clinical, and professional settings. The mission statement and guiding principles define our shared vision of *Creating Agents of Change*.

Mission Statement

Consistent with The College of New Jersey's clear public service mandate, the School of Education is committed to preparing exceptional teachers and clinicians. The basic tenet underlying our practice is our accepted truth that all individuals can learn and grow, and deserve schools/clinics and teachers/clinicians that respect their individual needs and circumstances while striving to give them the knowledge and skills to be successful in the larger society. Furthermore, we accept as truth the ideal that education is key to addressing the inequalities that exist in society, and that teachers and other school professionals can and should be agents for positive social change.

Therefore, through on-going partnerships with our colleagues in K-12 education and state government, faculty of the School of Education remain dedicated to the core mission of producing high-quality professionals who possess solid content knowledge, demonstrated clinical competence, and a clearly articulated belief that all individuals deserve the highest quality practices in their schools and clinics.

Guiding Principles

The following five principles form a statement of beliefs that provides a framework that guides our day-to-day practice.

Principle One: Demonstrating Subject Matter Expertise. We believe that teaching is a profession. As such, professional teachers should develop a solid base of knowledge in such areas as literacy, numeracy, child development, learning theory, exceptionality, and pedagogical techniques. All teaching candidates will complete their programs at The College of New Jersey eligible to be considered 'highly qualified.'

Principle Two: Demonstrating Excellence in Planning and Practice. We believe that our professional candidates must develop sophisticated pedagogical knowledge to design and implement effective instruction or interventions. They should possess an in-depth understanding of human growth and development to enable them to make developmentally appropriate decisions. They should be fully immersed, in both the college classroom and in the field, in a social-constructivist perspective of learning and its implications for student-centered planning, scaffolded learning experiences, and the use of a wide repertoire of instructional strategies including appropriate use of current technology. We believe that our professional candidates should appreciate the importance of a productive learning environment in which teachers and children communicate effectively and respectfully.

Principle Three: Demonstrating a Commitment to all Learners. We believe that our professional candidates should have the skill *and* the will to help all learners reach their

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full potential. Our candidates must believe in the ability of *all* students to learn and grow, must be able to implement the principles of culturally responsive teaching and differentiated instruction, and must understand the importance of partnerships with families, community members, and other professionals to address children's diverse needs. We believe our candidates need to experience diverse teaching/clinical settings in their programs at TCNJ and that students should be encouraged and supported to take advantage of opportunities to develop global perspectives through study abroad and international student teaching.

Principle Four: Demonstrating a Strong, Positive Effect on Student Growth. We believe that our professional candidates must see their success in terms of the progress made by their students. We are supportive of the underlying principle that all children should make progress in school. Our candidates must understand how to accurately assess their learners' strengths and needs through a variety of assessment tools, and how to use assessment information to provide effective data-driven instruction or interventions. Our candidates must also demonstrate an ability to effectively communicate information to a variety of audiences, including parents and guardians.

Principle Five: Demonstrating Professionalism, Advocacy, and Leadership. We believe that our professional candidates need to continue to develop their theoretical knowledge and practical skills well after they complete their program and enter their chosen career. As we strive to admit highly capable, high-achieving candidates into our program, we believe that our candidates are in a unique position to become future leaders advocating not only for the needs of children and youth in New Jersey but also for the educational professions at large. Our programs focus on developing reflective thinking skills as well as providing opportunities for our candidates to participate in various field experiences that require them to see themselves as professionals and to take on leadership roles.

Requirements for Teacher Education Candidates:

1. A cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.75 is required for students to successfully complete their teacher education program and be recommended for certification and licensure. To help assure that students at The College of New Jersey meet their requirement by graduation: 1) admission to candidacy in all teacher education programs, following completion of 16 course units, requires a 2.5 minimum GPA; and 2) admission to student teaching in all teacher education programs requires a 2.75 minimum GPA.
2. Students must meet a state hygiene/physiology requirement, and pass the appropriate Praxis examination before receiving initial certification to teach in the state.
3. A Mantoux or tuberculosis test is required of all students in the School of Education and in teacher preparation programs during their sophomore year. This test is a state requirement and can be obtained through the Health Center at The College of New Jersey or through a private physician. Further information is available through the Office of Support for Teacher Education Programs (STEP).
4. Students enrolled in a teacher preparation program are encouraged to obtain a substitute teacher certification after earning 15 units. Sophomore and junior students must sign a statement attesting that he or she has not committed any offenses that may disqualify him or her from state teacher certification. A list of applicable offenses will be provided. This certification will be to ensure the continued safety and security of TCNJ students and the faculty and students in the participating field placement districts. Students with convictions or charges pending may jeopardize their eligibility to continue in the teacher preparation

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program until pending charges are appropriately settled. Students are encouraged to contact the STEP office to discuss their eligibility.

5. Some school districts may require students to obtain a New Jersey Department of Education criminal background check before accepting the teacher candidate as student teacher.

Students should also be aware that the curriculum for the teacher preparation programs is designed to comply with the Federal and State of New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards and Administrative Codes. Consequently, the School of Education may have to alter the graduation requirements of the undergraduate teacher preparation programs to comply with any changes to the state teacher certification requirements. Any student seeking additional endorsements or teaching certificates beyond what is specifically awarded by their academic program should contact the State of New Jersey Department of Education directly for details about any additional courses or standardized tests that may be required.

Students majoring in early childhood education, elementary education, special education, and education of the deaf and hard of hearing/elementary education (dual certification program) must also complete an approved second major. To avoid extending their program, students are encouraged to declare their majors at the start of their freshman year.

Students enrolled in the Schools of the Arts and Communication; Humanities and Social Sciences; Nursing, Health, and Exercise Science; Engineering; and Science who are preparing to teach must complete the approved liberal arts or sciences major as well as the required sequence of teacher-preparation courses.

Departments within the School of Education maintain the right and responsibility to dismiss from a given major those students who have not made satisfactory progress in completing the major component of the program or fulfilling department requirements or expectations.