Introduction
Founded in 1899 in rural West Central Illinois, the Western Illinois State Normal School was established to address teacher preparation in the state's grammar schools, particularly in the semi-rural areas of West Central Illinois. The faculty and students of Western were eager to meet this need, and the institution soon became known for its well-rounded, deeply committed graduates, a tradition that continues. Teacher preparation was the first official program, and its first students graduated in 1905 (Hursh, 1927). The name was changed to Western Illinois State Teachers College in 1921 and then to Western Illinois University (WIU) in 1957. The institutional mission expanded to include programs that prepared high school teachers, the state’s earliest and most successful extension program, a multi-faceted graduate school, and liberal arts programs.

Today, WIU is comprised of four distinguished colleges that include Arts and Sciences, Business and Technology, Education and Human Services, and Fine Arts and Communication. Western has earned and maintains a reputation for expanding public access to affordable, high quality degree programs and fostering student involvement in University activities. Western is now a leading university with a residential campus in Macomb, a commuter campus in the Quad Cities, and extension and distance learning programs. WIU has been nationally recognized for recruiting and retaining first generation, low-income and minority students. With an outstanding, diverse faculty and staff committed to multicultural and international education, WIU offers undergraduate and graduate programs of study to more than 12,500 students from Illinois, across the nation, and around the world. Western’s Teacher and Professional Education Program (TPEP) prepares and graduates teachers and other school professionals as educational leaders, school counselors, school psychologists, and communicative disorders specialists for our region, state and nation.

Our vision is that Western Illinois University will be the leader in educational quality, opportunity, and affordability among its peers. Our mission is that by enacting our values and creating a synergy between instruction, research, creativity and service, Western Illinois University prepares and supports a socially responsible, diverse student, faculty, and staff population to lead in the global society. Our values focus on academic excellence, educational opportunity, personal growth, and social responsibility (Western Illinois University Catalogue, 2009). The initial, advanced and other school professional programs that constitute Western’s Teacher and Professional Education Program are informed by similar professional aspirations. The connection of WIU’s Teacher and Professional Education Program to these aims is visible in our unit’s vision, motto and

1 Updated January 22, 2010
graphic representation of our conceptual framework and in its mission statement, values and standards that follow.

TPEP Vision

Our graduates will be empowered educational professionals deeply committed to continuous learning and the empowerment of all learners.  

Approved August 22, 2008

TPEP Motto

Empowerment for learning. Learning for empowerment

Approved August 22, 2008

Our Graphic Representation of Conceptual Framework

Approved August 22, 2008

TPEP Mission Statement

The WIU Teacher and Professional Education Program empowers candidates to become educational practitioners who engage in informed action that is grounded in knowledge and reflection; who are deeply committed to the highest standards of professional practice; who are able to adapt to emerging social, economic, and cultural landscapes; who are skilled in the use of technological tools that promote teaching and learning; and who are committed to empowering all learners.

Approved August 22, 2008
TPEP Values

Commitment. A deep emotional and intellectual investment to becoming a caring and compassionate professional dedicated to personal growth, excellence, and service to one’s professional community, with the ultimate aim of empowering all learners.

Knowledge. Informed, critically examined, research-based, data-driven, and experientially grounded understanding of learners, content, pedagogy, technology, and the standards associated with one’s professional practice.

Action. Professional practice that embodies the focused and skillful application of knowledge and understanding informed by reflection and a deep commitment to learners and their ultimate empowerment.

Reflection. Analytical and thoughtful examination of one’s knowledge, understanding, and practice resulting in more targeted and refined action that empowers student learning.

Empowerment. The creation of a professional community wherein candidates develop the capability, confidence, efficacy, and sense of authority, enabling them to create a community that positively transforms the lives and actions of all learners and engages them in attaining their full potential.

Approved August 22, 2008

TPEP Standards

1. The competent candidate knows, reflects on, acts in accordance with, and is committed to professional standards governing his or her subject matter, expectations for learners as described in the appropriate content standards, and making such content meaningful and empowering for all learners.

2. The competent candidate knows, reflects on, acts in accordance with, and is committed to research-based best practices that promote the growth, development, learning, and empowerment of all individuals representing the social fabric of our diverse society.

3. The competent candidate knows, reflects on, acts in accordance with, and is committed to research-based principles governing the planning of instruction, the creation and maintenance of positive, safe learning communities, the implementation of appropriate technological tools, and the use of varied approaches to impact, assess, and empower learning.
4. The competent candidate knows, reflects on, acts in accordance with, and is committed to the importance of professional dispositions, especially those that advance fairness and the belief that all individuals can be empowered to learn.

5. The competent candidate knows, reflects on, acts in accordance with, and is committed to the principles that govern the application of his or her knowledge of subject matter, the empowerment of learners, and the acquisition of practical and professional skills during field and clinical experiences, and to the continual improvement of professional performance.

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As our motto, *Empowerment for learning; Learning for empowerment*, indicates, we understand that education is both a social function and a social end. Recognizing and mediating this dual reality is a complex endeavor in a democracy such as ours. Dewey (1916) remarks that the process of, “securing direction and development in the immature through their participation in the life of the group to which they belong,” is an aim of education broadly. He cautions us to recognize that this “education will vary with the quality of life which prevails in the group” (p. 81). This quality is a product of our Unit’s vision, mission, values, and standards and is foundational to these ideals and our educational programs.

Dewey further articulates that “[p]articularly is it true that a society which not only changes but which has the ideal of such change as will improve it, will have different standards and methods of education from one which aims simply at the perpetuation of its own customs” (p. 81). With empowerment as both our process and goal we believe that we embrace Dewey’s aim of education where the “object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth” (p. 100). We recognize that this maybe a challenging task, however democracy itself is a challenging project whose improvement parallels its educational institutions. As we embrace these ideals and the charge they bring, Dewey (1934) both advises and cautions us that our conceptual framework must “attempt to discover what education is and how it takes place” (p. 194). Thus is the task of the remainder of this framework, while Dewey’s warning is heeded these conceptual ideals must be grounded with a sense of reality.

We realize that education constantly changes to meet the needs of society and the resulting changes are inseparable from shifts occurring within that society. We recognize that at as we face an accelerating reliance upon and access to technology and we are increasingly aware of the growth of our culturally diverse population. Effective educators must be adept at responding to an ever-changing society; appreciate the importance of our diverse population; be adapt to emerging social, economic, and demographic patterns; be skilled in the use of technology tools to promote teaching and learning in our nation’s schools for the betterment of our democracy.
With this end in view, our candidates in our initial, advanced and other school professional programs understand that certain issues are non-negotiable. Every child is a unique human being who deserves an empowering education with respect and dignity. Candidates must also understand, however, that individual and situational differences dictate that teachers and educational professionals demonstrate flexibility in solving unanticipated and novel problems that may arise in meeting the needs of each child. Candidates must also contend with the differing educational expectations of students, parents, local-community, state and federal mandates. Each portion of our overall program requires a commitment to a continual process of inquiry, action, and reflection. As with our candidates our program cannot function effectively if we become complacent and unreflective about either our respective disciplines or our practice.

To meet the educational demands of our evolving society, our unit's conceptual framework (motto, vision mission, values and standards) reflects and embraces the core components of our program. The graphic representation and its individual values serve as reminders of the conceptual ideals that matter in success of our undergraduate and advanced programs. This representation, its values and the forthcoming statements alone, however, cannot capture the subtleties of a program. Although one familiar with our program would readily see the connections between the values, our mission statement, and actual practice, such connections must be more explicitly articulated if they are to inform our understanding and practice. What follows are statements to further define and operationalize our values. These statements are not meant to be defining ends in themselves; they are statements for departure and exploration of understanding and practice in our educational endeavors. Each value will be addressed separately. However in our discussion, as in practice, overlap and fusion will exist.

**Commitment**

*A deep emotional and intellectual investment to becoming a caring and compassionate professional dedicated to personal growth, excellence, and service to one’s professional community, with the ultimate aim of empowering all learners.*

**Analysis**

*Types:* self and other(s) (Individual (e.g. students), institutional (e.g. classroom, school, district), profession)

*Foci:* learners; society (democracy); professional knowledge; professional standards; personal and professional growth

*Basis/Sources or Ends:* personal morality; professional codes of conduct and ethics; human flourishing

**Expanded definition:** Within the context of the WIU Teacher and Professional Education Program, commitment refers to the personal and professional investment candidates must make as a professional and to the individuals and institutions that they
serve. The candidate’s commitment must be focused on both the individual learners and the ideals of our democracy (e.g. liberty, equality and the tension their combination bring). Candidates must be committed to gaining, understanding and utilizing the professional knowledge and standards within their field as models and leaders in doing what is right and best. Additionally the candidate must be committed to his or her own personal and professional growth, this area of commitment requires both personal and professional reflection on one’s shortcomings and strengths and seeking and offering assistant for improvement. Commitment is at the heart of human relationships where trust, responsibility and integrity form early inceptions, however in the context of our educational unit the candidate’s commitment must recognize the ends of the human flourishing and empowerment of learners as well as his or her own flourishing in the day-to-day context of professional practice.

The qualities of commitment that permeate WIU’s Teacher and Professional Education Program are readily seen in four character emphases: freedom of mind, intellectual engagement, shared leadership, and sustained professional development. The commitment to and development of these emphases presupposes certain beliefs and actions. Our faculty members believe that education has a salutary effect. Such a statement may appear self-evident, but it is frequently challenged by those who hold that the problems we face are simply too great. Many in society, it seems, sense that educators are engaged in an honorable but unwinnable battle—a gallant but tragic endeavor. Candidates recognize the inevitable difficulties associated with their practice, but with the assistance of the faculty they have developed what might be called reasoned optimism. However, our Unit’s reasoned optimism is built upon sophisticated knowledge of successful programs and best practices (Conchas & Noguera, 2006; Sizer, 2004; Meier, 2003; Noguera, 2003; Merrow, 2001; Resnick, 1999; Scheurich, 1998).

*Freedom of Mind*

Reasoned optimism stands in direct opposition to blind faith. It requires a critical eye, and this requires the freedom to question and to speak one’s mind. It requires freedom of mind (Dewey, 1937). Minimally, this means encouraging learners to be honest: honest about their hopes, their fears, and their doubts. It means encouraging future educators to find their own path to success in the classroom or in the other educational settings in which they may find themselves.

Freedom of mind means more than examining one’s feelings, however, just as it is more than a fundamental characteristic of the academic freedom the University espouses. With its opportunities and its demands, the modern world is capable of dulling perception and constraining action. Persons may come to see themselves and others as rather one-dimensional: indistinguishable from all others in their “flatness.” At core, such an image is incompatible with our commitment to diversity and requires that our candidates practice something akin to Marcuse’s “Great Refusal” (1964). Permission must exist to openly question practices and policies. The purpose of such questioning is not mere analysis, nor is it the cynicism of the unremitting skeptic. Freedom of mind is
about being able to choose wisely in a discerning manner. Ultimately, it is the commitment to integrity.

Success in education requires knowledge of strategies that work, but the fact that certain strategies do what they purport to do is not sufficient justification for using them. Honesty and integrity are essential if candidates are to think ethically and systematically about schools and about their practice (Hansen, 2007; Duffy, 2006; Ayers, 2004; Noddings, 2003; Maxcy, 2002; Brogan & Brogan, 1999; Haydon, 1997; Lemings, 1993). They must be prepared to ask not just whether something “works” but also whether it is good, fair, right, and whether it aligns with our highest collective ideals what Noddings (2003; 1984) identifies as the “ethical ideal” (p. 134). A Great Refusal permits learners to reject empty slogans and wishful thinking, but it also permits them to reject “effective” practices that diminish human beings and limit the empowerment of learners.

Although freedom of mind may appear largely philosophical, it is eminently practical. Decades ago, John Dewey noted an incongruity between schools’ stated belief in democratic decision making and the realization that many graduates were unable or unwilling to participate in such decisions. His explanation was that the difficulty lay in the disconnection between articulated principles and actual practice. He suggested that passive recipients of moral character and political intelligence would inevitably respond with apathy and non-participation (1916).

Moreover, many scholars have noted that it is not enough to act in a particular way if one does not understand or appreciate the principles beneath such action. Persons must understand why they act and what their actions mean. Without this developed skill, individuals are readily susceptible to the subtle coercion of institutions and forces that serve to develop tastes and dispositions of which they may not even be aware (Apple, 2004; Apple, 1996; Spring, 2005; Barber, 1998a; Barber, 1998b; Gutmann, 1987). Our candidates are expected to question and are coached into freedom of mind so that they enter the profession prepared to make intelligent and ethical educational decisions.

Intellectual Engagement
Noddings (2003/1984) is perhaps best known for her research on caring. Persons unfamiliar with Noddings’ work may mistake the notion of caring for more common forms of affection. In reality, her conception of ethic of care is nearly synonymous with engagement: engaging people, engaging the physical world, and engaging ideas. For Noddings, caring rather than competition should serve as the defining characteristic of education (Noddings, 1992).

Following Noddings’ lead, intellectual engagement is grounded in relationship rather than competition. It is born of the belief that it is connection that more fully sustains life and learning that leads to empowerment. In its simplest form, this means that we
acknowledge that our learners are persons with real lives, real needs, and real thoughts, and we model this awareness so that they may acquire it for use in their own classrooms or in therapeutic, counseling, or administrative settings. In its more complex form, it models the development of mind in which the relationship with diversity and transdisciplinary knowledge nurtures one’s personal and professional growth. Intellectual engagement declares that learning and the empowerment it brings, in and of itself, is a desirable goal.

Teacher and professional education faculty members believe that caring about ideas is necessary if one is to be fully competent. Faced with a serious question, the exclusively competitive person is apt to be driven by expediency. One who practices intellectual engagement will be inclined to look for the subtleties and for more than the immediately available solution. True research-based practice dictates an intellectual engagement which is characterized both by the sophisticated thinking required for cogent solutions and by the valuing of learning for its own sake. The first of these characteristics requires the second, and Western’s Teacher and Professional Education Program cultivate both.

Shared Leadership
Each of the components above reveal the Unit’s commitment to preparing educators who understand their responsibility to serve as educational innovators and leaders. It makes little sense to promote reflection or research-based practice if the professional lives of educators do not permit them to utilize the fruits of their labors. Nor are these ideas sensible if educators believe that decision-making is the exclusive province of others. Such views stifle creative thinking and promote disaffection and have prompted the call for greater shared leadership in many schools. Although recently there has been considerable interest in this notion, the idea will be empty if educators do not see a more significant role for themselves than that of compliant follower or if they believe, as administrators, that they are expected to act unilaterally (Futrell, 2008; Fullan, 2007; Barth, 2004; Futrell, 2003; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton, 2000; Fullan, 2000a).

As active participants in schools as candidates and as certified educational professionals, our graduates understand the reciprocal nature of leadership. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration recently generated its standards for educational policy leadership (ISLLC 2008). Although these standards primarily focus on the activities of educational leaders, their intent is to promote a learning atmosphere that is fully collaborative. Developing a shared vision, sustaining school culture, managing resources, collaborating with the community, behaving ethically, and influencing the larger political context are commitments that must extend beyond administration if they are to be truly effective. Our candidates and those enrolled in advanced programs recognize that a school lacking these characteristics may find itself wandering aimlessly from one real or imagined problem to the next; constantly moving but failing to progress. They also understand the collaborative nature of this venture and enter the
field prepared to bear their share of broadly conceived leadership responsibility to ensure the empowerment of all learners.

**Sustained Professional Development**

Sustained professional development presupposes certain underpinnings. The commitment that requires freedom of mind, intellectual engagement, and shared leadership must be fully functional if one is to pursue sustained development, for without them there is no consequential development. Even more basic, however, is the idea that sustained development assumes pre-existing professional competence. One cannot continue to develop something that does not already exist. For future educators, this base of competence is established in multiple clinical and field experiences. In incremental fashion, candidates are exposed to increasingly complex, real-world learning environments, and their cooperating educational professionals carefully monitor their ideas and actions for relevance and appropriateness. In parallel fashion, their responsibilities in these settings mount as their professional confidence and skill grow.

Our teacher and professional education faculty grasp that the most intricate and articulate theory is for naught if it fails to yield competent practitioners, and such persons are not possible without extensive and varied opportunities to apply in the field what they have learned in the classroom. The position statements of American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, American Association of School Administrators, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the Illinois State Board of Education align with the Unit’s commitments regarding early competence and ongoing professional growth for educators. When properly conceived, this focus has both pragmatic and theoretical aspects. The narrow view would suggest that competent educators think systemically about their practice in educational settings and that they begin this in their earliest field experiences. While this is laudable and absolutely necessary, it is not sufficient. Something similar to the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model is required, and this is promoted in the Teacher and Professional Education Program (Hord, Roussin & Sommers, 2009; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2007; Hord & Sommers, 2007; Hord, 1997).

Defining characteristics of such communities include the collaboration frequently mentioned above, including development of both a shared vision of education and shared leadership. They also include articulated commitments to high academic achievement and respect for persons. One of the most important components, however, is acceptance of the notion that educators are more than mere consumers of research. Educators at every level, including candidates, are generators of research. This position coheres well with the University’s commitment to research and creative activity and to the Unit’s image of educators as active participants rather than mere passive recipients of the insights born of others’ research. Development of professional dispositions and skills is inhibited if educators must continually look out there for the expert with the answer: professionals share in the scholarly work of the field.
The call for such learning communities is more than the quiet expectation that educators continue to develop after beginning their careers. It would be foolish to claim that one’s practice or knowledge base could not be enriched. It would also be foolhardy to assume that each candidate left our program completely qualified. Such a stance would conflict with the notion of growth to which the faculty ascribe and with the experience of exceptional teachers. While we expect our candidates to enter their first professional environment committed to the skills and dispositions necessary to be successful, we also understand that our work is foundational.

**Knowledge**

*Informed, critically examined, research-based, data-driven, and experientially grounded understanding of learners, content, pedagogy, technology, and the standards associated with one’s professional practice.*

**Analysis**

- **Types:** informed understanding
- **Foci:** learners; content; pedagogy; technology; standards
- **Basis/Sources:** critical examination (thoughtful analysis, synthesis and evaluation/weighing); research (scientific literature); data (assessment); experience (practice)

**Expanded definition:** Within the context of the WIU Teacher and Professional Education Program, knowledge refers to informed understanding of learners, content, pedagogy, technology and the standards of one’s profession. With regard to our candidates, this understanding should be rooted in critical examination of current research and theory pertaining to these topics as well as the data derived from their own experiences in the classroom. It is expected that our candidates will not only know a great deal about these topics, it is also expected that they will grasp the relevance of their knowledge in each domain and that they be able to apply it, in a thoughtful and effective fashion, in the day-to-day context of their professional practice.

Since the inception of the normal school, those who have prepared educators have wrestled with how best to prepare them. Accounts from the founders of the common school suggest that certain themes have always been important to this ongoing conversation. Then, as now, the features included a thorough knowledge of the various subjects one might teach (e.g. content knowledge). It also included consideration of how best to share that knowledge with the students under one’s care (e.g. pedagogical knowledge) (Spring, 2009; Hansen, 2008; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Perhaps we have always had an intuitive sense of the necessary components, but it is also possible that Shulman’s 1987 model has served to give these intuitions palpable form. Shulman’s articulation of the “categories of the knowledge base,” supported the
The evolution of the clearer and more demanding understanding of teaching as a profession that has driven the standards movement. Specifically, Shulman included the following: content knowledge; general pedagogical knowledge; curriculum knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; knowledge of learners and their characteristics; knowledge of educational contexts; and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). Such understanding is critical regardless of whether one intends to teach kindergarten or serve as a school administrator or a school psychologist.

Shulman’s categories correspond closely with those endorsed by our Unit’s faculty members, but it is probable that the same could be said of most education programs. While all programs may share certain similarities and common beliefs, it is also undeniably the case that individual program emphases differ markedly. Such emphases are inevitably influenced by the history of a program; by current public opinion; and by the identities, education, and experiences of the persons who prepare educational professionals within a program. Consequently, every Teacher and Professional Education Program has a personality and this personality is uniquely visible in how it satisfies the requirements of the knowledge base. What may well distinguish WIU’s Unit from other programs is the transdisciplinary approach to learning endorsed by university departments and modeled by our Unit’s faculty. This section is intended to reveal the distinctive personality of the Teacher and Professional Education Program at Western Illinois University by examining conceptually what is meant by understanding learners, content, pedagogy, technology and the standards of one’s profession.

**Understanding of Learners**

Effective educators must understand learners. Understanding of this sort includes recognition of the relationship between human development and learning. Our candidates understand that educators must match the age, background, experiences, and developmental levels of their students with the proposed learning strategies. They also understand that the complexity of their students rivals that of disciplinary knowledge and of the knowledge of learning environments. Faculty members continually remind our candidates that students are multifaceted and that this requires considerable flexibility on the part of the educator (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Darling-Hammond & MacDonald, 2000; Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, 1993; Gage and Berliner, 1998; Erikson, 1980).

This orientation is most visible in the functional commitment to diversity shared by both the University and our Unit. Careful observers recognize that the face of the nation is changing (Villegas, 2008), but suggestions about how best to respond to such changes vary greatly. Banks has aptly captured the sentiments motivating many political figures. Banks argues that enthusiastically addressing diversity issues is necessary for the economic and political health of the nation (2007, 2001). Banks rejects as inadequate what he calls the contributions and the additive approaches to curriculum reform. The former focuses on heroes and holidays, while the latter simply adds new content or
units to a relatively fixed and inflexible curriculum. In contrast, he recommends movement toward the transformation and social action approaches, which allow learners to view others’ experiences through the eyes and voices of those persons (2009). The ultimate goal becomes the use of this enriched understanding to confront actual social issues and better empower learners (Nieto, 2008; Nieto, 1999).

For this empowerment of learners, candidates and educational professionals may need to consider the most effective practices for different groups of learners. These considerations may need to go beyond curricular additions and instructional repertoires that Banks and Nieto critique and include culturally responsive curriculum, pedagogical and teaching practices. Within these practices educators might involving learners in the construction of knowledge, learn more about building on learners' interests and linguistic resources, learn more about tapping community and home resources, and helping learners examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives (Sleeter, 2008; Banks, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Irvine, J. 2003; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Candidates and all educational professionals must realize to better understand learners they must be willing to examine and understand themselves. The process of becoming and sustaining oneself as an educational professional begins with an exploration of one’s own beliefs, ideals and positionality (LaPrad, 2008; Bullough, Goodson & Gitlin, 1994). This is coupled with an awareness of the patterns and beliefs of the cultural identities one has. At the same time candidates need to be aware of and confront their own biases and prejudices (Berlak, 2008; Pollock, 2008) and privilege (Wise, 2007; McIntosh, 1988) as they desire to become more cultural competent beings (Ladson-Billings, 1995). These are joined to the image of an evolving and oft roiling national conception of what it means to be a citizen. And each of these components is ultimately connected to a global identification and outlook needed in our twenty-first century (Banks, 2001). All together with these competencies, when candidates and educational professionals gain the knowledge of learners they are able build deeper relationships with learns which better enables their empowerment.

**Understanding of Content**
Our Unit recognizes as Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy (2001) supported Shulman’s (1987) understanding and research that educators should possess deep understanding of the subject that they teach. Our candidates are expected to exhibit in-depth understanding in major and minor areas of the sort necessary to “demonstrate the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of their disciplines,” but they are also expected to understand where disciplinary understanding intersects and what results from such intersections. While there are always caveats for approaches that carry the transdisciplinary appellation, such an orientation is never an attempt to avoid the rigors of disciplinary training within a single field. It is recognized that the most formidable social and intellectual problems are seldom comfortably confined within disciplinary boundaries. Moreover, a transdisciplinary orientation recognizes that much of the most
interesting work occurs at the margins in areas that defy predictability and neat categorization (Adam & Allan, 1995; Carruthers & Boucher, 1998). Candidates benefit from a transdisciplinary model that offers complex insights into the lives of the people with whom they interact in schools and communities (Dunbar, Knight, & Power, 1999).

Teacher and professional education faculty members also realize that a transdisciplinary approach is not intended to provide candidates with broad but superficial exposure to innumerable topics. In its courses, the Teacher and Professional Education Program reject cursory coverage. Such cafeteria approaches to understanding are only capable of holding one's attention for a short time and, in Whitehead's words, chiefly serve to "inoculate" learners against deeper exploration of a subject (1967). In contrast, we hold that a “less is more” approach stressing depth across disciplines holds greater promise for capturing imagination and promoting the learning strategies embraced by Grossmen, Schoenfeld & Lee (2005). They explain that educators must be able to “create multiple examples and representations of challenging topics that make the content assessable to a wide rage of learners” (p. 201). These strategies are what fuel effective teaching, nurture lifelong learning, and empowerment.

It is apparent that ideas, events, and individuals are connected and that specific disciplines share certain themes. Our commitment to a transdisciplinary approach implies more than these facile truths. It speaks of a method of knowledge gathering, knowledge constructing, and knowledge use (Wineburg & Grossman, 2000). It is difficult to be a resilient and responsive educator if one possesses too narrow an understanding of knowledge. Such educators are more apt to be overly dependent upon “experts”: persons who can provide answers to questions that one is uncomfortable even engaging. Candidates who have internalized a transdisciplinary approach to learning are less likely to abrogate responsibility for dealing with their own real questions, as they sense that they possess the intellectual resources necessary to resolve them.

Understanding of Pedagogy
Western’s teacher and professional education faculty fully comprehend that candidates cannot find such success if all they possess is content knowledge. Truly effective educators also command critical knowledge of planning and instruction. The complementary and relational quality seen in our transdisciplinary approach to knowledge of content is evident here as well (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Rosaen & Florio-Ruane; 2008; Darling-Hammond, et. al., 2005; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Understanding of curricular vision; of lesson planning; of motivational, administrative, or therapeutic strategies; of learning activities; of classroom management plans; and of the designing of learning environments must not be viewed as separate and distinct. Effectiveness necessitates the integration of assorted components of knowledge of pedagogy.
For instance, considerable recent research has confirmed the central role of assessment in effective teaching and reform efforts. Learning in a particular subject area for students in a regular classroom or learning the correct pronunciation of a particular sound for a child with an articulation difficulty cannot be maximized without the evidence generated through appropriate assessment (Fullan, 2000b). Success entails assessing student learning, but this suggests more than asking whether material was learned. Assessment clearly includes analyzing the learning and management strategies an educator uses. Educators must assess their own practice by asking whether their approaches actually provide the desired outcome and whether other approaches might better serve their purposes to empower learners (Shepard, et. al., 2005; McNeil, 2000).

Understanding of Technology
Although each of the elements of understanding of pedagogy is essential, one of the most distinctive Teacher and Professional Education Program features is its emphasis on technological literacy. Properly placing themselves in history with a global perspective requires that candidates have facility with emerging technologies. Western possesses an international reputation for its work at the crossroads of technology and education. As a result, our candidates are expected to graduate with a working set of competencies, and this list includes more than a functional knowledge of particular equipment and software programs.

Persons underestimate the role and impact of technology when simply referring to it as a “tool.” Such a stance suggests that it is little more than an attachment to an invariable body of educational knowledge and practice. From such a perspective, technology merely provides rapid access to vast pools of traditional information. In contrast, the faculty view technology in much the same way as Walker (1999). This richer understanding views technology not just as a tool but as a new literacy. Understood from this vantage point, technology changes communication and changes our perception of both problems and solutions.

Even if constrained by administrative edict or financial exigency, technology will dictate that educators become much more sophisticated managers of information. It encourages teamed approaches to problem solving and a stronger connection between material learned and the pressing issues in everyday life. It requires facility with multiple symbol systems. It does not just change how educators do things; it changes what we do. “Thus to be ‘literate’ on the Web means to have powers of discrimination suitable for making durable educational uses of abundant resources” (Weiland, 2008, p. 1219).

None of this suggests that technological literacy will somehow trump text-based or quantitative illiteracies, and that the faculty will reject the useless exercise of establishing a hierarchy of illiteracies (Rafferty, 1999). Instead, we appreciate the powerful interconnections between assorted illiteracies. The emergence of print-text changed the definition and scope of what it meant to be an educated person, similarly
“Hypertext” and “Hypermedia” may do the same and evolve the meaning of education (Weiland, 2008). Western’s faculty and candidates recognize that technology will have as profound an effect and that only adaptive educators must be able to take thorough advantage of it as tools and goals in empowering learners.

Understanding of Professional Standards
Finally, this integrative, transdisciplinary approach is fully visible in the other emphases of the understanding component of the Conceptual Framework and in the Unit’s handling of professional standards. As educational professionals in the twenty-first century we realize that standards mediate our profession. Three years after A Nation at Risk the Carnegie Task Force (1986) called for the creation of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). In early the 1990s standards-based reform movements began to shape educational landscapes for both teachers and their students. Candidates must recognize and understand both the standards that govern their profession and the learning standards appropriate to their students. Reliance on a standards-based model could lead to assuming that a capable educator is one who has simply met individual standards and enables their students to do the same. In contrast, a true transdisciplinary notion for understanding asks candidates to examine the relationship between standards and to ask how strengths in one area standard may complement effort in another. Competence cannot be confused with a completed checklist. Candidates understand that content, learning, and area standards must operate in non-hierarchical concert if we, as educators, are to experience professional success and personal satisfaction in the classroom, in the resource room, or in an administrative setting.

Action
Professional practice that embodies the focused and skillful application of knowledge and understanding informed by reflection and a deep commitment to learners and their ultimate empowerment

Analysis
Types: internal (e.g. psychological cognitive) and external (e.g. social cognitive; social meditated by the social context)
Foci: crafting and enabling opportunities for learning and empowerment
Basis/Sources or Ends: agency: responsibility and granted authority, situational or contextually dependent; continued action, learning, empowerment

Expanded definition: Within the context of the WIU Teacher and Professional Education Program, action refers the professional practice of our candidates in both current and future educational environments. Action is based on the candidate’s understood agency, her/his responsibility to a given social context and potentially occurs in multiple domains ranging from the cognitive to the socially mediated (e.g. communication; non-verbal, verbal, & written; psychomotor, etc.). Action incorporates and utilizes knowledge and commitment in the candidate’s profession within the
mediation of a response to contextual situations that fosters opportunities for continued learning. As educational professionals, the authority given to candidates warrants commitment to thoughtful action and the consequences this action brings to their learners as agents of their empowerment.

If our candidates are to see themselves as agents actively involved in this process of creating history, they must be treated as individuals. The existentialist Kierkegaard railed against the restrictive scientific thought of his day for reducing persons to interchangeable parts in a mechanistic system (1985). He contended that humans must be viewed as unique beings rather than as mere products of human nature. Our Unit’s faculty understands that we cannot prepare educators unless we first view candidates as agents with real and distinct lives. To do otherwise is to risk viewing them as nothing more than objects for transmission of mere information negating our Unit’s mission and rendering our motto as mere rhetoric. Our Unit’s faculty must model agency for their candidates.

Dewey (1922) argued that choice and deliberation shape human agency when required action must go beyond established habit (conditioned human activity). It is such choice and deliberation that must shape the actions of our candidates and all educational professionals in empowering learners. What is recognized is that the professional domain of each candidate and educational professional will shape her/his choices and deliberations. Thus, an important aspect of our Unit’s mission is to provide candidates opportunities for experience and practice in these domains.

The actions of our candidates will be shaped by given social situations, however it is their actions in these given situations and the consequences of these actions that are keenly important to us as educators (Dewey, 1927). The consequences of our educational agents must lead to eventual learner empowerment. By recognizing this agency we must prepare our candidates to integrate multiple content areas and disciplines to foster active inquiry and interaction in their field and clinical experiences and eventually in their own classrooms or other educational settings. At core, agency is essential for the intelligent and efficacious action expected of a genuine educator. Action disconnected from agency is action disconnected from purpose (Dewey, 1922; Dewey, 1927; Mead, 1934; Davidson, 1971; Bandura, 2001).

Being effective in this effort requires that the candidate bring the professional knowledge and commitment described above to bear on her/his developing practice. Experience is imperative to our candidate’s growth and development within an apprenticeship approach involving modeling, coaching, scaffolding and practicing in the domain of firsthand experience and practicum (Lave & Wenger, 1998). With the assistance of those supervising field and clinical experiences, our candidates discover how to adjust and correct their style, knowledge, and classroom, school or district climate to more effectively meet the needs of their learners or the needs of those whom they serve in promotion of an empowering experience by all. Most people recall
teachers, educational leaders and other school professionals capable of doing this.
These accounts suggest that it is not enough to know one’s discipline and profession if
one cannot effectively act and help others flourish under her/his charge.

Education that fails to articulate this significance might be adequate if its only purpose is
to transmit a preconceived set of beliefs and practices (Gutmann, 1987). Although some
would suggest that this is the primary purpose of education, however the complexity
along with the ebb and flow of educational environments often requires novel solutions
to uncharted situations with multiple participants. As McDonald (1992) notes, real
action occurs in “the wild triangle of relations” (p. 1). Recognizing such we must assist
our candidates in honing their communication, critical thinking, and problem solving
skills in accordance with their practice. Expectations are placed on the Unit’s faculty to
model what we expect our candidates to practice in their field and clinical experiences
and in their own classrooms, schools and district offices. Empowerment must begin
with the socially mediated practices of our Unit’s faculty inside classrooms and beyond
in all learning opportunities.

**Reflection**
*Analytical and thoughtful examination of one’s knowledge, understanding, and practice
resulting in more targeted and refined action that empowers student learning.*

**Analysis**
- **Types:** analysis; thoughtful examination
- **Foci:** knowledge; understanding; practice
- **End(s):**
  a. (immediate) targeted and refined action.
  b. (ultimate) empowering student learning

**Expanded definition:** Within the context of the WIU Teacher and Professional
Education Program, reflection refers to the thoughtful analysis and examination of the
knowledge candidates obtain through study and practice during the course of their
professional preparation. It is expected that such reflection will lead to a deep
understanding of themselves as practitioners, as well as the learners and the profession
they serve. Ultimately, such reflection is designed to foster the achievement of two
critical aims: (a) increasingly targeted and refined action as a practicing professional,
and (b) the empowerment of student learning.

Our Unit expects candidates to be able to place themselves in history. They must
recognize their relationship with past “human accomplishment,” and that they flow
from a complex past containing the lives, trials, and decisions of countless human
beings. Just as importantly, they must also realize that they are currently in history.
Rather than scant passive observers of history, they are agents who actively participate
in creating it (Asante, 2001; Asante, 1998; Freire, 1974). Candidates or educational
professionals cannot be reflective, nor can they demonstrate relevance for the material
they are learning or practicing if they lack a sense of their own agency and the consequences of their actions.

The clarion call for reflective practitioners is heard from every quarter. The idea is intuitively appealing and parallels similar trends for the ongoing development of other professionals (Schon, 1983). Its value has been touted throughout the ages. Socrates asserted that the unexamined life was not worth living, and Lao Tzu reminded us that while clever people know others, only the wise know themselves. Stories abound of persons whose lives have come to ruin because of an unreflective mindlessness. The case can easily be made that reflection is inherently valuable for those who desire to be effective educators. Nevertheless, questions remain about how one performs this task.

Since the 1980s reflective practice has been a popular familiar concept in educational literature and tied to educational reform movements (Pedro, 2005; Valli 1992; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1991; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Dewey (1933) often is given credit for theorizing earlier conceptions of and the value in reflective practice in education. For Dewey reflection occurs prior to intelligent action and is itself an act of thoughtful contemplation regarding the understanding of an idea or a given experience and consequences of this understanding (Dewey, 1933).

Conceptually, Hatton and Smith (1995) offer a framework for understanding the different kinds or aims of reflection, they credit Van Manen (1977) for outlining these aspects or aims from Habermas (1973). The first kind or aim, technical reflection, is an uncritical type concerned with means to achieve some ends and only the efficacy and effectiveness in meeting these ends. Dewey would have considered this kind of reflection mere instrumentality. The second kind, practical reflection, is critical of both means and ends and the assumptions that assist in constructing them, recognizing that both are open to interpretation. The third kind, critical reflection, is a combination of the previous two that includes moral and ethical considerations of the examined means and ends. Critical reflection is culturally situated within historic and political context as actions and their consequences are scrutinized from multiple perspectives of power and marginalization (Hatton and Smith, 1995).

“Lifelong learning along the innovation dimension typically involves moving beyond existing routines and often requires people to rethink key issues, practices and even values in order to change what they are doing” (Hammerness, et. al., 2005, p. 361).

In educational domains, as recognized in the above quote, reflection lies within a continuum between the technical and critical, specific location within the above framework may be based on perspective or situation. Even within this framework, it is important to recognize that reflection does not occur in a vacuum. Although one’s reflective activity may transpire when one is alone, it must occur in relationship. By definition, reflection requires the bouncing back of ideas, images, or feelings. These must reflect off some thing. A mirror, in effect, is required. Questions such as “What
am I doing?” and “How well am I doing it?” take on new and richer contours when viewed from another’s perspective. Responses from other persons contain critical information, but they do not represent the whole of reflective resources. Reflective sources must also encompass original text material, and this material may include sources that align with the stances most attractive to the candidate or educator. Some sources, however, must also include ideas antithetical to those of the candidate or educator. Truly reflective persons cannot adequately assess their beliefs, comments, knowledge, understandings, and practices by simply gathering like-minded sentiments. Critical reflection demands that candidates contend with contrary perspectives and challenge their beliefs. These sources must include both historic and contemporary thought, as the ability to place ideas in their historical context is necessary both for reflection and for a sense of agency.

Although one may reflect on many things, one central aspect for our Unit’s program involves contemplating one’s character and one’s motivations for entering the profession—an integral component of the global perspective described in understanding of learners. The reasons for this are myriad. A critical reflective view of the self serves to check errant positions or as Giroux (1994) calls us to be “self-reflective of the interests and assumptions” (p. 36) that shape our actions that potentially marginalize those they intended to serve. Guggenbühl-Craig (2009/1971) argues that persons active in the helping professions may have unclear motives for their involvement. Some may be driven by the desire for authority or by a heightened desire to nurture, even if such motivations actually result in limiting their students’ or their colleagues’ agency. Candidates and educational professionals must examine why it is they want to teach, counsel, lead or serve in educational environments and they must do this to ensure that they do not directly or indirectly restrict the life prospects of those in their care. We reflect to reduce the possibility that we unintentionally may harm.

Educators must also reflect for the purpose of professional self-preservation. Those who have reflected on their reasons for teaching, leading or serving learners are less likely to burnout, to become too involved, or not involved enough. It is more than this, however, for the true essence of an effective educator may reside in this realm. Palmer (1997) maintains that “knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject,” and that herein “is a secret hidden in plain sight: good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (pp. 15-16). This critical review of the self serves not only to check errant motivations but also one’s welfare. Elshtain (1995) warns that when we fail to distinguish between our private and public selves, private life becomes a commodity of the sort consumed on talk shows. Fully as dangerous is the loss of civic identity when everything becomes self-referential and has significance only if it personally matters to the individual. Candidates in our program understand this personal exploration to be one aspect of what is required for them to be fully competent educators.
Equally important, reflection cannot be an end in itself. It must be aimed at the refinement of one’s actions – “to refine and improve” one’s educational capacities (Darling-Hammond, 2008). This refinement upon assessment might note shortcomings in one’s commitments or gaps in knowledge or understanding. Once recognized adjustments can be made in future actions in similar situations as true praxis occurs as the refinement of one’s actions leads for further empowerment of one’s learners (Freire, 1970). Reflection is but one piece of an integrated whole and cannot stand in lieu of the other conceptual values. In the end, a union of commitment, knowledge, action, and reflection are necessary if our candidates are to successfully complete their program and the future empowerment of the learners under their charge. The combinations of the four values are iterative and foster a generative tension to promote empowerment our final value.

**Empowerment**

*The creation of a professional community wherein candidates develop the capability, confidence, efficacy, and sense of authority, enabling them to create a community that positively transforms the lives and actions of all learners and engages them in attaining their full potential.*

**Analysis**

**Types:** practice; being  
**Foci:** learners; pedagogy; action; guidance (with an ironic understanding); trust  
**End(s):** a. (immediate) refined action & freedom (autonomy; creativity; novelty; possibility) within reason for student learning. b. (ultimate) liberation; human flourishing; solidarity

**Expanded definition:** Within the context of the WIU Teacher and Professional Education Program, empowerment is a process with an end in view (liberation; human flourishing; solidarity) where power is distributed or shared to meet this end that evolves with time. Capability requires knowledge, skills, and action (application & practice). Confidence requires knowledge, experience, and reflection. Efficacy requires knowledge, skills and reflective action. Authority requires the acceptance and recognition of power and the moral understanding for having said power (its public interest). Community is a public interest that requires a common purpose (end) mediated through communication and independent and interdependent action towards that end.

What is meant by empowerment? True empowerment has as Greene (1988) states, “an emancipatory possibility of relevance for an education in and for freedom” (p. 133). We must be clear in our convictions here that, within this practice (means) with this aim (end), empowerment assumes either the sharing of agency or power or a transfer of power or agency within and educational domain between the educator and her or his learners. However we may question whether power and agency are interchangeable even while they are related. Cooper (2003) warns educators “who do not recognize the
power they possess are likely to abuse it or fail to maximize it for their students’ benefit” (p. 104). The extremes of the abuse of power may become the oppression that Freire (1970) challenged.

The idea of oppression has dark sorted images, connected to terms like hegemony. Entwhistle (1979) cites Gramsci when he defines hegemony as the subjugation of others by intellectual and moral persuasion, not by physical coercion. Sadly we may conjure our own educational experiences when this type of persuasion occurred. As Greene (1988) warns, “persuasion is often so quiet, so seductive, so distinguished that it renders young people acquiescent to power without their realizing it. The persuasion becomes most effective when the method used obscures what is happening in the learners’ minds” (p. 133). Shor (1992) described perhaps disempowering educational experiences as ones that left learners (or teachers, or leaders, or broadly educational professionals) with negative emotions of “self doubt, hostility, resentment, boredom, indignation, cynicism, disrespect, frustration, and desire to escape” (p. 23). These types of emotions Shor explained may potentially lead to “anti-intellectualism” or as Dewey (1916) would call this “miseducative,” regardless we can recognize that this type of affective domain is undesirable in any educational situation.

So an empowering learning or education would be the antithesis of the above. Or as hooks (1994) envisions an education, “to open our mind and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions . . . enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom” (p. 12). Bartolome (2009) would identify this as a “humanizing pedagogy” (p. 344) or as Greene (1988) explained there that there exists a type of learning where learners (and all people) “may become empowered to engage in some sort of praxis, engaged enough to name the obstacles in the way of their shared becoming.” These obstacles and forms of oppression “may be identified with prejudices, rigidities, suppressed violence: All these can petrify or impinge on the sphere of freedom” (p. 133).

For empowerment in learning, Grant and Vonzell (2008) identify that the agency of students is an imperative, yet all to often this agency ignored. However, true empowerment in learning will create “possibilities for students to negotiate the forces that work to regulate their positionalities” (p. 191). These authors recognize that when positionality and agency are linked, deeper questions can be raised (e.g. “What possibilities can be created to maintain or access that would improve the quality of life given the way we are situated within the matrices of positionalities by those with the influence to shape public sentiment?”) (p. 191-2). Questions such as this are the means and ends of learning for empowerment. Where agency becomes “a form of intellectual labor and concrete social practice—in short, a critical praxis” (McLaren & Farahmandapur, 2001, p. 149).
Shor (1992) explains *learning for empowerment* as “a critical-democratic pedagogy for self and social change . . . it approaches individual growth as an active, cooperative, and social process, because the self and society create each other . . . the goals of this pedagogy are to relate personal growth to public life, by developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry, and critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and change” (p. 15).

Giroux (1988) describes *empowerment for learning* as educating students “to fight for the quality of life in which all human beings benefit . . . Schools need to be defended, as an important public service that educates students to be critical citizens who can think, challenge, take risks, and believe that their actions will make a difference in the larger society” (p. 214). McLaren (1989) explains that this type of learning will “broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the way we live” (p. 186).

Banks (1991) explains that the type of learning “to empower students must be transformative in nature and help students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions in effective personal, social, political, and economic action” (p. 131). As Greene (1988) explained then “Power may be thought of, then as “empowerment,” a condition of possibility for human and political life and, yes, for education as well. But spaces have to be opened in the schools and around the schools; the windows have to let in the fresh air” (p. 134).

In opening up these spaces for *learning for empowerment* participation is imperative. Shor (1992) identifies that Dewey (1916) understood this as he explained “participation is democratic when students construct purposes and meanings. This is essential behavior for citizens in a free society. Dewey defined a slave as someone who carried out the intentions of another person, who was prevented from framing her or his own intentions. To be a thinking citizen in a democracy, Dewey maintained, a person had to take part in making meaning, articulating purpose, carrying out plans, and evaluating results” (p. 18).

These everlasting results are true empowerment, the aim of learning in and for our democracy. A dream? A work in progress? Aronowitz (1998) nicely introduced Freire’s ideas and beliefs describing him as a person who “aligns himself with those who still dream and keep alive hope for a world without exploitation, inequality, and cultural enslavement . . . Freire’s belief in the emancipation of men and women is rooted in an “existential” commitment to an ethical ideal” (p. 7). Freire (1998) explains those who empower take the “radical stance on the defense of the legitimist interests of the human person . . . the human person is the maker of history and is one made by history . . . As ethical beings who in their ethicality are capable of being unethical, of transgressing the ethical code indispensable for human beings . . . I am a “conditioned” being, capable of going beyond my own conditioning. The place upon which a new
rebellion should be built is not the ethics of the market place with its crass insensitivity to the voice of genuine humanity but the ethics of universal aspiration. The ethics of human solidarity” (115-6). The learning for empowerment.

Conclusion
Western Illinois University’s Teacher and Professional Education Program is a palpable example of conscious evolution at work. In its self-definition, it has sought an amalgam that respects the history of the institution and its stated mission. Western’s program connects these with the education faculty’s diverse professional experiences, with our most sapient thinking about effective preparation, with an emerging conception of professional standards, and with rich and varied field experiences. As virtually every observer realizes, the professional landscape for educators is changing rapidly and dramatically. It is conceivable that our Unit might be resistant to these unexpected developments. Such a stance results, however, in a sense of being buffeted by forces outside oneself. Within such a perspective, programs and people seemingly would be forced “against their will” to adapt to a chaotic and unstable world, and their response might well be resignation and resentment.

In contrast, our Unit’s faculty has chosen to capitalize on these changes and on the uncertainty. This characteristic is apparent in the continuous evaluation and revision performed by the undergraduate and advanced programs within our Unit. We do not just respond to conditions and the environment in which we find ourselves; we consciously exhibit the creative imagination and wisdom we expect of our candidates. With aplomb and anticipation, we engage the ambiguities of the present to sculpt intelligent ends and means in our primary task of preparing knowledgeable, reflective, agents committed to empowering all learners.

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