UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO

College of Education

The Meanings and Practice of Education in Democratic Life: The Preparation of Professional Educators at UIC

Overview

The University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) is a comprehensive public research university located in the heart of Chicago, one of the nation's largest and most diverse cities. UIC serves nearly 36,000 students across 16 colleges and is Chicago's largest university and only public research institution. UIC's location in Chicago provides students with extraordinary opportunities to learn and engage within a city characterized by significant racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. UIC is designated as both a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI), and is recognized as one of the most diverse college campuses in the United States. More than half of UIC undergraduates are first-generation college students, reflecting the university's longstanding commitment to access, opportunity, and social mobility.

UIC currently offers licensure programs in elementary education, elementary math specialist, special education, early childhood education, reading specialist, urban school leader (principal and superintendent), secondary education (with programs in art, biology, chemistry, earth and space science, English, environmental science, French, German, history, mathematics, music, physics, and Spanish), school nursing, and school social work. These programs depend upon several entities working together - admissions, programs, advisors, colleges, ISBE, community schools and programs, students and candidates, and so on. The various activities involved in preparing teachers are coordinated through the office of the Council on Teacher Education (CTE).

The Illinois' Board of Trustees established the CTE in 1943-44 to formulate policies and programs of student selection, retention, guidance, preparation, and placement in elementary and secondary schools. The CTE consists of deans from the five colleges that sponsor professional education programs that lead to teacher, administrator, and school service personnel certificates: Architecture and the Arts; Education; Liberal Arts and Sciences; Nursing; and Social Work. The chair of the CTE is the Dean of the College of Education. The CTE's activities are coordinated through a Director, who is responsible to the CTE Deans. The Director supervises staff who assist in the coordination and implementation of CTE procedures and policies and who ensure that candidates are qualified for licensure by the Illinois State Board of Education.

The CTE coordinates professional education curricula, policies, and procedures. It serves as a liaison between UIC and the Illinois State Board of Education and between UIC and P-12 school personnel. In its role as liaison with the state, it is regarded as the "unit" for accreditation. The Council on Teacher Education (CTE) developed UIC's conceptual

Council on Teacher Education
College of Education
412 S. Peoria St., 6th Floor (MC 134)
Chicago, IL 60607-7133

Email uic_cte@uic.edu
Web cte.uic.edu

framework to articulate the unit's shared beliefs, values, and expectations for educator preparation.

Originally developed in 2000, the conceptual framework has been intentionally reviewed and revised over time in response to institutional and state expectations. A major revision in 2003 addressed findings from the 2000 ISBE institutional review by establishing a formal adoption process, broadening communication of the framework across the university community, and developing systematic processes for alignment and assessment.

Subsequent reviews strengthened the framework's connection to candidate expectations and Illinois standards. In 2004, the unit adopted Safety and Technical Standards (Unit Standards), which articulated competencies expected of candidates for effective professional practice. A planned review in 2006 incorporated these standards and a set of candidate dispositions into the conceptual framework, following extensive input from faculty, program coordinators, school district personnel, mentor teachers, and teacher candidates. The framework was subsequently refined to strengthen its alignment with state expectations and updated references.

In 2026, the CTE once again reviewed and updated the conceptual framework to ensure that it reflects current UIC educator preparation practices, professional expectations, and applicable state and national standards. Consistent with the CTE's longstanding approach, the revision process emphasizes broad stakeholder engagement, alignment across educator preparation programs and assessment processes, and regular review to ensure that the conceptual framework remains a current, credible, and meaningful statement of the unit's shared commitments to educator preparation.

Vision, Mission, and Goals of the Council on Teacher Education

Our Vision

UIC prepares educators who improve the lives of children, families, schools, and communities through excellence in teaching, leadership, scholarship, and service. As Chicago's public urban research university, UIC embraces its responsibility to prepare professionals who understand the strengths, complexities, and opportunities of diverse communities while advancing educational opportunity for all learners. Educator preparation at UIC reflects the university's broader commitment to access, inclusion, innovation, and civic engagement.

Our Mission

The Council on Teacher Education coordinates educator preparation programs across the university to ensure candidates develop the knowledge, skills, professional dispositions, and ethical commitments necessary for successful practice. Through strong partnerships among academic programs, PK–12 schools, and community organizations, UIC prepares educators who continue learning throughout their careers while contributing to the improvement of schools and society.

Three Foundational Goals

The conceptual framework is organized around three interconnected goals that define every educator prepared through UIC.

1. Commitment to Developing the Full Human Potential of Every Student

UIC educators believe that every learner deserves meaningful educational opportunities and that schools play a central role in strengthening democratic society. Candidates are expected to recognize and build upon students' cultural, linguistic, intellectual, and community assets while working to address educational inequities. Graduates foster inclusive learning environments where all students can thrive and participate as engaged citizens.

2. Professional Knowledge Through Critical Inquiry

Professional educators require deep disciplinary knowledge, strong pedagogical expertise, and the ability to critically evaluate research and evidence. UIC candidates learn to integrate knowledge of subject matter, human development, learning sciences, culture, communities, and educational systems. They develop habits of inquiry that enable them to reflect, solve problems, adapt to changing contexts, and make informed instructional decisions throughout their careers.

3. Effective Professional Practice

Effective educators translate knowledge into action. UIC candidates develop the professional skills necessary to create engaging learning environments, collaborate with families and colleagues, use assessment to improve learning, integrate technology thoughtfully, and respond to the diverse needs of students. Extensive clinical experiences, reflection, and continuous feedback prepare candidates to become confident, ethical, and effective professionals.

Features of Educator Preparation at UIC

Equity, Diversity, and Technology

Candidates learn to create equitable learning environments that honor differences in culture, language, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, gender, and lived experience. UIC prepares educators to recognize diversity as an essential resource for teaching and learning.

Similarly, technology is viewed not simply as a tool but as an essential component of teaching, learning, communication, inquiry, and participation in contemporary democratic society. Candidates develop the ability to integrate technology thoughtfully to enhance student learning and support informed citizenship.

Assessment and Continuous Improvement

Candidates participate in multiple assessments that measure academic knowledge, professional practice, dispositions, clinical performance, and readiness for licensure. Assessment data are used not only to evaluate candidate growth but also to improve programs, strengthen partnerships, and ensure continuous quality improvement across educator preparation.

Preparing Educators for Democratic Life

The UIC Conceptual Framework affirms that education is essential to a thriving democratic society. Preparing educators is not simply about developing technical competence; it is about cultivating professionals who are committed to equity, critical inquiry, collaboration, ethical practice, and continuous learning. Through this framework, UIC prepares educators who are committed to helping every learner reach their full potential while strengthening schools, communities, and the broader public good.

Standards for Educator Preparation at UIC

The standards are a set of collectively agreed upon statements of proficiency that explicate the behaviors and dispositions necessary for the three goals to be met. These standards address qualities that are necessary for commitment, knowledge, and practice. Students review and acknowledge these standards upon application to candidacy.

The dispositions in Part III of the unit standards hold special value for our candidates. These dispositional statements clearly embody the mission and goals of the unit and are meant to guide candidates' thoughts and actions. Thus, not only are they embedded in standards, but also they are referred to in separate documents, reviewed, and assessed throughout a candidate's program.

I. Physical Presence in Classroom

A candidate should be able to:

A. Attend classes, fieldwork, and other educationally related events and be punctual.

B. Observe/participate in activities associated with teacher education, including, but not limited to, classroom demonstrations, lessons, classroom interactions, student assessment, classroom and student management, lesson planning and lesson implementation.

C. Observe students accurately at a distance and close at hand.

D. Perform the customary techniques used during instruction, such as assessment of student engagement and the management of a safe and orderly classroom environment.

E. Be physically present for the full assigned school day and perform extended and additional duties of the classroom teacher such as parent conferences, Open Houses, and other assigned duties. Unexcused absence from 10% of assigned field experience hours and/or unexcused absence from more than 3 days of student teaching may require the student to repeat the field or student teaching experience.

II. Conceptual Reasoning

A candidate must have sufficient conceptual, integrative, and quantitative abilities and skills to:

A. Master relevant content in subjects commonly taught in K-12 schools and pedagogical principles and their application in field settings at a level deemed appropriate by the faculty.

B. Comprehend, memorize, calculate, analyze, integrate and synthesize material in a timely manner appropriate to the practice of teaching.

C. Develop reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making skills in a timely manner appropriate to the practice of teaching.

D. Understand the central concepts, tools of inquiry (e.g., observation, documentation, interpretation), and structures of the disciplines and create learning experiences that make these aspects of subjects or content knowledge meaningful for students.

E. Assimilate and apply complex information in the form of lectures, small group work, written materials, and field experience.

III. Dispositions

Throughout their coursework, field experiences, and professional practice, candidates are expected to demonstrate the following dispositions:

A. Equity: Show commitment to helping all learners succeed.

B. Advocacy: Work to recognize and reduce unfairness in education.

C. Asset-based mindset: Recognize and value community and cultural strengths. D. Collaboration: Build positive relationships with students, families, and colleagues.

E. Self-awareness and Reflection: Pursue continuous improvement and be responsive to feedback.

F. Adaptability: Be flexible, open-minded, proactive, and solution-oriented.

G. Maturity and Professionalism: Respond to challenges calmly and act with empathy and compassion.

H. Responsibility: Be reliable, follow through on tasks, and complete work in a timely manner.

IV. Communication

A candidate must have sufficient expressive and written communication skills to:

A. Communicate with, understand and observe colleagues, students and their families in order to conduct conferences, interviews, elicit information, describe changes in mood, activity, posture, and receive and analyze non-verbal communications.

B. Explain important principles and concepts delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards (e.g., school district policies and standards, school policies and practices)

C. Communicate with people to make assessments and plans known to others including colleagues, students and their families.

D. Communicate effectively, efficiently, and sensitively with colleagues, students and their families regardless of their gender, race, lifestyle, religion, cultural and social backgrounds.

E. Communicate concepts, assignments, evaluations, and expectations with members of the learning community.

F. Demonstrate receptive and expressive English at a level consistent with successful course completion, having the ability to communicate with colleagues, students, and their families.

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Standards

The State of Illinois requires all teacher candidates seeking licensure to demonstrate proficiency in professional teaching standards established by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). These standards guide teacher preparation across the state and are embedded throughout UIC teacher education coursework, field experiences, clinical practice, and assessments. Candidates should become familiar with these standards early in their program, as they serve as the foundation for effective teaching practice and are reflected in licensure requirements and evaluations.

UIC teacher education programs align with the following ISBE professional standards frameworks:

Illinois Professional Educator Standards (IPES)

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards (CRTLS)

In addition to these professional standards, many teacher education programs also align coursework and assessments to national and discipline-specific content standards relevant to their area of licensure.

Conclusion

The conceptual framework of the Council on Teacher Education reflects UIC's enduring commitment to preparing educators who are knowledgeable, reflective, ethical, culturally responsive, and prepared to serve the diverse communities of Chicago and beyond. Grounded in the university's mission and informed by the perspectives of faculty,

candidates, school partners, and other stakeholders, the framework provides a shared foundation for educator preparation across UIC's programs.

The framework is intended to be a living document rather than a static statement of beliefs. Through ongoing review, assessment, and engagement with stakeholders, the CTE will continue to examine and refine the framework in response to changes in the profession, the needs of P–12 learners and communities, and evolving professional and state standards. The 2026 revision represents the CTE's continued commitment to ensuring that its conceptual framework remains relevant, coherent, and meaningful to the work of preparing educators for today's schools and for the future.