

DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

As a teacher, you will make hundreds of decisions every day—decisions about what should be taught, why it should be taught, when it should be taught, how it should be taught, why it should be taught, and to whom it should be taught. You make decisions that affect the learning of individual students and groups of students. You will make decisions that affect students' future learning and academic progress. All of these important decisions will be based on your knowledge, understanding, experience, purposes, values, attitudes, and beliefs. The better informed you are, the more likely you are to make sound, defensible decisions, and the less likely you are to make serious mistakes in judgment.

As you progress through your program of study, you will be acquiring essential knowledge and understandings about the profession, schools, diverse learners, how people learn, the environment for learning, curriculum, instruction, and evaluation. The basic concepts you acquire initially will become increasingly complex and content specific as you progress through your program of study. You will integrate all of this knowledge into a *conceptual framework for teaching and learning*. It will reflect who you are as a person and what you value, as well as what you know and understand. You will also have opportunities to observe and reflect on the effects of teacher decisions on real students in public school classrooms. During the senior internship, you will make teacher decisions and be responsible for the effects of those decisions on student learning and well-being. All of these experiences are intended to prepare you for a successful transition from the preservice phase to the induction phase of your professional career.

So, how does a person construct a conceptual framework? Easy. All that is required is a shift in mental attitude toward what you study in your courses, plus one important disposition or habit. First, the shift in mental attitude toward what you are learning in your courses is this: instead of checking off every assignment and every course as if it were a list of chores, own what you learn. Make it count. Make it worth the time and effort you put into it. Make it meaningful to you on your own terms. Think about what you are learning. The second step in conceptual framework development is the disposition or habit to put what you learn into your own words, preferably in writing. Writing is thinking. The act of writing about what you are learning or experiencing is a learning process called *critical reflection*. Thinking in writing organizes your mind and your thoughts. It also brings unanswered questions and unresolved issues to the surface of thought where they can be dealt with intelligently and consciously.

To support you in the process of conceptual framework development, you will be asked to write a critical reflection about at least one aspect of teaching and learning in different courses as you progress through your program. Table 1 shows the courses designated for conceptual framework development and the topics you will focus on for your written reflections. Your initial ideas will keep growing as you learn and experience more. Feel free to revise any