



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Bemidji State University
Teacher Preparation Programs

Conceptual Framework Development

Bemidji State University's (BSU) teacher preparation programs' conceptual framework was crafted by a committee over an 18-month period beginning in 2022-2023 through collaborative discussions involving BSU program leaders, staff from the Office of Teacher Education, and education faculty members. The committee convened after a 3-day workshop that was held to discuss departmental values and desirable outcomes from shared education programs in relationship to the updated Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice (SEPs), going into effect July 1, 2025.

The SEPs stress the importance of preservice teachers' understanding of power and privilege to address educational inequities. As a result, many of the discussions regarding a new framework centered on the role of advocacy as a fundamental quality for effective teachers. The committee explored numerous additional essential qualities that faculty aim to instill across BSU's education programs, drawing on educational theories and research that form the foundation of courses. These qualities were organized by theme, leading to the development of a framework and guiding statement, which was voted on by BSU Academic Program Leaders in Education (APLE) members on January 25, 2024.

The framework statement is, *"We are champions of change who value knowledge, reflection, and individual and collective well-being."*



Conceptual Framework Literature Review

“We are champions of change who value knowledge, reflection, and individual and collective well-being.”

BSU envisions its education framework as a tree, which is emblematic of the Northwoods location in Bemidji, Minnesota. This tree metaphor illustrates BSU’s belief that education, much like a tree, is a living organism, where each component is essential for thriving. Individual and collective well-being serves as the foundation, or roots, of BSU’s conceptual framework, nourishing the branches of champions of change, knowledge, and reflection.

The framework foundation of individual and collective well-being is informed by culturally sustaining, relevant, and revitalizing pedagogies (Alim et al., 2020; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014). BSU recognizes that effective pedagogy provides opportunities for preservice teachers to honor and extend their cultures and heritage and that educational settings have often suppressed these cultural assets to the detriment of individual and collective well-being. This lens significantly shaped the formation of BSU’s new education courses based on the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice (SEPs), as well as several methods courses. Additionally, BSU’s proximity to three tribal nations further underscores the importance of culturally sustaining (Alim et al., 2020; Paris & Alim, 2014) and revitalizing pedagogies (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Smith, 2012) to ensure that preservice teachers not only understand these theories but learn to apply them meaningfully and appropriately. BSU also promotes asset-based frameworks (Paris & Alim, 2014; Yosso, 2005) to shape preservice teachers’ mindsets and pedagogical approaches, fostering both individual and collective well-being. When students feel a sense of belonging and see their identities valued rather than viewed through a deficit lens, they are more likely to flourish and experience joy (Muhammad, 2023).

Recognizing education as a pathway for personal and community advancement, the branch of BSU’s framework champions of change is grounded in the principle of advocacy. Just as reformers like Horace Mann and John Dewey (1933) championed equality through education and civic participation, BSU aspires to foster these qualities in its teachers through the study of historical and contemporary theorists and through the application of inclusive pedagogy. BSU’s advocacy approach is further shaped by critical theories that interrogate injustices and oppression in educational systems and practices (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Higgins & Ronnkvist, 2020; hooks, 1994; Muhammad, 2023). These theories guide BSU in fostering criticality among preservice teachers—the ability to understand and articulate systems of power, privilege, and

oppression (Muhammad, 2023)—so they can advocate for anti-oppressive educational practices and policies that promote individual and collective well-being.

The essential role of reflection, another branch in BSU's conceptual framework, in the practice of educators has been long established in educational theory (Boud et al., 1985; Dewey, 1933; Kolb & Fry, 1975; Schön, 1991). Educators who examine their identity, experiences, prior knowledge, and beliefs driving their actions can self-correct and enhance their effectiveness and capacity for growth in their practice. Reflection is embedded in many of BSU's education courses and in the student teaching experience in the form of journals and assignments. From their first education course to their student teaching experience, BSU's preservice teachers connect theory to practice and reflect on ways to enhance their teaching. This process emphasizes that reflection and improvement are continuous practices throughout a teaching career. Beyond pedagogical practice, BSU's encourages its preservice teachers to reflect on their roles as advocates for collective and individual well-being, the foundation of our conceptual framework.

Content and pedagogical knowledge equip teachers to create a learning environment that encourages students to engage deeply, connect new concepts to their existing knowledge, and think critically. This knowledge is fundamental to effective teaching (Ausubel, 1969; Bruner, 1960; Shulman, 1987) and is another branch of BSU's conceptual framework. In BSU's education programs, preservice teachers receive a combination of content and pedagogical coursework, along with opportunities to apply their knowledge through field experiences and student teaching. BSU students explore and integrate multiple theoretical perspectives (e.g. constructivism and behaviorism) (Aylward & Cronje, 2022) and learn from theorists who connect content with culturally relevant teaching practices (Hammond, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000). This combination fosters both knowledge acquisition and individual and collective well-being.

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