Vision Statement

The Teacher Education Program at Furman University prepares educators who are scholars and leaders.

Mission of the Program

Furman University prepares teachers and administrators to be scholars and leaders who use effective pedagogy, reflect thoughtfully on the practice of teaching, and promote human dignity. Furman is committed to a program of teacher education that calls for collaborative, interdependent efforts throughout the academic community.

Furman’s Teacher Education Program is anchored in the university’s commitment to the liberal arts—encompassing the humanities, fine arts, mathematics, and social and natural sciences as the essential foundation for developing intellectually competent educators. Furthermore, all candidates develop the following Proficiencies as they progress through the Teacher Education Program:

1) mastery of subject matter
2) mastery of pedagogical knowledge
3) the ability to teach diverse learners
4) the ability to reflect on scholarship and practice
5) the belief that all learners can succeed
6) fair and respectful behavior

Philosophy

Our educational past ... is not to be viewed as completed, or isolated from our educational present. Rather, the varying contexts in which leading educators, philosophers, and ideologists interacted with their environments are viewed as episodes in an ongoing educational experience. (Gutek, 2001, p. 4)

The works of many educators, philosophers, researchers, and practitioners give direction to the program of teacher preparation at Furman University. Inspired by the scholarship of Dewey (1904, 1933, 1938) and the work of Bruner (1960, 1966), Piaget (1954, 1970), Vygotsky (1978), Bronfenbrenner (1972, 1979), and Gardner (2006), among others, we embrace the historical shift in pedagogy from teaching as a mechanical process of delivering information to a concept of more informed practice based on thinking, reflecting, and understanding (Aaronsohn, 2005; Marzano, 2012; Schon, 1987; van Manen, 2003; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2012). We are involved in the efforts to promote an education profession in which practice is grounded in theoretical understanding, research (Boyer, 1990; Duckworth, 2006), and extensive field experiences (Posner, 2009). We endorse the work of those who have promoted the importance of
depth of subject matter knowledge in the preparation of teachers (Leung, 2002; Sherin, 2002; Shulman, 1987).

Furthermore, we believe that learning is cultural and social, and that one of the greatest challenges in educating children for the 21st century is the search for a socially-just curriculum that engages all students and brings meaning to their lives (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gay, 2010; Nieto, 2004; Oakes & Lipton, 2006). We believe that changes in the educational system can be brought about by educators who are caring and thoughtful (Noddings, 1984; Oakes & Lipton, 2006; Posner, 2000; van Manen, 2003); inspire others to participate actively in school improvement (Gurthrie & Schuermann, 2010; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005); and join their colleagues for purposes of renewing schools and teacher preparation programs (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2005; Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004; Sato, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2008).

Further, this philosophy is augmented by additional commitments to technology and diversity in all aspects of education:

**Technology**

*Teachers use their knowledge of subject matter, teaching and learning, and technology to facilitate experiences that advance student learning, creativity, and innovation in both face-to-face and virtual environments.* (International Society for Technology in Education (ISTEnets-t, 2008, p. 1).

In preparing educators as scholars and leaders, Furman’s teacher education program acknowledges the crucial role of technology as a means to locate information, transmit knowledge, gain conceptual understanding, and achieve occupational ambitions. Teachers and students must therefore acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will enable them to solve problems and use technology as a tool for collaborating and communicating. This objective is all the more urgent in light of the explosive growth of digital media, including personal handheld computing devices, notepads, and “cloud” computing.

Following the lead of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTEnets-t, 2008), Furman’s teacher education program, in defining technological literacy as a requirement for its candidates, incorporates a broad definition. Thus, we believe that technological literacy involves:

- competence in operating information technologies;
- the ability to use technology in creative and innovative ways;
- the ability to assess and apply a variety of technologies in the classroom based on student needs and learning styles;
- appreciation of technology as a means, rather than an end, in the instructional process;
- competence in using technologies for collaboration and communication;
• understanding of, and sensitivity to, the social, ethical, and economic issues related to technology, including the concept of “digital citizenship.”
• competence in using technology for functional skill development (e.g., eye contact for social skills, functional math, functional reading).

Diversity

*Any student who emerges into our culturally diverse society ... with a monocultural perspective on the world can legitimately be considered educationally ill-prepared.* (Nieto 2004, p. xv)

Furman’s teacher education program is committed to preparing educators who, as scholars and leaders, understand and appreciate the diverse nature of learners and their cultures. Our society’s concern for addressing diversity can be traced to the common school movement of mid-nineteenth-century America. Horace Bushnell, a leading thinker of the time, expressed the widespread concern that popular prejudices would be reinforced unless students were exposed to diversity: “Never brought close enough to know each other, the children, subject to the great well known principle that whatever is unknown is magnified by the darkness it is under, have all their prejudices and repugnancies magnified a thousand fold” (Bushnell, 1853, p. 184). So, too, did Horace Mann believe that common schools would promote tolerance and democracy: “It is here [in the common school] that the affinities of a common nature should unite [children] together so as to give the advantages of pre-occupancy and a stable possession to fraternal feelings, against the alienating competitions of subsequent life” (Mann, 1837, cited in Cremin, 1957).

The teacher education program at Furman recognizes the continuing role that schools and teachers play in fostering acceptance and celebration of diversity, both individually and collectively. Recent studies suggest that teachers unable to model these dispositions cannot transmit or promote positive attitudes toward diversity among their students; nor can such teachers impart to their students the academic and social skills necessary for understanding, or competing in, a diverse world (Banks, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Lindsey, Robins & Terrell 2009). In addition to enhancing their instructional repertoire, we believe that exposure to diversity will enable candidates to confront and, if necessary, modify their own attitudes toward different cultures. This not only leads to more effective teaching, but it also promotes the larger cause of inclusiveness (Giroux, 2005; Rasool & Curtis, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2010).

**Content, Pedagogy, and Dispositions**

The Teacher Education Program of Furman University prepares educators who are scholars and leaders, based on the following *Indicators:*

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1. **Educators who are scholars and leaders** have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals and concepts of their discipline. *(CONTENT)*

   They:

   a) demonstrate content knowledge, as well as the historical, political, social, and philosophical foundations of education, through inquiry, synthesis, and critical analysis;
   b) understand the interrelationship of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to help all students learn;
   c) know and can implement national/state/district curricula and learning standards;
   d) are able to meet the standards set by all national/state/ and district content assessments;
   e) use accurate and current content from multiple sources to make subject matter meaningful to all students.

   * The Unit uses the phrase *all students* to encompass students who represent all characteristics of diversity, including but not limited to, gender, race, religion, creed, sexual orientation, geographic origin, socioeconomic background, and varied abilities.

2. **Educators who are scholars and leaders use evidence-based practice for effective teaching and communication.**(PEDAGOGY) *They:*

   a) articulate their own philosophy of education and use it to guide their practice;
   b) demonstrate effective long- and short-range planning using appropriate organization and time management strategies;
   c) establish and maintain high expectations for all students;
   d) use a variety of assessments to inform instruction;
   e) implement differentiated instructional strategies that address multiple learning styles;
   f) demonstrate ethical use of current educational technologies to enhance instruction, assessment, and student performance;
   g) consider school, family, and community contexts, and adjust practice based on students’ experiences, interests, and relationships;
   h) analyze individual student, classroom, and school performance data, making data-driven decisions about strategies for teaching and learning;
   i) create, nurture, and maintain a classroom environment that promotes learning;
   j) use effective and appropriate classroom management strategies;
   k) demonstrate respectful and productive communications with diverse families and care-givers;
   l) communicate effectively and professionally in writing, orally, and through various electronic media;
m) reflect on curricula, the nature of learning and teaching, and their own practice for professional self-renewal;
n) demonstrate initiative to extend responsibilities beyond the classroom and into the school and community;
o) engage in collaborative work with colleagues, other professionals, and community members.

3. **Educators who are scholars and leaders are caring and thoughtful individuals who respond sensitively to the needs and experiences of all students and others with whom they interact. (DISPOSITIONS) They:**

   a) are aware of, and sensitive to, community and cultural diversity;
b) are timely, respectful, and responsible in meeting professional expectations;
c) acknowledge and accept feedback, responding appropriately to improve practice;
d) reflect thoughtfully and frequently on their own attitudes and actions;
e) exemplify passionate commitment to teaching, continuous learning, and professional involvement;
f) model appropriate professional conduct;
g) use sound judgment and display confidence in practice;
h) are advocates for the well being of all students;
i) treat all students fairly and equitably;
j) exhibit cooperative and productive work relationships with students and colleagues;
k) value civil engagement in decision making with students, colleagues, and community members.

(Based on InTASC, 2011; NBPTS [date depending on certification area]; and ADEPT, 2006 standards)

References


