A Conceptual Knowledge Base
Teacher Education Program
Grace University

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.
Henry Brooks Adams

The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterward.
Anatole France

What is education?

Education is the deliberate attempt by the learner or by someone else to control (or guide or direct, or influence, or manage) a learning situation in order to bring about the attainment of a desired outcome (goal).¹

Education is the life-long process that occurs in a variety of circumstances and contexts. It can be formal, informal, or non-formal.

A school is one of society's agents for learning, educating, and training; but education is not limited to school. School is a servant of society, not its master.

Education for the Grace University Teacher Education student will be a deliberate act of directing a learning environment in a set place and set time as well as a life-long process occurring in many other settings. The teacher is one of many influences a learner encounters in life. It is the teacher's job to awaken curiosity and to help the student fulfill that curiosity. The teacher is a change-agent who works on the context of a formal school setting to guide, direct, influence or manage the learning environment in order to directly produce the attainment of not only a knowledge, but thought processes, critical and analytical thinking, and attitudes. The teacher is concerned about the learner as a whole and must deal with that learner not only on the intellectual/cognitive level but on the physical, social, and spiritual level as well. The teacher touches the whole person and in so doing "affects eternity" as "he can never tell where his influence stops." Teaching is an extremely valuable job in light of this influence. It should never be taken lightly for the teacher holds the future in his or her hands. The responsibility is great but so are the rewards.

Martin Luther felt education and the job of the teacher was of the utmost importance in life as a whole. He valued it above all else:

If I had to give up preaching and my other duties, there is no office I would rather have than that of a school teacher. For I know that next to the (pastoral) ministry it is the most useful, greatest and best; and I am not sure which of the two is to be preferred. For it is hard to make old dogs docile and old rogues pious, yet that is what the ministry works at,
and must work at, and must work at, in great part, in vain; but young trees, though some may break in the process, are most easily bent and trained. Therefore, let it be considered one of the highest virtues on earth faithfully to train the children of others, which duty very few parents attend to themselves.¹

How then should we educate children? Education needs to be seen in light of our philosophical beliefs but it will also be affected by political dynamics, social forces, economic conditions and expectations of family and community. It can be broken down into five educational issues:

1. Nature of the student
2. Role of the teacher
3. Curricular emphasis
4. Teaching methodologies
5. Social function of the educational institutions

These all result in the choice of educational practices in the schools. Within this framework the knowledge base for the Teacher Education Program at Grace University will be laid out. Added to this basic structure is the uniqueness a Bible-based worldview is added. Grace University educational practices will be examined, evaluated and corrected in light of our basic philosophical beliefs. The eternal principles of Christianity will be united with intelligent choices as to what works best in our unique place and time. It is impossible to separate out our faith from what we believe about the nature of the student, the role of the teacher, the curricular emphasis, teaching methodologies and the social functions of the school.

We will seek to teach our future teachers to understand the beliefs that govern their actions so that they may be flexible in applying educational principles that grow out of their worldview. They will have the responsibility and freedom of choice to apply their philosophical beliefs to the professional act of teaching. With that idea in mind, we will seek in all professional educational courses to examine the educational principles that grow out of our assumptions of the Christian World View.

Who is the learner?

The most important component of the school is the learner. The teacher must never lose sight of this but must always deal with students in the much larger context of social, spiritual, mental and physical health.

What is the nature of the student? "The essential thing about human beings from the biblical perspective is that God created them in his own image” (Gen. 1:27).² We are created in God's likeness and stand in a unique relationship to him. The "Christian view of man is that he is understood primarily from the standpoint of God, rather than the uniqueness of his rational faculties."³ God created humankind responsible and accountable, singled out from all other creatures.(Gen. 1:28) We are beings of love and goodness, trustworthiness, rationality and righteousness. As a result of the fall, humanity rejected God and chose his own way (Gen. 2:17; 3:19) thus distorting the image in which we were created. (Gen. 9:6, 1 Cor. 11:7, Jas. 3:9) God
in his infinite love restored the image to its fullness by sending Jesus Christ to save fallen humanity from their sins. (John 3:16, 17) Once again it became possible to live in harmony with God resulting in a restored harmony within ourselves, to others, and to the natural creation.

How does one's belief system affect how one views the learner?

There are many implications of how one's belief system affects how one views the learner. Listed below are some of those implications:

1. Individuals must be viewed with infinite potential because they are God's children.

2. Individuals are holistic units - the whole person is important to God and therefore important to the teacher. It is not enough to deal with children at one level but it is essential for the teacher to know and understand students in a much bigger context and to seek to restore and provide balance to all aspects of a person.

3. Being made in the image of God (Imago Dei) allows people to reason and make responsible choices and spiritual decisions. The student is not a robot to which is applied rewards and punishments to control behavior, but a person capable of making responsible choices. To that end the teacher has the job of cultivating a student's decision-making.

4. Teachers must respect an individual's uniqueness. A student comes to the classroom with his or her own individually. The teacher seeks to build the personal worth of every child.

5. While valuing individual uniqueness, the teacher must also be aware of the importance of the group as a whole. Classroom management choices and discipline techniques must build on the respect for each student but take into account how the community of the classroom as a whole will be affected.

6. Since the fall, the problems of the human race have not changed. The teacher must also be ready to speak to the heart. Every individual in the classroom deserves the very best education that can be offered. In seeking to provide this, the teacher must deal with the learner as a whole, restoring social, spiritual and physical health as well as dealing with the mind.

How does the student learn?

A child learns by actively constructing knowledge into the base of what he/or she already knows and understands about the world. A child is naturally curious, alert, and persistent. The child moves through definite stages of development in which knowledge is incorporated into his/her mental framework. These stages are dependent on physical maturation (biological growth of the
nervous system), physical experiences (manipulation of materials, objects), social interaction (with others especially in a formal school setting), and equilibration ("a self-regulated learning process involving, recognizing discrepancies between physical reality and personal ideas, and activity, and persistently working to resolve the discrepancies through assimilation and accommodation.")

The practical applications of a cognitive approach to learning result in the following classroom techniques:

1. Valuing of learning styles
2. Moving children's thinking from the concrete to the abstract
3. The use of a variety of teaching/learning activities
4. Hands-on/minds-on guided discovery learning
5. Assessment of student progress frequently to help guide teaching
6. A movement of the teacher from a transmitter of knowledge, information, and concepts to the role of a facilitator of a student-centered classroom.

Valuing the learner as the most important component of education necessitates looking at the learner as a unique individual, capable of choices, deserving of respect, and an active participant in the learning process.

**What is the role of the teacher?**

The teacher is not only responsible for transmitting knowledge, but must have an abiding care for those under their tutelage. The teacher must develop the mind as well as develop character.

The non-teaching position, ideal curriculum, latest teaching tools, and flawless organizational pyramid are marginal unless there are quality human relationships at the point where students encounter a school's teachers.

Grace University seeks to prepare students to be Christ-like, maturing responsible individuals who have a basic knowledge of scripture and the world and have skills in the integration of this knowledge. They are equipped, motivated and dedicated to serve God as servant-leaders.

With this distinctive as a guide, the Education Department, through the Grace University Teacher Education Program, seeks to prepare prospective teachers:

1. To be knowledgeable about how children grow and develop and how the process of learning takes place through this development. An understanding of how children learn forms the bedrock for choices made in the classroom as to how best to teach.

2. To be especially knowledgeable in a specific discipline as well as having a breadth of knowledge based on the general education requirements at Grace University. This knowledge base is the foundation of good teaching along with effective communication skills.
3. To build a knowledge base of the philosophical and historical positions of education combining this with the unique integration of Christian values and ethical practices in the educational setting.

4. To develop the necessary skills, attitudes and understandings from the theories and methods of educational strategies that will allow them to make competent decisions in pedagogy and curriculum choices. They will demonstrate problem-solving strategies that will take into account learner needs while demonstrating flexible classroom management, cooperative group learning and experience-oriented teaching methods.

5. To develop a sensitivity and respect for cultural diversity in the school through practical tutoring in a multicultural setting, always seeing children as uniquely created by God in his image. The servant-leader teacher has special concern for the poor and disadvantaged, always seeking ways to equal education regardless of class, gender or race.

6. To become knowledgeable and responsive to the specific needs of at-risk learners creating an atmosphere of learning that addresses the challenges of all need levels.

7. To be knowledgeable about the latest communication techniques and be able to effectively employ them in the classroom.

8. To be a teacher who has a passion for teaching and children. It is critical to infuse a competent knowledge base and a well-rounded choice of pedagogy with an enthusiasm for the process of learning and desire to see all children reach their fullest potential.

What knowledge is of most worth?

The basic principle-underlying curriculum to the Christian is that "all truth is God's truth." God is the creator of all things and therefore the truth stems from Him. The Bible provides a pattern for thinking in all areas. It is the foundation and context for all knowledge and it enters into all areas of curriculum adding significance to each topic. Curriculum should not be studied as fragmented knowledge but as it interrelates to all other knowledge. The Bible helps us understand all topics. The following diagram gives an integration model showing how every subject can be approached in light of the biblical perspective giving it its fullest meaning. The two-headed arrows show that the study of history, science also shed light on the meaning of scripture. It is critical that every topic in the curriculum is integrated with all others as well as an interactive relationship with the biblical perspective. As we strive to teach teachers at Grace University, curricular areas will be integrated into all other subject matter and discussed as they relate to the biblical perspective as seen in the following graphic.
Another important curricular consideration is attention to academic fundamentals in the form of core curriculum. Attention needs to be paid to the basic subjects of English, History, Geography, Math, Science, Art and Music. Students need to possess the essential skills that allow them to speak and write well, add, subtract, multiply, divide and measure, to think logically and clearly, to ask good questions, to analyze problems and search for correct answers.

What are appropriate teaching methodologies?

Since human beings are created in the image of God, they can therefore think reflectively as well as make decisions about how they will act and where they will go. In light of that truth, instructional methodology needs to be chosen that will encourage learners to think for themselves rather than responding to environmental cues to guide behavior. Instructional techniques must move beyond strategies for passing on information to the encouragement of critical thinking.

The Old Testament model of education encouraged a total educational environment that encompassed body, mind, and soul. This environment was to awaken curiosity in the minds of
children so that they would ask questions and engage their teachers in a dynamic interchange. Life-long education was valued as the children of Israel were reminded through feasts and holidays of the reason for their faith.

In the New Testament we have the powerful example of Jesus. "Jesus succeeded as a masterful teacher largely because of his remarkable ability to capture the interest of his audience." We can learn much from his teaching techniques.

1. He used illustrations that were concrete, that appealed to the imagination of his audience and to which they had a personal interest.

2. He was a master storyteller using stories to teach lessons but allowing the listener to draw out meaning. He kept his listeners actively involved in the thought process.

3. He used object lessons, using items he found around him, such as the lily of the field and its lack of anxiety, the coin and who should pay taxes.

4. He used thought-compelling questions. He never told the people, "Here is what you should believe," but instead drew out spiritual truth by creating a dialog in which he led them along to discover the truth for themselves.

5. He used theory and practice. He would use periods of instruction with his disciples and then send them out to apply what they had learned in the "real world". He put theory into action and was always concerned that his listeners did not merely hear the words but used them in everyday practical ways.

6. Jesus was always positive with his students. He respected them as individuals and saw hope for each of them. He believed in them and cared about them and his hearers sensed this concern. He made them believe in themselves and expected the best of them.

These techniques stand the test of time and can still be employed in classrooms today. The Teacher Education program at Grace University will seek to put into action these techniques we see Jesus using. We as instructors will model these behaviors while we seek to teach our students how to be master-teachers as Jesus demonstrated.

Translated into the educational jargon of today's classroom, Grace University intends to use the following model of instruction to help students develop a full perspective of the continuum of teaching styles, learning styles, and learning activities. Our intent is not to follow trends from one side of the continuum to the other; rather, our goal is to help students understand the full spectrum available to accomplish the teaching/learning experience.
Teaching Style Continuum for the Instructor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Active/Facilitator</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Learning Style Continuum for the Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive or Active</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Learning Activities Continuum to Facilitate the Learning Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Instruction</th>
<th>Guided Discovery</th>
<th>Indirect Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td>Recitation Method</td>
<td>Discussion Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Instruction</td>
<td>Drill Method</td>
<td>Film Analysis Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook Method</td>
<td>Review Method</td>
<td>Debate Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workbook Method</td>
<td>Questioning Method</td>
<td>Oral Report Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalkboard Method</td>
<td>Oral Edam Method</td>
<td>Brainstorming Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulletin Board Method</td>
<td>Discussion Method</td>
<td>Team Learning Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-Solving Method</td>
<td>Laboratory Report Method</td>
<td>Peer Review Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration Method</td>
<td>Contract Method</td>
<td>Programmed Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Method</td>
<td>Hands-on/Lab Method</td>
<td>Individualized Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inquiry Method</td>
<td>Note-taking Method</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No one model of instruction is best for all students all the time under all circumstances. That being the case, we propose to use a wide range of possible teaching methods along a continuum from direct teaching or expository teaching (telling) on the one extreme to indirect or free discovery on the other extreme with the role of teacher dominance moving from high to low.

Recognizing the need for direct instruction as an effective means of teaching, we will emphasize its use when used for disseminating information, stimulating and motivating students, for the mastery of facts, rules and procedures, to introduce further indirect instruction and when control of the classroom learning situation is essential. A suggested model for this type of instruction is Rosenshine's Direct Teaching Approach.⁹

1. Precisely state lesson goals for students
2. Focus on one thought at a time before beginning another
3. Teach in small steps, checking for understanding before going to the next step
5. Organize material so one point is mastered before the next is given
6. Provide feedback and corrections
7. Conduct independent practice
8. Use weekly and monthly review.

Research shows that using direct instruction improves student achievement in content and skills when the instruction is systematic or step-by-step. (For the specifics of the research, please refer to the Resource List as a partial reference.) From this starting place students should be guided to greater independence and more complex learning in the form of applying concepts and principles, planning investigations or solving problems. Direct instruction should never be the only means of instruction but should play a key role in the presentation of facts and concepts.

From the direct instruction method the teacher moves into the indirect instruction methods. These vary on the continuum from teacher-guided exploration and discovery to independent or free discovery. While it is unlikely that elementary or middle school teachers will use free discovery because of the use of advanced mental strategies, it is a method that should be used at the secondary level where students can engage independent higher level abstract cognitive strategies. It is suggested for elementary and middle school that the guided discovery method be used with teacher involvement and guidance dependent on the age of the children.

Guided discovery learning allows students to manipulate and process information in a direct concrete method. Students in this method are actively involved in learning not only through manual activities (hands-on) but actively involved by listening, speaking, reading, seeing and thinking (minds-on) John Dewey says this about active learning, "We learn by doing and reflecting on what we do." Learning is not passive according to Jerome Bruner, "The student is not a bench-bound listener, but should be actively involved in the learning process." This type of learning also known as “constructivist” involves the student in three distinct roles; active learner, social learner and creative learner. The model for constructivist - oriented instructional methods moves through the following steps:

1. **Invitation:** Observations, asking questions, proposing hypotheses
2. **Explorations, Discoveries, Creations:** Focused play, brainstorming, observation of specific phenomena, collecting organizing data, problem-solving strategies, discussion of solution with others, design and conduct experiments
3. **Explanations & Solutions:** Communicating information and ideas, constructing new explanations, evaluation by peers, determine closure
4. **Action:** Applying knowledge and skills, share information and ideas, ask new questions

With the Guided Discovery method the teacher may cover less but more is retained and transferred. It is a holistic view of the learner that allows them to grow cognitively and creatively, develops and meets the varied learning styles and helps students develop self-confidence.
What is the social function of educational institutions?

The school serves a social function in society in that all youth must pass through its doors before moving out into the world. As future leaders, the decisions they make will determine the future of society and are largely dependent on their education. George S. Counts states that we must "shape educational policy. . . to guard the path that leads from the present to the future." School needs to be the place where a common legacy is studied and "a common culture" is transmitted to our future leaders. This is the place where the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence is studied, where children learn "all men are created equal", where they learn the events from the past that make our nation great and the poems and stories that give our country such a rich, diverse heritage. The school must be the place where cultural literacy is taught.

School must also be the place where children learn what it means to be a good citizen. Here students learn the rights as well as the duties of citizens and country, of civic duties, how to live up to obligations, not to shrink from toil, to give respect to others to be "loving critics" that respect the country but recognize its faults.

The Christian school should be the nursery in which reformers are born and reared - the reformers who would go forth from the school burning with practical zeal and enthusiasm to take their place as leaders in these reforms.

Finally, schools need to be the place of character development. Children need to be taught self-discipline, diligence, perseverance and honesty. The teacher not only needs to actively teach these concepts but also must role model these traits to his/her children. Next to parents, teachers have the most powerful influence on students. Teachers are being watched all the time. Their lives need to be exemplary models of true character. Jesus said,

And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and drowned in the depths of the sea. (Matthew 18:5-6)

What special focus in education would be appropriate for Grace University?

Because of the unique urban location, involvement, and collaboration with urban service units in the city of Omaha, we would further define our scope as developing our teaching strategies and accumulating proven-methods that will increase learning at urban-setting schools. At the infancy stage of our program, this area of the knowledge base has yet to be developed. We have begun to meet with a steering committee researching the possibility of an urban setting high school that would use alternative teaching/learning techniques in a neighborhood setting that draws on community resources and a collaborative effort of a number of agencies. The committee members represent St. Paul Lutheran School, Trinity Church, New Hope Youth League, Omaha Street School, Omaha Youth Center, and concerned parents. It is our dream to become
intimately involved in the planning and organization of this new school, using it as a training ground for our own students while developing our own program with a special bent toward urban educational needs. This will give Grace students exceptional training for working with students in multicultural settings.

**Conclusion**

The profession of teaching should not be entered into lightly. It is a demanding profession with much responsibility. We owe the leaders of tomorrow the best education we can offer them. We owe all children access to the highest quality education with no regard to race, creed, or gender. Along with this great responsibility, though, comes great reward. Reward will come in the form of watching a child's eyes light up when they finally "get it", a hug at the door from a child who finally opens up, the middle school student who becomes turned on to something you taught in class or the high school student who graduates and becomes a responsible citizen. Certainly this is not the profession to get rich in the way the world defines wealth, but it is the profession to "get rich" in the things that are eternal. It is our desire at Grace University to do everything in our power to produce excellent teachers. We are committed to the continual process of evaluation and study to make sure we are always producing graduates who are of the highest caliber.

*A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.*

Henry Brooks Adams
Notes

13. Ibid., p. 12
Resource List


Charney, R.S. (Spring, 1991) "Guided Discovery: Teaching the Freedom to Explore," *A Newsletter for Teachers*, no. 1.


Schniedewind, N. & D. *Open Minds to Equality: A Sourcebook of Learning Activities to Promote Race, Sex, Class, and Age Equity*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.


