Carroll University
Teacher Education Program
Guiding Principles

Introduction
Carroll University endeavors to develop skilled professional educators who integrate complex roles and dispositions in the service of diverse communities of learners. Our program fosters in candidates a commitment to the premise that all children and adolescents can learn, and we further encourage our candidates to commit themselves to supporting that learning. Using developmentally appropriate and educationally effective approaches and guided by state and national standards, our candidates create environments that prepare learners to contribute to a democratic society in an increasingly interdependent and global world.

The conceptual framework for the preparation of teachers at Carroll University is based on developing a complex set of roles and dispositions that are informed by our "Guiding Principles." The principles inform the lifelong professional development of teachers. The term "Guiding Principle" is used to convey the notion that the Carroll dispositions constitute a set of logical first principles, or axioms, that can be used to generate a complete and consistent approach to learning about, understanding, implementing, and reflecting upon the teaching process, at any stage in a professional educator's career. The Guiding Principles are dispositions in the sense that they specify natural professional tendencies, mindsets, or lenses for considering ethical, moral, social, practical and professional approaches for facilitating learning outcomes in children.

The Carroll Guiding Principles evolved from extended, collaborative, formal and informal discussions among faculty, both full and part time, who were involved in the Carroll University teacher education program. They are: Constructivism, Cultural Sensitivity, Multiculturalism, Curricular Integration, and Critical Reflection. They are infused in the program as philosophies; as organizers for curriculum, instruction, and experiences in education courses; as theories of teaching and learning; as pedagogical practices; and as a set of lenses through which pre-professional and professional educators can reflect on their developing practices.

Viewing the Guiding Principles as dispositions that can be developed, assessed, and refined, the Carroll program aligns those dispositions with:

- Educational course work in the program.
- The Wisconsin Teacher Standards (WITS) for DPI licensure.
- Periodic high stakes portfolio assessments at program admission points.
- Immersion and conventional field experiences in settings characterized by diversity.
- Clinical student teaching experiences in a variety of local, regional, and, in the near future, international placements.
- Follow-up evaluation studies to assess, confirm, and affirm the use of the dispositions in the teaching practices of graduates.

Brief Guiding Principles
The Guiding Principles have both brief descriptions and longer explications. Briefly, the principles state that:

- **Constructivist** teachers encourage active, engaged, inquiry-oriented learning enabled by formal and informal assessments of prior student learning and experience and by instruction designed in response to those assessments.
- **Culturally Sensitive** teachers use differences in student social and cultural backgrounds to design instruction that enhances both teaching and learning.
Curricularly Integrative teachers use interdisciplinary curricula to promote student learning that connects new ideas with each other and with prior student knowledge and experience.

Multicultural teachers use curricula and design instruction to explore and embrace a variety of cultural perspectives, including, but not limited to, the cultures of their students.

Critically Reflective teachers use multiple formal and informal methods to review their teaching and student learning in order to strengthen both.

**Explicated Guiding Principles**

Brief descriptions are used as shorthand in order to talk about the Guiding Principles, but each principle has a longer, more thorough explication that is used to convey its full conceptual meaning, as well as to ensure that it is clear that the principles infuse and inform all aspects of teacher development. The explications are included below.

**Constructivism** involves helping learners to question, interpret, and analyze information. It includes using information to strengthen learner understanding of concepts and ideas. It encourages the development of higher order thinking skills including creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving. It emphasizes the active role of learners as they build understanding and construct new knowledge from learning experiences.

At appropriate times in their professional lives, **constructivist teachers** will:

- Develop a community of learners and critical thinkers.
- Use incidental teaching (Teachable moments) and developmental assessments.
- Create and prepare an environment which facilitates learning.
- Encourage learners to explore the world around them and learn from new experiences.
- Involve learners actively in their own learning.
- Provide instruction based on the prior knowledge and experiences of learners.

**Cultural Sensitivity** affirms that knowledge construction is filtered through a learner’s culture, a fact that cannot be disregarded by an effective teacher. Culture is broadly defined to include social class, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, family background, age, language, values, experiences, and rituals that affect the prior and ongoing experiences of learners. Cultural sensitivity stresses the importance of understanding how learner differences in social and cultural background influence teaching experiences and practices.

At appropriate times in their professional lives, **culturally sensitive teachers** will:

- Develop knowledge and understanding of the cultural communities of the individual learners they teach.
- Demonstrate awareness of the ways in which cultural differences, broadly conceived, influence the teaching and learning processes for individual learners.
- Use culturally relevant teaching practices and strategies in their classrooms.
- Design instruction related to cultural norms and cultural differences of learners.
- Use culturally sensitive instructional materials and methods that foster acceptance, tolerance, and community.
- Work with community agencies that support the well-being of learners.
- Develop understanding of the cultural and social contexts affecting their classrooms, their schools, their school districts.
Curricular Integration is a way to organize instruction that is respectful of the natural, interdisciplinary learning processes of learners. Integrative teachers know that learning and experience are interrelated, and that learners do not confine their learning to one subject at a time. At appropriate times in their professional lives, teachers using curricular integration will:

- Use strategies to meet individual needs and styles of diverse learners.
- Design instruction allowing learners to explore concepts cutting across the disciplines included in the school curriculum.
- Teach subject matter that integrates ideas within and across subject areas.
- Use methods to link new ideas to learners’ prior knowledge.
- Develop curriculum plans that encourage learners to be creative and develop critical thinking skills.
- Use inquiry methods, projects approaches, problem based learning, "fuzzy" problem solving and learning based on lived experience.

Multiculturalism views learning and schooling as preparation for life in a pluralistic society. It explores and celebrates a variety of cultural perspectives. Multicultural curricula and classroom environments reflect life experiences, understandings, and backgrounds from a variety of cultures. It supports the idea that classroom experiences for all learners should include different racial, cultural, disability, socioeconomic, and gender groups. At appropriate times in their professional lives, multicultural teachers will:

- Infuse multicultural approaches and content throughout the curriculum.
- Capitalize on incidental teaching opportunities presented by differences in gender, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status.
- Design and use experiences and materials that promote individual and cultural differences to teach about equity and social justice.
- Work to reduce discrimination against any learner in the classroom setting.
- Create a classroom environment that is physically and emotional safe for all learners.
- Encourage multiple perspectives in classroom activities.

Critical Reflection involves analysis and critical review of the learning process and of the personal experiences of both teachers and learners. Critical reflection informs and supports teaching and learning processes. It also involves having an understanding of how to effect change by identifying problems, framing solutions, and analyzing both their real and potential effects. In both learners and teachers, reflective narratives are used to demonstrate prior knowledge and experience, personal growth, and development of values. At appropriate times in their professional lives, critically reflective teachers will:

- Show evidence of professional growth as a result of reflection.
- Teach learners to reflect on what they have learned, as a means to facilitate further learning.
- Use assessment information critically to improve teaching and learning processes.
- Review teaching and learning experiences to improve them.
- Frequently assess learners using a variety of formal and informal strategies.
- Collaborate with colleagues to strengthen reflective understanding of the teaching and learning processes.