



Department of Special Education and
Speech Language Pathology
Carrollton, Georgia 30118
College of Education

Department of Special Education and Speech Language Pathology Articulation of the COE Conceptual Framework

The Department of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology offers undergraduate and advanced degree programs, initial certification programs, endorsement programs, and add on certificates in special education and speech language pathology. Realizing that the conceptual framework provides the basis or underpinnings for all programs in the College of Education, department faculty members have collaboratively completed a number of activities in an effort to articulate clearly the conceptual framework to all candidates enrolled in courses and/or programs within the department. To begin with, each course syllabus has been revised/amended to include a description of the conceptual framework, and the alignment of all course objectives with the 10 descriptors of the conceptual framework, the Performance Based Standards of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), INTASC principles (initial certification programs), NBPTS propositions, and NBPTS Exceptional Needs (graduate/advanced programs). All department syllabi can be located on the web by using the following links: <http://coe.westga.edu/syllabi/sped/> and <http://coe.westga.edu/syllabi/slpa/>.

Since all course assignments are aligned with specific course objectives, each assignment and class activity, therefore, is correlated with the 10 descriptors of the conceptual framework, learned society standards, and INTASC principles or NBPTS propositions. Each year the course syllabi are reviewed by the appropriate department committees to ensure the inclusion of current literature, best practices, and relevant instructional content in all courses offered to candidates. In addition, the importance of engaging in instructional practices that ultimately will lead to the improvement of schools for all children is a theme that permeates course objectives, instruction, activities, assignments, and practices of department candidates and faculty. Candidates comprehend the importance of achieving at high levels in all aspects of their educational program so that they can in turn bring their students, regardless of innate abilities, to the highest levels of learning.

To further articulate the conceptual framework to candidates, at the beginning of each semester the conceptual framework is explained to candidates and the relationship of the course and accompanying coursework to the conceptual framework is described. Some faculty members have prepared visuals that are used in conjunction with their verbal description of the conceptual framework while other faculty use the conceptual framework description that is found on the COE web page to more clearly demonstrate all aspects of the conceptual framework to students. As a result, candidates more easily envision the relationship between the current course, the specific educational program, the department's overall goals and objectives, and the college's conceptual framework. Examples of presentations that have been developed in an effort to help students realize the importance of the conceptual framework and its relationship to all aspects of programs within the department are:

- The conceptual framework was presented to Nondegree Initial Certification candidates during their Orientation held on August 16, 2002, and will be explained thoroughly at future orientation sessions for new candidates. During the presentation the relationship between the conceptual framework, learned society standards, and INTASC principles was explained to candidates;
- The conceptual framework is presented to undergraduate candidates (SED and SLP) each fall; this takes place in SPED 2704, Foundations of Special Education;
- The conceptual framework is presented to Master of Education candidates in their first course, Professional Seminar. Again, the relationship between the conceptual framework, specific descriptors, learned society standards, and NBPTS propositions, both general and Exceptional Needs, is explained to candidates.

This document is *not* a complete review of all the undertakings of the Department of Special Education and Speech Language Pathology's efforts to incorporate the COE's conceptual framework. Instead, representative *examples* of the department members' attempts to infuse the conceptual framework in all programs offered through the department are presented. The following paragraphs list each conceptual descriptor and examples of the Special Education and Speech Language Pathology Department's instructional practices that correlate with the descriptors.

Decision Maker. The programs and degrees in SED/SLP address decision making in a number of ways and at varying levels of competence.

- Candidates in all programs engage in activities such as individual student instructional planning (preassessment of students abilities, determination of instructional and IEP goals and objectives, and formative and summative assessment of individual student progress) and curriculum planning;
- Candidates at various levels of preparation conduct functional behavioral assessments, design behavior intervention plans (BIP), assess the effectiveness of BIPs, and repeat the cycle;
- Candidates in the M. Ed. Program in Interrelated Special Education face advanced levels of decision making on a daily basis because they are practicing educators in classrooms throughout Georgia. In their classrooms and educational programs, candidates are required to plan and carryout a curriculum based assessment project; design, plan, and conduct a formal educational assessment based upon students' learning and/or behavioral characteristics; and, prepare a case study that includes instructional, behavioral, and social recommendations for teachers and parents;
- Candidates at various levels of preparation utilize formal and informal assessments to determine the most effective instructional strategies for individual students in special education and collaborative environments;
- Candidates in Educational Specialist programs develop a model for eliciting full participation of all members of the IEP team.

Leaders. The nature of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology as disciplines places our candidates, both those in initial and advanced program, in positions of leadership at a level not found in most disciplines.

- Program graduates/completers are required to serve as team leaders when developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Transition Plans (ITPs), and Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and conducting meetings that involve educational personnel, community personnel, and family members;
- Candidates at all levels learn to consult with general education faculty and provide all school personnel with recommendations for appropriate instructional, behavioral, and/or assistive technology modifications for individual students;
- Graduate candidates prepare and conduct staff development programs in their schools in order to share their advanced knowledge and skills with other persons.
- Our Ed. S. programs have as their primary focus the preparation of candidates as lead teachers, supervisors, and directors of special education.
- Speech language pathology graduate candidates serve as team leaders in advanced practicum courses;
- All candidates advocate for their students and their parents/guardians with school personnel and, frequently, community service personnel.

Lifelong Learner. Candidates in all of our programs are viewed as lifelong learners, and course requirements support this.

- Candidates in the undergraduate program in special education are required to attend professional conferences and are encouraged to participate in professional organizations, particularly the university chapter of the Student Council for Exceptional Children;
- Candidates and faculty members in speech-language pathology have organized and participate in a very active, campus based chapter of the National Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association;
- Candidates in advanced preparation programs, both SED and SLP, are made aware of and encouraged to attend professional conferences and share knowledge/skills with other candidates through class presentations;
- Candidates in the advanced preparation programs are expected to focus on selected areas of interest/strength in order to demonstrate and develop learning that is both of interest and benefit to them as is evidenced by the development of child change projects based on professional literature and research;
- Candidates in the M.Ed. in Special Education: Interrelated are required to use the CEC Performance Based Standards and NBPTS Exceptional Needs propositions as reference points for formal reflections;
- SED/SLP faculty members participate in numerous professional organizations, regularly attend and present at conferences, and publish in refereed journals;

Adaptive. The nature of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology as disciplines emphasizes the need for the adaptation of instructional strategies, materials, technology, interactions with educational personnel and parents. Adaptation is one of the major focal points of the special education and speech language pathology educator preparation curriculum.

- Candidates at the initial preparation and advanced preparation levels are required to demonstrate in courses, practica, and internships their ability to adapt instruction based on the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional needs of individual students;

- Candidates at all levels are required to demonstrate their abilities to collaborate with peers, parents, and community personnel and adapt their perceptions of others and their motives;
- Because of the nature of the students with whom our candidates will instruct, much of the focus of the curricula for all programs is on individualized planning for diverse learners;
- Faculty members in SED/SLP have demonstrated their ability to adapt to . Despite having a number of unfilled faculty openings over the past year, faculty members have managed to continue to offer the same number and quality of courses by making adaptations to their workload and recruiting and providing assistance to adjunct faculty;
- Faculty members continually examine programs and courses with the goal of ensuring that the content of instruction and instructional practices correlates with national professional standards and best practices. For example, faculty members currently are working to bring our courses and programs into alignment with CEC's new performance based standards;
- The department faculty members have responded to the need for increasingly larger numbers of special education teachers in Georgia by developing, reviewing, and improving the initial certification programs and greatly increasing the numbers of candidates enrolled in these programs.

Collaborative. The nature of Special Education and Speech-Language Pathology as disciplines necessitates that our candidates are proficient collaborators, not only with other educators but also with parents, advocates, community service personnel, and a cadre of individuals who work with persons with disabilities. When program candidates demonstrate proficiency in collaboration skills, their students or clients benefit from the full spectrum of service providers available in the educational, local, and state communities.

- Candidates in the initial preparation and master's level programs are required to complete specific collaboration courses. These courses emphasize collaboration skills that are needed for effective interactions with students, parents, and professionals;
- Candidates at all levels of preparation are required to complete numerous projects that require them to collaborate with other candidates, public school educators, and/or personnel from private and public clinics;
- The speech language pathology faculty members and candidates provide speech, language, and audiology services through the Speech Clinic; such services require collaborative relationships with service providers for adults with cognitive and communication disabilities, parents of children with communication disorders, adults with communication disabilities, and other community service providers that address the needs of persons with disabilities;
- Faculty members in the department who come from two distinct disciplines work collaboratively on department committees to ensure that department goals and program development and revision are completed in a collaborative manner;
- Faculty members from the department, both in special education and speech, invited faculty members from curriculum and instruction (specifically reading), and a local public school district to participate in the developing, writing, and submitting of a State Improvement Grant that focused on central auditory processing, and reading;
- The same faculty members and personnel from the public schools are implementing the State Improvement Grant for the purposes of educating special and general educators as

well as speech language clinicians in reading theory and strategies, encouraging collaborative instructional models in the public schools, and ultimately improving reading instruction for students with disabilities in inclusive settings;

- Faculty from both departments are modeling collaborative instruction in the college classroom;
- Three special education faculty members and two reading faculty members participated in Power of 2 Training at the University of Kansas for the purpose of improving their own collaboration skills and incorporating those skills into the courses taught by those faculty members in the COE;
- Faculty from special education and speech language pathology have engaged in collaborative efforts with and/or been elected to offices of local, state, and national organizations that focus on the improvement of education for persons with disabilities

Culturally Sensitive. Because students served in special education represent a diverse population either ethnically, culturally, racially, cognitively, physically, behaviorally, or socially, all coursework, activities, and practicum experiences provide candidates and faculty members with myriad opportunities to become more culturally sensitive individuals. The nature of the special education and speech language pathology disciplines requires that cultural sensitivity is a theme that permeates all courses, activities, and experiences.

- Candidates in all programs are required to demonstrate awareness of the diverse needs of learners and their families, and to plan instruction that is sensitive to the needs of the students;
- Practica and internship placements and experiences provide students with opportunities to interact with persons from various cultures and demonstrate their abilities to adapt instruction to the diverse needs of the learners;
- Specific assignments in courses require students to research the customs, music, food, etc. associated with various cultures and present this information to other candidates;
- Candidates from all teacher preparation programs offered through the College of Education are required to take the mandatory special education course offered by the department. This course is a venue for teaching all teacher education candidates the needs of diverse learners and instructional strategies and modifications that ensure more appropriate instructional strategies for diverse learners;
- Candidates in department preparation programs, particularly those in the nondegree initial certification program, increasingly are representative of a more diverse population and provide opportunities for other candidates and faculty to increase their knowledge of persons from other cultures;
- Faculty members in the department represent diverse groups;
- A new faculty member who joined the department this fall is very active in the International Division of the Council for Exceptional Children and provides additional opportunities to increase the cultural awareness of faculty and candidates.

Empathetic. Candidates in the special education and speech language pathology preparation programs at all levels must respond to students, parents, guardians, and extended family members of persons with disabilities with sincere empathy in order to provide effective programs and instruction that will enable students in classrooms for students with disabilities to develop skills that will ensure maximum independence in the community.

- In all courses offered through the department, the emphasis is on the individual and not the disability; for example, students in all courses are required to use “people first” language in all written assignments and verbalizations;
- Initial preparation candidates at the undergraduate level are placed in practicum situations early and throughout their program in order to ensure instructional opportunities with students at all ages and levels of disability;
- In courses that concentrate on the characteristics of persons with disabilities, candidates at all levels become knowledgeable of various factors associated with particular disabilities that lead to negative stereotyping of individuals with disabilities;
- In courses that emphasize collaboration and the needs of families of persons with disabilities, candidates at all preparation levels become knowledgeable of the effect of a disability on all family members of the person with the disability;
- Candidates are instructed in effective methods for interacting with and conducting meetings with parents of persons with disabilities, particularly in the Policies and Procedures, Collaboration, and Curriculum and Methods classes;
- Candidates are provided with opportunities to simulate IEP meetings, parent conferences, etc., and evaluate their interactions in such simulations in order to develop and hone their parent interaction skills;
- Candidates are required to observe and participate in IEP meetings and parent conferences to develop appropriate parent interaction skills;

Knowledgeable. Although a knowledgeable educator traditionally has been defined as one who has a breadth and depth of specific content knowledge that is appropriate for certain grade levels, in special education and speech language pathology knowledge must be interpreted more broadly. That is, knowledgeable candidates who are educated in the Special Education and Speech Language Pathology Department are expected to have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will ensure the effective education of persons with disabilities from preschool through grade 12. These candidates are expected to be knowledgeable of the federal and local laws, rules, and regulations that govern special education; effectively adapt instruction and materials for all grade levels and content areas in order to meet the diverse needs of all learners; competently instruct students in the use of assistive technology; functionally assess behavior and write and implement behavior intervention plans; collaborate with representatives from diverse service providers, other educators, and parents; provide academic and/or community based programs; plan for effective transitions of persons with disabilities from schools to postschool environments; and, use formal and informal assessments in order to document that students with disabilities have engaged in higher levels of learning.

- Candidates in initial preparation programs cannot be admitted to Teacher Education without demonstrating basic knowledge in reading, writing, and math as demonstrated by achieving specified scores on the Praxis I;
- Candidates in initial undergraduate preparation programs complete an approved general education core that provides them with basic knowledge required for teaching a variety of subjects either in a special education classroom and/or a collaborative general education classroom;
- Candidates in nondegree initial preparation programs and advanced level programs must have completed a degree from an accredited institution that ensures a base of general knowledge;

- Candidates in initial preparation programs must complete coursework in child growth and development so that they become more aware of the developmental stages and needs of students at various ages;
- Candidates for advanced degree programs are required to achieve specified scores on the Graduate Record Examination, have a specific GPA, and maintain a specified GPA throughout the program;
- Candidates at all levels are required to read professional literature and research to expand their basic content and professional knowledge;
- Candidates in the advanced programs in special education and speech language pathology are required to review professional literature and complete projects that will demonstrate their ability to use the new knowledge gained from the literature to initiate child change projects in their own classrooms/clinic situations;
- Faculty members represent a diverse knowledge base and professional experiences and have earned degrees from varied universities and areas of the country;
- Faculty members are involved in a wide range of professional activities and hold membership in diverse professional organizations.

Proactive. Special education and speech language pathology candidates are aware of the need to be proactive; that is, they always must be prepared for the unexpected. Because their students have diverse needs and abilities, candidates in this department are prepared to plan instruction in the traditional manner but likewise are prepared to have an alternate plan at all times. Special educators and speech language pathologists cannot wait for students to fail; these educators must be prepared to adapt instruction, materials, and content in order for students with disabilities to experience success rather than failure.

- The initial preparation programs at the undergraduate level emphasize early practicum experiences with students with disabilities so that candidates can affirm that their career choice is appropriate for him/her;
- Course content for all levels of preparation emphasizes proactive strategies as opposed to reactive strategies; for example, candidates gain knowledge of positive behavior supports and practice using them in classrooms for students with disabilities;
- Through courses in behavior modification or behavior management, candidates learn how to design and implement a functional behavior assessment, design and implement a behavior intervention plan, and assess the effectiveness of these actions;
- Through the Policies and Procedures course, initial preparation and advanced preparation candidates develop the knowledge and skills that will ensure that they protect the due process rights of children with disabilities and avoid litigation or due process hearing. For example, candidates gain knowledge of the due process procedures that ensure the educational rights of all children with disabilities, procedures that ensure active participation of parents in the education of their child, and develop the skills needed to write appropriate and comprehensive IEPs that address the specific needs of individual students;
- Through courses in collaboration, candidates develop skills that ensure positive, productive interactions with parents or guardians and practice effective strategies for working with, not against, parents;

- Through numerous courses, candidates learn and practice problem solving skills that emphasize proactive rather than reactive behaviors and learn instructional strategies for teaching these skills to students in their classroom;
- Increasingly, candidates in the education specialist program are choosing topics for their research proposals that focus on student self-advocacy and/or self determination skills because they realize the need to empower their middle school and secondary students to assume more responsibility for their learning, participating in their IEP meetings and transition meetings, and planning for their postsecondary lives;
- Candidates who experience a pattern of behavior that negatively impacts their professional development participate in the development of a Professional Development Plan that will provide them with specific interventions/activities that are needed for the successful continuation in the specific preparation program;
- In courses and conferences with faculty, candidates at all levels are being made increasingly aware of the importance of dispositions throughout the preparation program;
- Advanced preparation candidates use curriculum based assessment models to track students' progress and make appropriate adjustments to the curriculum in order to prevent student failure;
- Faculty members have enrolled in InTech training or audited technology classes to improve their skills and more effectively incorporate technology into their own classroom presentations;
- Faculty members meet in department committees to evaluate current programs and determine needed program modifications, deletions, or additions.

Reflective. Just as children proceed through various stages of development, so do educators. Reflective educators are those who have reached a level of professional maturity where they no longer are dependent upon others to evaluate their instructional effectiveness. Reflective educators are aware of their professional shortcomings and strengths that impact the learning of children and engage in activities that will ensure the educators' continued growth and professional development. That is, educators who are reflective use every instructional experience as an opportunity to grow professionally.

- Candidates at all levels of preparation are required to provide written reflections on their instructional activities in all practica, internships, or clinic experiences;
- Candidates at the initial preparation level are provided with copies of the Teacher Performance Evaluation Instrument that is used to evaluate their instructional effectiveness at various stages of professional development. Candidates are encouraged to use the instrument to guide their evaluations of their own teaching effectiveness;
- Candidates at the graduate level in special education use the CEC Performance Based Standards and the NBPTS Exceptional Needs Propositions as a focus for their reflections. For example, these candidates are required to choose a standard, identify an activity related to the standard, describe its effect on the learning of students, and propose a professional development plan that will ensure growth in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to that standard;
- Faculty members reflect upon their effectiveness in the classroom as they review candidates' evaluations of courses and use those evaluations to design more effective instructional practices in the university classrooms;

- Faculty members use committee meetings and department meetings to reflect upon the effectiveness of all programs and determine needed actions for program improvement.

Summary

The members of the Special Education and Speech Language Pathology Department recognize that there is a need to reflect continuously upon the components of the conceptual framework; examine programs to ensure that they encompass and further the components of the conceptual framework, best practices, and sound educational theory; and are responsive to the needs of the students in the public schools as well as the candidates in our program. Major projects of department members have been alignment of all course objectives with the new CEC Performance Based Standards and the development of a sequenced set of activities that will provide documentation of the ability of our candidates at all levels to effect positive child change in the public schools. Likewise, the department members are attempting to develop an instrument that will provide us with data from our candidates and consumers in the public schools that will help us evaluate the effectiveness of programs offered through the department.