

University of South Carolina Beaufort

Education Unit
The Constructivist Educator
Conceptual Framework

Pre-Condition IV
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4.1 THE VISION AND MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY

4.1a INSTITUTIONAL VISION

Located in the southernmost quarter of the state, the University of South Carolina Beaufort (USCB), a small senior campus of the state's public university, has brought associate degree programs to area residents for over 40 years. Now serving the most rapidly growing region of the state, we seek to respond to a broader spectrum of critical educational needs and interests of our citizens by becoming the region's first baccalaureate degree-granting institution.

Recognizing teaching as its primary function, USC Beaufort recruits and continuously develops highly qualified faculty members with current content knowledge, outstanding instructional skills, and a student-centered philosophy of education. USC Beaufort, through its dedicated professional administration, faculty and staff, seeks to provide a learning environment which is technologically current, supportive of students with diverse interests and abilities, and dedicated to student success.

This institution also strongly supports the study and appreciation of the area's unique geography, ecology, history and culture. As this region grows in population and complexity, USC Beaufort will be the primary resource for the intellectual, social, cultural and economic life of the region.

4.1b INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

The University of South Carolina Beaufort, a small (1,000 to 3,000 students/fall headcount enrollment) senior campus of the state's largest public university, brings the University of South Carolina's statewide mission of teaching, research, scholarship, and public service to the rapidly growing Lowcountry of South Carolina. USCB offers baccalaureate degrees that respond to regional needs, draw upon regional strengths, and prepare graduates to participate successfully in communities here and around the globe. The campus also supports the USC Extended Graduate Campus, which provides local access to graduate courses and programs.

USCB offers programs in mathematics and the natural sciences, humanities, and professional and social sciences. Its curriculum is designed to promote acquisition of knowledge and, through it intellectual dispositions and skills that encourage depth of understanding, tolerance of others and individual accountability. Attracting a racially and culturally diverse student body of varying ages and experiences, the University of South Carolina Beaufort draws its students primarily from the South Carolina Lowcountry, with representation from other parts of the state, other states, and foreign countries. The University encourages students to think analytically and abstractly, to explore options, to see similarities, to be open to differences, to communicate effectively, and to respect each individual.

The major intellectual and cultural center for the region, the University enriches the quality of life for area residents of all ages through presentations of the performing and fine arts, community service, symposia, and research initiatives, and partnerships with area schools, businesses and organizations.

4.1c UNIT VISION

The vision of the USCB education unit faculty and administration, supported by the general education faculty and administration, is to establish USCB as a primary resource for educators and school systems in the Lowcountry. This will be accomplished through partnerships with school districts and educators, outreach to the community, and the development of USCB as a recognized source of expertise and activity in education.

Specifically, we envision an education program that educates and trains prospective teachers based on accepted research and developmental practices strengthened by professional preparation experiences in the public schools of the region. We envision faculty who educate and train prospective teachers, are recognized leaders in the educational community, and who add to the knowledge base of education through research. We envision graduates who have the professional knowledge base, pedagogical expertise, and the disposition to synthesize these abilities to work effectively in the everyday environment of the education system. These graduates, working in diverse settings with diverse populations, will accept all students where they are in the learning process and devise a learning environment that will enable each student to reach his or her potential.

We envision graduates who, as professionals in education, are able to effectively represent themselves and their profession in the community. This representation includes an advocacy for children and education, along with an ability to inform and communicate to members of the community on issues relating to children and schools in a manner that is respectful of all members of the community.

4.1d UNIT MISSION

At USCB, the Education Department is the professional education unit that prepares early childhood educators. The Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP) at USCB has been designed to support and fulfill the Beaufort campus' mission to offer baccalaureate degrees which respond to regional needs, draw upon regional strengths, and prepare graduates to participate successfully in the local as well as global community. The unit's mission, based on its conceptual framework, is to prepare early childhood constructivist educators who are nurturers, communicators, reflective professionals, and facilitators.

The curriculum in the ECEP is designed to promote the development of each of these qualities as well as the acquisition of knowledge through intellectual dispositions and skills that encourage depth of understanding, tolerance of others and individual accountability. The USCB Education Unit is committed to a learning environment that encourages candidates to reach their academic and professional potential through exposure to highly qualified faculty, professional learning environments, and a supportive atmosphere in a multicultural setting. Unit program graduates are trained to work with colleagues; they also teach students of varied cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds in the global community.

To accomplish these goals candidates are provided with experiences designed to develop skills, knowledge, pedagogy and dispositions appropriate for teaching in early childhood classrooms along with working with infants, toddlers and young children. Graduates from the education program are expected to demonstrate excellent classroom teaching abilities, leadership in the school and community, and a desire to have a positive impact on the students, children and infants the candidates will care for and teach. We support and uphold the USCB Core Values of Integrity, Collaboration, Innovation, Responsiveness, Accountability and Excellence.

4.2 UNIT PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSES AND GOALS

The Unit's Conceptual Framework, the Constructivist Educator, is based on a constructionist philosophy residing in the critical role of the learner's active involvement during the learning process. The common belief of the unit faculty is that construction of knowledge as an activity is engaged in by teacher and student. This shared philosophy guides our unit focus on the following beliefs:

- We believe that learning must be constructed by the young child. This construction does not take place in isolation. Teachers, peers, parents, and others effectuate the learner's construction of knowledge through participation diverse settings.
- We believe developmentally based learning is both individual in nature, socially influenced, and that various factors contribute to the construction of knowledge.
- We believe the teacher candidate is a critical player in the purposeful construction of knowledge by the learner. A teacher educated in developmental levels of learners, methodology, technology integration, and content knowledge can best guide in the classroom.
- We believe that for teachers to monitor their effectiveness in the classroom, and for the progress of the learners to be guided effectively, systematic evaluation must take place on a regular basis.
- We believe that the teacher must model the pursuit of learning within his or her own life and as part of the community of learners within the classroom.

This philosophy forms the underlying belief system that guides the development of the Unit's curriculum, proficiencies, teaching practices and assessments.

The unit's operational definition of constructivism uses the constructivist educator approach and all four of its elements. Construction of knowledge may be individual as theorized by Piaget, or social as theorized by Vygotsky. Individuals interact with the environment comparing their present construction (knowledge) of the world with what they are experiencing through their interactions. This process of construction can take place individually or with the help of others. The USCB Education Unit prepares students to become constructivist educators who are nurturers, communicators, reflective professionals, and facilitators. The curriculum in the USCB Early Childhood Education Program is designed to promote the development of these qualities, referred to as elements of the Conceptual Framework. The acquisition of knowledge, through intellectual dispositions and skills, encourage depth of understanding, tolerance of others, and individual accountability.

The *Constructivist Educator as Nurturer* models positive teacher-parent relationships, creates positive relationships with families, recognizes the developmental differences of children, seeks partnerships with the families of learners, and provides a safe environment for children to develop intellectually and socially.

The *Constructivist Educator as Communicator* effectively models oral and written communication; identifies and responds to diverse learning styles of learners in listening, speaking, reading, and writing; integrates technology to communicate; creates a positive, communicative learning environment, and clearly identifies and communicates academic and behavioral expectations to students.

The *Constructivist Educator as Reflective Professional* uses reflection in order to assess and improve practice and performance of learners, demonstrates by example a dedication to lifelong learning, maintains and applies contemporary understanding and knowledge of education through professional activities, and serves as a mentor and role model to learners, families, and educators.

The *Constructivist Educator as Facilitator/Instructor* demonstrates an understanding of the relationship between constructivism and other learning theories, scaffolds learning activities, and expands the zone of proximal development of learners, implements best practice through age-appropriate, individualized, and socially/culturally appropriate activities, applies local, state, and national standards to

curriculum and assessments in the classroom, and also develops and adapts curriculum to meet the learning styles and diverse needs of all children.

The USCB Education Unit is committed to a learning environment that encourages candidates to reach their academic and professional potential through exposure to highly qualified faculty, professional learning environments, and a supportive atmosphere in a multicultural setting. Graduates of the unit program are trained to teach students of varied cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds in the global community.

The professional education unit's purpose is to prepare candidates who are nurturers, communicators, reflective professionals and facilitators for work in the early childhood classroom. In order to achieve this overall purpose, the unit has identified the following goals:

1. Provide candidates with a high quality early childhood program that prepares them to work effectively and establish positive relationships with young children and their families.
2. Provide candidates with a professional and supportive learning environment that encourages them to reach their academic potential.
3. Provide candidates with a highly qualified faculty in a multicultural setting.
4. Prepare candidates to believe that all children can learn and assume responsibility for their learning.
5. Prepare candidates who are able to design and integrate technology rich experiences based on the educational needs of children and to achieve educational goals in the classroom.
6. Prepare candidates to work with colleagues, children and communities of varied cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds.

The USCB Education Unit Conceptual Framework was developed with the input of all Education Faculty, and has evolved and been modified over time. In addition to the Education Faculty, input was requested and obtained from USCB faculty, staff, administration, education students, peer institution, public school principals, teachers, and members of the University of South Carolina Beaufort

Education Advisory Council, Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Research, USCB Arts & Science Faculty, representatives from the private sector, non-profit organizations, and members of the community. The Conceptual Framework has been used as a teaching document in Early Childhood Education Program courses and is emphasized in Senior Seminar, during the Internship experience.

The USCB Education Faculty challenge candidates to develop and acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to become Constructivist Educators who can nurture, communicate, facilitate, instruct, and grow as reflective professionals.

4.3 RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE BASE

Constructivist Educator as Nurturer

The Constructivist Educator as Nurturer must have a clear understanding of the vital role of the educator in developing positive, nurturing relationships with learners. Research demonstrates the importance of positive teacher-child relationships for learning. Understanding the critical elements involved in the successful construction of nurturing, and successful educator-learner relationships, must be fully achieved for the benefit of learners (Marshall, 1999). Vygotsky (1978) believed that development in the child required nurturing and is best remembered for his concepts of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding. These terms do not involve “pushing the child,” rather they describe a process of understanding the child and his or her developmental level; this provides a system in which the educator supports, facilitates, and nurtures the learning of the child. According to these theoretical concepts, educators can use activities and language to move the learner from one level of knowledge to the next. Bodrova & Leong (1996) criticized what they considered “...single perspective teaching models.” They wrote that the theory of Vygotsky, by providing the concept of scaffolding, was highly suitable for positive teaching results because it allowed the teacher to use his/her superior knowledge to guide the child. Rogoff (1990) described a process of “guided participation” in which the adult and learner collaborate together, making a connection that leads to learning, and stressed the active role that children take in connecting with the adult for social and educational guidance. Young children learn to understand themselves by interacting with others, especially parents and caregivers. (Rossi & Rossi, 1990) Children who have been nurtured from birth have fewer problems in school. (Shim, Felenr, & Shim, 2000). Noddings (1992) wrote about the need for all humans, at all stages of development, to “be cared for in the sense that we need to be understood, received, respected, and recognized” (p. xi). This understanding, respect and recognition form a foundation for the teacher-child relationship which allows the educator to facilitate the development of the learner in the learning process. Martin and Loomis (2006) wrote, “The constructivist teacher helps students make sense by helping each person attach the new information he already possess.”

In an environment of nurturing and connectedness, the Constructivist Educator is friendly and accessible to the child beyond the classroom walls, seeks a partnership with the learner's family, and does not expect all children to be the same. Most importantly, in a connected, nurturing classroom, the teacher makes learners feel "special." The environment of connectedness, along with the resulting connection between educator and child, are critical to the development of positive and successful curriculum (Marshall, 1999; Gibbs, 2000). Noddings (1995) wrote about the important role of educators in the lives of children and of the importance for them to take the time needed to develop nurturing relationships of trust with learners. Berk (2006) described the process in a constructivist classroom as an educator encouraging learners to discover through interactions with the environment.

In describing memorable teacher-child relationships, Fried (1995) wrote that "...of those who inspired us most, we remember what they cared about and that they cared about us and the person we might become." (p. 17). A curriculum which emphasizes caring is more likely to "...promote a shared learning process among children, parents, and teachers." (Swick, 1992, p. 2), resulting in family-centered schools, promoting connection between educators and children.

As Lumsden (1994) wrote about the importance of the classroom climate, "If students experience the classroom as a caring, supportive place where there is a sense of belonging and everyone is valued and respected, they will tend to participate more fully in the process of learning" (p. 2). Paley (1979) reinforced these ideas as she wrote, "The challenge in teaching is to find a way of communicating to each child the idea that his or her special quality is understood, is valued, and can be talked about" (p. xvi).

It is important for educators to be nurturing to one another, as well as with learners. A recent study of 369 South Carolina former public school teachers cited that the lack of nurturing support of teachers and students alike was the number one reason for both teacher attrition and student misbehavior (Eggen, 2003). In order for the Constructivist Educator to be successful, he or she must understand the vital importance of positive relationships with peers, learners and their families and be able to develop such relationships. Candidates are provided extensive opportunities for observation and practice in developing positive

classroom and school-home relationships during such course work as observations, service learning projects, family interviews, and practicum and internship experiences.

Constructivist Educator as Communicator

The Constructivist Educator as Communicator must develop considerable skill in communicating with learners, families, and peers, communicating in a clear and professional manner. Kramer (2003) wrote about the importance of the educator modeling proper language usage. Candidates develop communication skills in basic courses such as composition, literature, and public communication. These skills are also developed through a Resources for Teaching (technology) course, group and individual project presentations, presentations of lesson plans and units to other teacher candidates, and experiences in practicum and internship.

Lev Vygotsky (1962), a Russian psychologist and philosopher, is most frequently identified with the theory of social constructivism. Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky placed a central importance upon the role of social factors and interaction in the development of learning and knowledge. Vygotsky asserts that all learning progresses from the social level to the individual level, from the interpersonal to the intrapersonal. He believed contexts were important, and school experiences should be linked to out of school experiences. Vygotsky placed a strong emphasis on the role of language in the developmental process, believing that language and perception were linked from an early age. He wrote how egocentric speech (talking out loud to self) was very important in the development of the young child, as the child spanned the bridge between verbalization and the internal thought processes. Vygotsky theorized that schools should concentrate on what he called the third level of speech (internalization) because this level is the basis for higher cognitive functioning. The child uses inner speech to direct himself while others use socialized speech during assisted learning (Bodrova & Leong, 1996). An important role of the educator is to model socialized speech and communication skills for learners.

The Constructivist Educator as Communicator must have a clear understanding that the educational process works best when teachers and parents communicate freely, share ideas, and envision common goals for children. This is frequently a difficult process as teachers are transplanted from one social context to

another, bringing with them preconceived ideas which may not easily mesh with a new school and social environment (Marshall, 1999). Bronfenbrenner (1979) wrote extensively about the sets of widening contexts which include immediate and remote environments (physical and social) that affect human behavior across the species. The educator must navigate these contexts, communicating easily with children, parents, and peers, while modeling positive communication skills. The Constructivist Educator as Communicator emphasizes reading, writing, listening, and speaking in all curriculums.

The role of positive communication with parents and families cannot be emphasized enough. Duckworth (1996) believed that parents and educators could work together to best understand children by careful observation of children's lives. Tenorio (1995) emphasized the importance of using parents as a resource with an understanding that they are the child's first teacher, and see them as equals in the education of children. The Constructivist Educator as Communicator understands the critical importance of communication skills and strives to continually improve these skills.

Constructivist Educator as Reflective Professional

The Constructivist Educator as Reflective Professional continually reflects upon classroom practice, using these reflections to improve future practice. Dewey (1993) wrote, "Reflection is an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds supporting it and future conclusions to which it tends" (p. 6), further writing that the process of reflection should involve open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. Goodlad (1990) believed in the value of having educators and candidates reflect on teaching practice in order to make improvements in instruction, while Newman (1990) emphasized the need for reflection to be an ongoing process. Candidates are required to reflect in course journals throughout pre-professional and professional courses, to practice the reflective process as well as to develop reflective practice as a professional habit.

The Constructivist Educator as Reflective Professional will follow a path of lifelong learning to continuously develop and hone skills as a professional. As a professional, the educator will develop positive and communicative relationships with not only parents and learners, but also with community members, peers, and administrators. The Reflective Professional will attend seminars and professional conferences,

stay current on theory and education trends through reading and research, serve as a mentor to other educators, and use reflection to improve his/her own classroom instruction. Reflective professionals approach their classroom with a belief that they can use reflection to bring about positive change. To the reflective professional, improvement is a continual and ongoing process. Parsons and Brown (2002) state that reflective teachers know what they are doing, and why they decided to do it, but review what was done to improve classroom teaching. This review includes a self-evaluation of attitudes and dispositions toward the teaching/learning environment.

Candidates in the USCB Education Program develop a portfolio that reflects professional practice and development, are strongly encouraged to participate in the USCB Education Club, are required to attend professional conferences (and are required to do so during the internship seminar), must document reflections as a part of many course journals, are required to join a professional education organization and are strongly encouraged to present at professional conferences. Candidates also must demonstrate professionalism and professional growth as part of the South Carolina educator evaluation system, Assisting, Developing, & Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT). Candidates develop lesson plans and units according to ADEPT standards, receive in-depth ADEPT training, and are evaluated in internship according to ADEPT guidelines and disposition evaluations.

Constructivist Educator as Facilitator/Instructor

In order for the Constructivist Educator as Facilitator/Instructor to teach successfully, it is vital to have an understanding of how the minds of learners work and learn. According to the theory of constructivism, a child constructs knowledge from within, through interaction with the environment. Jean Piaget (1952) developed much of the theory behind our current understanding of the constructivist process, theorizing that the human being constructs his or her own reality, moving from an individual reality to a collective reality. For Piaget (1965, 1974), learning was an active and hands-on process conducted on an individual basis and involving adaptation to the environment through such processes as assimilation and accommodation. Through this process the learner develops a perspective of the world unique to his or her

own experiences (individual reality) before later using this knowledge to make a comparison with the knowledge of others (collective reality).

Piaget did not believe that maturation is a process of age only (the child did not get smarter just from becoming older), but emphasized the role of development in the learning process. Having begun his career as a biologist studying the mechanisms by which an organism adapts to its environment, Piaget saw the child as a “little scientist,” who learns from interaction with the environment. Piaget believed that the role of the adult was to stimulate the curiosity of the child. Piaget also felt children benefited more from interaction with peers than from interaction with adults and older children because of the unequal power involved. He theorized that the learner internalized his or her experiences, whether they involved the physical world or social interaction. Piaget identified four (4) factors necessary for the construction of knowledge: interaction with the physical world, social interaction, maturation, and equilibration (Sigel & Cocking, 1977).

Piaget (1978, 1985) described the development of the child in terms of developmental stages: sensor motor (infants and toddlers use their senses to construct knowledge about the world); preoperational (preschool-aged children need concrete experiences to learn and tend to be egocentric, have mental representations, can imitate, lack reversibility, and can recall); concrete operations (7-11 year old children learn reversibility and are able to sort and classify, but lack the abstract thinking ability of adults); and abstract logic (the thought capabilities of the child approach adult levels and the child is able to think at a level of complexity). Acknowledgement of these stages of development, along with developmental milestones, is required for candidates to plan, individualize, and implement curriculum.

Piaget has been criticized for his lack of emphasis on the role of social factors in learning, while Vygotsky has been criticized for his lack of emphasis on the role of nature. Recently, authors have emphasized the commonality between Piaget and Vygotsky, attempting to integrate their theories. High/Scope literature frequently points out the great influence of both Piaget and John Dewey (1916) in providing a theoretical basis for the widely used High/Scope Curriculum. Dewey believed that it was important for adults to make learning meaningful and interesting for children. According to Dewey, the

educator should keep the child stimulated by learning and take great precautions to prevent learning from becoming a blasé process. As with Piaget, Dewey saw education as being an active process. Rogoff (1990) believed that both Piaget and Vygotsky valued nature and nurture, environment and social factors, and differed only concerning the centrality of these ingredients. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) wrote extensively about the role of the educator in facilitating the learning of students by emphasizing the role of knowledgeable adults in scaffolding learners and expanding the zone of proximal development through meaningful interactions.

Successful instruction centers upon an understanding by the candidate that best practice in the classroom provides attention to developmental appropriateness of the curriculum, attention to individual differences and needs, and an understanding of social and cultural contexts (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The Constructivist Educator as Facilitator/Instructor needs to have a clear understanding of learning from the developmental perspective provided by theorists including not only Vygotsky and Piaget, but also Gardner (1993) and Erikson (1950). Candidates must be able to apply this knowledge as they plan and implement curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for learners. The Constructivist Educator as Facilitator/Instructor must also possess extensive knowledge about the individual needs of children, including learning styles and theories of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993). Candidates are additionally prepared to deal with diverse learners by extensive experiences in diverse settings for observations, service learning projects, practicum, and internship.

The Constructivist Educator as Facilitator/Instructor must be able to move beyond an understanding of learning theories to a substantial knowledge of the standards that determine what will be taught in the curriculum. Knowledge of the standards must be extensive in all content areas. Candidates' knowledge of standards must include a thorough understanding of the state of South Carolina standards and ways of planning instruction focused on facilitating children's acquisition of the desired knowledge.

In order to facilitate classroom learning, the Constructivist Educator as Facilitator/Instructor must possess strong classroom management skills that include a wide array of strategies to address the diverse needs and individual differences of learners (Hanson, 1998). Instruction can also not proceed successfully

without thoughtful and well-designed student assessment. Malaguzzi, (1998) wrote about the “...hundred languages of children” that candidates should be aware of as they design assessments to best gauge the present knowledge and potential of learners. Candidates use an array of technology and assessment techniques to assess student learning in practicum and internship including student journals, artifacts, portfolios, work samples, and audio and videotapes.

The USCB education faculty believes in the uniqueness of each learner and educational opportunity, along with diversity in learning styles and opportunities among children. We believe that the works of Piaget and Vygotsky are complimentary, and pulled from these and related constructivist theories, a stronger understanding of the diverse ways that learners acquire knowledge and how various learning opportunities set the stage for the construction of knowledge.

4.4 CANDIDATE PROFICIENCIES/OUTCOMES

The unit's vision, mission, philosophy, purposes and goals are realized through the candidate proficiencies aligned with professional, national and state standards. The candidates' proficiencies support the unit's conceptual framework, the Constructivist Educator.

The proficiencies are organized around the four educational standards of the Conceptual Framework; Nurturer, Communicator, Reflective Professional and Facilitator/Instructor. They include the knowledge (K), skills (S), and dispositions (D) we expect candidates to demonstrate.

Critical Tasks, utilized to provide evidence that candidates meet the expected proficiencies, are embedded in each pre-professional and professional program course.

The professional education program is committed to preparing constructivist educators who are nurturers, communicators, reflective professionals and facilitators.

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST EDUCATOR AS NURTURER:

- N-1. Demonstrate positive teacher-child relationships for learner and identify the uniqueness of each child.(D)*
- N-2. Demonstrate positive relationships and seek partnerships with families of learners. (D)*
- N-3. Demonstrate knowledge of the development of children and support facilitate, and nurture the learning of children.(K)*

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST EDUCATOR AS COMMUNICATOR:

- C-1. Communicate effectively with children, parents, peers and community using a variety of communication skills which includes verbal and nonverbal techniques, writing, technology, and media. (S,D))*

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST EDUCATOR AS REFLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL:

- R-1. Reflect on classroom practice, using these reflections to improve future practice and classroom instruction. (K,S,D)*
- R-2. Demonstrate a dedication to lifelong learning. (D)*

R-3. Demonstrate knowledge of education theory and trends through reading, research and attendance at professional conferences. (K)

R-4. Serve as a professional mentor and role model to other educators. (D)

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST EDUCATOR AS FACILITATOR / INSTRUCTOR

F/I-1. Identify the principles of constructivism as well as other learning theories. (K)

F/I-2. Demonstrate best practice in the classroom, including age-appropriate practice, individually appropriate practice, and practice that is socially and culturally appropriate. (S)

F/I-3. Demonstrate local, state, and national standards and their application to the curriculum. (K,S)

F/I-4. Demonstrate classroom management skills that include a wide array of strategies.(S)

F/I-5. Recognize and respond to the diverse needs and individual differences of learners and design appropriate assessments. (S)

**4.4a USCB EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ASSESSMENT
ALIGNED WITH SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
ADEPT STANDARDS AND NAEYC STANDARDS**

USCB Standards/Proficiencies	SC Standards (ADEPT)	NAEYC Standards
<p style="text-align: center;">Nurturer</p> <p><i>N-1. Demonstrate positive teacher-child relationships for learners and identify the uniqueness of each child.(D)</i></p> <p><i>N-2. Develop positive relationships and seek partnerships with families of learners(D)</i></p> <p><i>N-3. Demonstrate knowledge of the development of children and support, facilitate and nurture the learning of children.(K)</i></p> <hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining an environment that promotes learning. • Managing the classroom. • Promoting content for learners. • Monitoring, assessing and enhancing learning. • Fulfilling professional responsibilities. <hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting child development and learning. • Building family and community relationships. • Observing, documenting and assessing to support young children. • Teaching and learning. <hr/>
<p style="text-align: center;">Communicator</p> <p><i>C-1. Communicate effectively with children, parents, peers and community using a variety of communication skills, including verbal and non-verbal techniques, writing, technology and media.(S)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using instructional strategies to facilitate learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building family and community relationships. • Becoming a professional.

**4.4a (continued). USCB EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ASSESSMENT
ALIGNED WITH SOUTH CAROLINA STATE ADEPT STANDARDS
AND NAEYC STANDARDS**

USCB Standards/Proficiencies	SC Standards (ADEPT)	NAEYC Standards
<p>Reflective Professional</p> <p><i>R-1. Reflect on classroom practice, using these reflections to improve future practice and classroom instruction. (K,S,D)</i></p> <p><i>R-2. Demonstrate a dedication to lifelong learning.(D)</i></p> <p><i>R-3. Demonstrate knowledge of educational theory and trends through reading and research and attendance at professional conferences.(K)</i></p> <p><i>R-4. Serve as a professional mentor and role model to other educators.(D)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-range planning. • Short-range planning of instruction. • Planning assessments and using data. • Establishing and maintaining high expectations for learners. • Fulfilling professional responsibilities. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-range planning. • Short-range planning instruction. • Planning assessments and using data. • Establishing and maintaining high expectations for learners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing, documenting and assessing to support young children and families. • Teaching and learning. • Becoming a professional. <hr/>
<p>Facilitator/Instructor</p> <p><i>F/I-1. Identify the principles of constructivism as well as many other learning theories.(K)</i></p> <p><i>F/I-2. Exhibit best practice in the classroom, including age-appropriate practice, individually appropriate practice, and practice that is socially and culturally appropriate.(S)</i></p> <p><i>F/I-3. Demonstrate local, state, and national standards and their application to the curriculum.</i></p> <p><i>F/I-4. Demonstrate classroom management skills that include a wide array of strategies.</i></p> <p><i>F/I-5. Recognize and respond to the diverse needs and individual differences of learners and designs appropriate assessments.(S)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing content for learners. • Using instructional strategies to facilitate learning. • Managing the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting child development and learning. • Building family and community relationships. • Observing, documenting and assessing to support young children and families. • Teaching and learning.

4.5 ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Candidate assessment is a layered process driven by the elements and proficiencies of the Conceptual Framework aligned with NCATE standards, South Carolina state standards (ADEPT), and NAEYC standards. Candidates begin this process taking Level I (Pre-Professional) courses where they are assessed at the Entry Level. When the candidates progress to Level II (Professional Program) courses, they are assessed at the Intermediate Level; during Level III (Internship) they are assessed at the Advanced Level; Level IV (Program Completion) candidates are assessed at the certification or licensure level.

Desired candidate proficiencies are indicated in course syllabi. Candidate performance in relation to the desired student outcomes is measured by Critical Tasks supported by course assignments and assessments. Critical Tasks provide evidence of candidate competencies of the desired outcomes based on the rubric evaluation of the product (artifact) required by the Critical Task assignment.

Critical Tasks as a collection of assignments are designed to address NCATE standards, as well as South Carolina state standards (ADEPT) and NAEYC standards related to content knowledge, skills, dispositions, and diversity. Each Critical Task is related to a competency to be attained by the candidate. Candidates can not pass a course or a field experience without receiving an evaluation of “acceptable” or “target” on the Critical Task.

Candidate assessment, both internal and external to the institution and program, includes multiple assessments of proficiencies. Internally, various tasks will assess the same proficiency but from different perspectives. All assessments are made based on clearly defined evidence products (artifacts) each candidate produces. These evidence products are identified in the course syllabi, tracked during the candidate’s enrollment in the program, and evaluated to determine the candidate’s growth toward the development of teacher qualities identified in the Conceptual Framework elements and proficiencies. Evidence products labeled Critical Tasks measure candidate completion of proficiencies, must be completed successfully as determined by rubric evaluation in order for the student to progress through the degree program.

Externally, the Praxis I test is an assessment that determines candidate entry into the professional program. The Praxis II test determines entry into Internship and the Praxis II and PLT tests are used in the candidate assessment process developed by the Education Unit. A fourth state mandated assessment is the state of South Carolina ADEPT program. This assessment process is introduced to the candidates at the beginning of the Professional Program and culminates in a state of South Carolina ADEPT evaluation of each candidate during Internship. This evaluation must be successfully completed to achieve program completion status.

4.5a PROGRAM TRANSITION POINTS AND PROFICIENCIES ASSESSMENT

Entry Benchmarks	Transition Point	Standards	Assessments Internal/External
<p style="text-align: center;">Level I (Pre-Professional)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acceptance to the University. 2. Completion of a minimum 46 hours of required USCB general education courses as identified in the Education Department Program of Study. 3. Education majors must see advisor for signed approval. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Level I (Pre-Professional)</p> <p>Open to all students meeting University entrance requirements.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level I (Pre-Professional)</p> <p>Nurturer N1, N2, N3</p> <p>Communicator C1</p> <p>Reflective Professional R3</p> <p>Facilitator/Instructor F1, F2, F3, F4, F5</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level I (Pre-Professional)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Internal</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level I Constructivist Paper.(N1, F1) 2. Level I Lesson Plan. (F2, F3, F4) 3. Technology. (C1) 4. Parent and Family Interview. (N2, N3, C1) 5. Group Project/ Special Education. (F5) 6. Level I Education Philosophy Paper. (N3, R3) <p style="text-align: center;"><i>External</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Praxis I or SAT or ACT test results.

Entry Benchmarks	Transition Point	Standards	Assessments Internal/External
<p style="text-align: center;">Level II (Professional)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 in all courses. 2. Completion of all general education requirements and Level I education courses with a 3.0 GPA in education courses. 3. Grades of “C” or better in English 101 and 102, Speech Communications, and Math 221 and 222. 4. Submission of Professional Program Application by required deadline: Fall; March or July 15th Spring; October 15th. 5. Approval of Professional Program Application by the USCB Education Committee. 6. Passing scores on all three sections of Praxis I or the required state of South Carolina SAT or ACT score. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Level II (Professional)</p> <p>Open only to education majors who have been accepted to the Professional Program and non-education majors by special permission.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level II (Professional)</p> <p>Nurturer N1,N3</p> <p>Communicator C1</p> <p>Reflective Professional R3</p> <p>Facilitator/instructor F1, F2, F3, F4, F5</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level II (Professional)</p> <p><i>Internal</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level II Constructivist Paper. (N1, F1) 2. Group Curriculum Project. (N3, C1, F2) 3. Diversity Lesson Plan. F1, F5) 4. Reading Practicum Evaluation and Observation Notebook. (F3, F5) 5. Reading Diagnostic Report. (F3, F5) 6. Math and Science Thematic Unit. (N3, F3) 7. Social Studies and Creative Activities Practicum Evaluation and Observation Notebook. (N3, C1, F3, F4) 8. Language Arts Thematic Unit. (N3, C1, F3) <p><i>External</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Praxis II. (N1-F5) 2. Fingerprint and teacher certification application.

Entry Benchmarks	Transition Point	Standards	Assessments Internal/External
<p style="text-align: center;">Level IV (Program Completion)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Required 2.5 GPA. 2. Passing score on portfolio. 3. Recommendation for certification from University supervisor and cooperating teacher. 4. Passing score on ADEPT evaluation. 5. Passing score on state mandated Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) exam. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Level IV (Program Completion)</p> <p>Open only to students who have completed all requirements for Level III and have been approved for acceptance by the Education Committee.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level IV (Program Completion)</p> <p>Reflective Professional R2, R4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level IV (Program Completion)</p> <p><i>Internal</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommendation for graduation. (R2, R4) 2. Recommendations for Certification. <p><i>External</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) Exam. (R2, R4) 2. South Carolina Department of Education Application for Certification.

4.5b ANTI-BIAS ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Vigilance against bias in assessment is an important and ongoing process to ensure all students are evaluated equally and fairly. This is accomplished by establishing multiple points of evaluation through different evaluators including self assessment by the candidates. The multiple points of assessment include internal items such as Critical Tasks that are scored by department approved rubrics, gates to program progression identified as “levels” with published criteria, and layered evaluations that chart the progress of candidates in achieving proficiency levels. External assessments such as the Praxis I and II are standardized assessments with established validity, reliability, and predictive values.

During internship, assessments come from three sources; the university supervisor, the cooperating teacher, and the candidate. All three assessments are compared for consistency with any anomalies addressed.

4.5c EXAMPLE OF INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Central to the Education Unit is an understanding of constructivism. Like most complex concepts this is not an understanding that usually is fully developed on first exposure. Therefore, it is the intent of the faculty that this concept be taught in modules called critical tasks. These critical tasks are taught in education courses and measured over time as the candidate passes through the degree program. More importantly, assessments are set at each level to monitor the candidate’s progress toward the development of understanding of Constructivism. Level I, the Critical Task is the Constructivist Paper I. At Level II, the Critical Task is the Constructivist Paper II. The Level II Constructivist Paper II assesses for an understanding of constructivism at this level. For Level III, the Critical Task that addresses Constructivism is the portfolio.

What follows is an example of the conceptual understanding of constructivism and how it is established and tracked through the early childhood education program. This progression begins with at a

basic level of understanding, culminating in a demonstrated ability to design and implement learning activities for students that promote constructivism.

Level I

Critical Task: Constructivist Paper I

Syllabus Objective: Each student will be able to define and explain constructivism.

Syllabus Assignment: Each student will write a paper on constructivism. Credit for the course will not be given until the student earns a grade of “acceptable” on this assignment. The scoring criteria for this assignment is as follows:

Syllabus Rubric:

Critical Task	Unacceptable Score 0	Acceptable Score 1	Target Score 2
Constructivist Paper I	No understanding of Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s theories is evident. The student is unable to make a connection between interaction with the environment and constructivism. There is no distinction between individual and social construction.	Information and comparisons of Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s theories is not complete. An understanding of individual and social construction is present at a developing level. Individual and social construction are identified, but not fully explained. A connection with interaction in the environment and the construction of knowledge is present at a beginning stage.	Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s theories are clearly identified, compared, and contrasted. Individual and social constructions are explained and the differences identified. An explanation of how an individual constructs knowledge through interaction with the environment is present.

Level II

Critical Task: Constructivist Paper II

Syllabus Objective: Each student will be able to write a descriptive essay on constructivism and how it is implemented in the early childhood classroom.

Syllabus Assignment: Each student will write an essay of at least 500 words explaining constructivism and how it is implemented in the early childhood classroom.

Syllabus Rubric:

Critical Task	Unacceptable Score 0	Acceptable Score 1	Target Score 2
Constructivist Paper II	Explanation equivalent to Level I understanding at the acceptable level.	Expands on Level I acceptable explanation. Discussion of individual and social constructivism includes definitions and how the two complement each other. Examples of classroom constructivist activities are included.	Explanations of individual and social constructivism are detailed and complete. How these two forms of constructivism compliment each other is thoroughly explained with specific examples of constructivist classroom examples and how they can be implemented in the classroom.

Level III

Critical Task: Portfolio for Senior Seminar

Syllabus Objective: The goals and objectives of this course are designed to facilitate the candidate's development as a Constructivist Practitioner. This course is the culmination of the teacher preparation program and will focus on the synthesis of the Constructivist Practitioner as noted in the USCB Early Childhood Education Unit's Conceptual Framework, which includes external NAEYC standards.

Syllabus Assignment: Complete portfolio

Syllabus Rubric:

Critical Task	Unacceptable Score 0	Acceptable Score 1	Target Score 2
1. Candidate will produce a satisfactory resume with appropriate additional personal information as per course instructions (resume must be approved by Academic Success Center Director).	Resume and additional personal information are unclear, not prepared as per course instructions, poorly organized, and/or not free of grammatical and typographical errors.	Resume and additional personal information are clear, prepared as per course instructions, well-organized, and free of grammatical and typographical errors.	Candidate's resume and additional information not only meet all "acceptable" conditions, but also are appealing and compelling as a voice as to why this candidate should be hired as an early childhood Constructivist Educator.
2. Candidate will include a well-thought out and well-written Philosophy of Education paper as per course requirements (5 or more pages, APA style, etc.) Philosophy paper must be organized according to and address each of the above 4 major elements of the USCB Constructivist Educator.	Paper not well-planned and well-written, is not free of major grammatical and typographical errors, does not meet course requirements (5 or more pages, APA style, etc.); is not clearly organized around the major elements of the USCB Conceptual Framework.	Paper is well-planned and well-written; free of major grammatical and typographical errors, meets all course requirements (5 or more pages, APA style, etc.); is clearly organized around the major elements of the USCB Conceptual Framework.	In addition to requirements for an acceptable paper, candidate's writing demonstrates exemplary writing and expression ability, as well as strong indications of self-reflection as a Constructivist Educator.

<p>3. Candidate will summarize each of the five (5) NAEYC Standards, explain his/her rationale for selection of artifacts that exemplify the elements of each standard, and attach appropriate artifacts.</p>	<p>Candidate does not offer a summary of his/her understanding of each standard, demonstrates a lack of clear understanding or an inability to offer a rationale for selection of appropriate artifacts, and/or does not include appropriate artifacts.</p>	<p>Candidate completes a summary of his/her understanding of each standard, demonstrates a clear understanding of the standard and an ability to offer a rationale for selection of appropriate artifacts, and includes appropriate artifacts.</p>	<p>Candidate demonstrates a strong understanding of each NAEYC Standard and attaches strong artifacts that clearly represent both the standards and the candidate's understanding of them.</p>
<p>4. Professional Portfolio will be well-organized and include a table of contents.</p>	<p>Portfolio lacks clear organization or a table of contents.</p>	<p>Portfolio starts with a table of contents and flows with clear organization.</p>	<p>Portfolio demonstrates an exemplary level of planning and organization.</p>
<p>5. The Professional Portfolio will contain visuals to create interest and enhance the narrative of the document. Information is included that documents the source of the pictures and other visuals.</p>	<p>No visual enhancements are included.</p>	<p>There are a few visuals that are largely unrelated to specific content in the portfolio</p>	<p>The portfolio contains visuals that are directly linked to the content of the portfolio.</p>
<p>6. Candidate's lesson plans and learning activities will reflect the Constructivist approach.</p>	<p>No indication of active involvement of learners in the learning environment.</p>	<p>Learners are involved in learning activities.</p>	<p>Learners are involved in learning activities, have time for reflection of new construction with opportunities for social interaction.</p>

Level IV

Reaching Level IV Indicates that candidates have fulfilled all university educational requirements, including Critical Tasks. Critical Tasks and other course assignments are designed to require candidates to produce artifacts that can be identified and measured while reflecting the qualities of each element or proficiency. The elements and proficiencies identify the teacher qualities the faculty believes are essential to becoming a professional educator. Objectives are based on the constructivist philosophy of active involvement in the learning process.

4.5d CANDIDATE PROGRESSION

It is the Constructivist view that “...new learning depends on current understanding...” (Eggen & Kauchak, 2004). For this reason, the Early Childhood Education Program (ECEP) in the Education Unit has four (4) levels, with each level acting as a gate for program progression. After completing the general education requirements, ECEP majors must complete four (4) levels of academic requirements. The complete program of study may be viewed at <http://www.uscb.edu>.

Level I

The pre-professional sequence may be taken by education majors and non-education majors. The courses in this sequence are foundation and introductory courses. These courses provide declarative knowledge for the procedural knowledge courses in Level II. At this level, candidates construct their base knowledge of child development, pedagogy, knowledge of public education systems, along with knowledge of families, children’s literature, and the process of constructivism.

Social interaction learning environments such as cooperative learning and group projects are used at this level to foster the constructivist process. Candidates compare their construction of concepts and competencies through interaction with other candidates and faculty. Learning activities such as writing a philosophy of education allow candidates to exchange ideas and construct or reconstruct their own views.

At Level I, candidates construct a basis for assimilating and accommodating new information necessary for Level II. It is on this knowledge base that candidates will compare qualitatively new information focused towards constructing knowledge, skills, and dispositions at a higher level.

Level II

The professional sequence of courses at this level may only be taken by education majors after they have completed all requirements for the professional program and their application for the program has been approved by a faculty committee.

At Level II, instruction progresses from primarily declarative knowledge to a focus on procedural knowledge. At Level II, the clinical courses give the candidates hands-on, active involvement in classrooms through practicum requirements. This begins the application of teacher candidates' knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the real-life setting of the classroom. This supports the Constructivist belief that "...the most meaningful learning occurs within real-world tasks." (Eggen, P. & Kauchak, D., 2004).

This level provides increased opportunities for candidate interaction with diverse populations. The school districts where practicum and internship placements are made provide candidates with interaction opportunities with students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The following chart¹ indicates the ethnic breakdown of each district served by the USCB Education Program with Hispanics constituting a significant portion of the "other" column.

Diversity Chart¹

School District	African-American	Caucasian	Other
Beaufort	40.7%	45.9%	13.3%
Colleton	57.3%	39.9%	2.8%
Hampton 1	55.1%	43.7%	1.3%
Hampton 2	95.1%	2.1%	2.8%
Jasper	74.7%	13.1%	12.3%

¹ Data for Diversity Chart from the "South Carolina Education Profiles" for school year 2003-04.

Level III

The internship level can not be entered until all requirements have been satisfied for Level II. Passing scores must be attained on state-required exams, and the candidate's application for internship must be approved by a faculty committee. The internship is the logical extension and culmination of the clinical experience. This capstone experience requires the candidate to demonstrate his/her ability to conduct learning activities in a well managed classroom environment based on the content knowledge, skills, and dispositions he/she has constructed. It is only through the demonstration of mastered competencies will the candidate be recommended for licensure.

Level IV

The fourth and final level focuses on candidate completion of all state mandated requirements, verification of all required recommendations, verification of passing scores on all internship requirements, completion of all university requirements for graduation, and completion of the certification application process.

SUMMARY

The mission of USCB is to serve the people of the Lowcountry of South Carolina. In accordance with the University's mission, the Education Unit's mission is to prepare professional educators and act as a resource for school districts in the region. This mission will be accomplished by providing a teacher preparation program that follows our conceptual framework and culminates with constructivist educators who are effective Nurturers, Communicators, Reflective Professionals, and Facilitators.

Constant monitoring of teacher candidates in a fair and impartial manner helps to prepare highly qualified, caring individuals to serve the families, children, and schools throughout the region.

Leading by example, the USCB Education Department faculty and staff act as a bridge, connecting the community, school districts, and families of the region to the resources of the academic community.

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