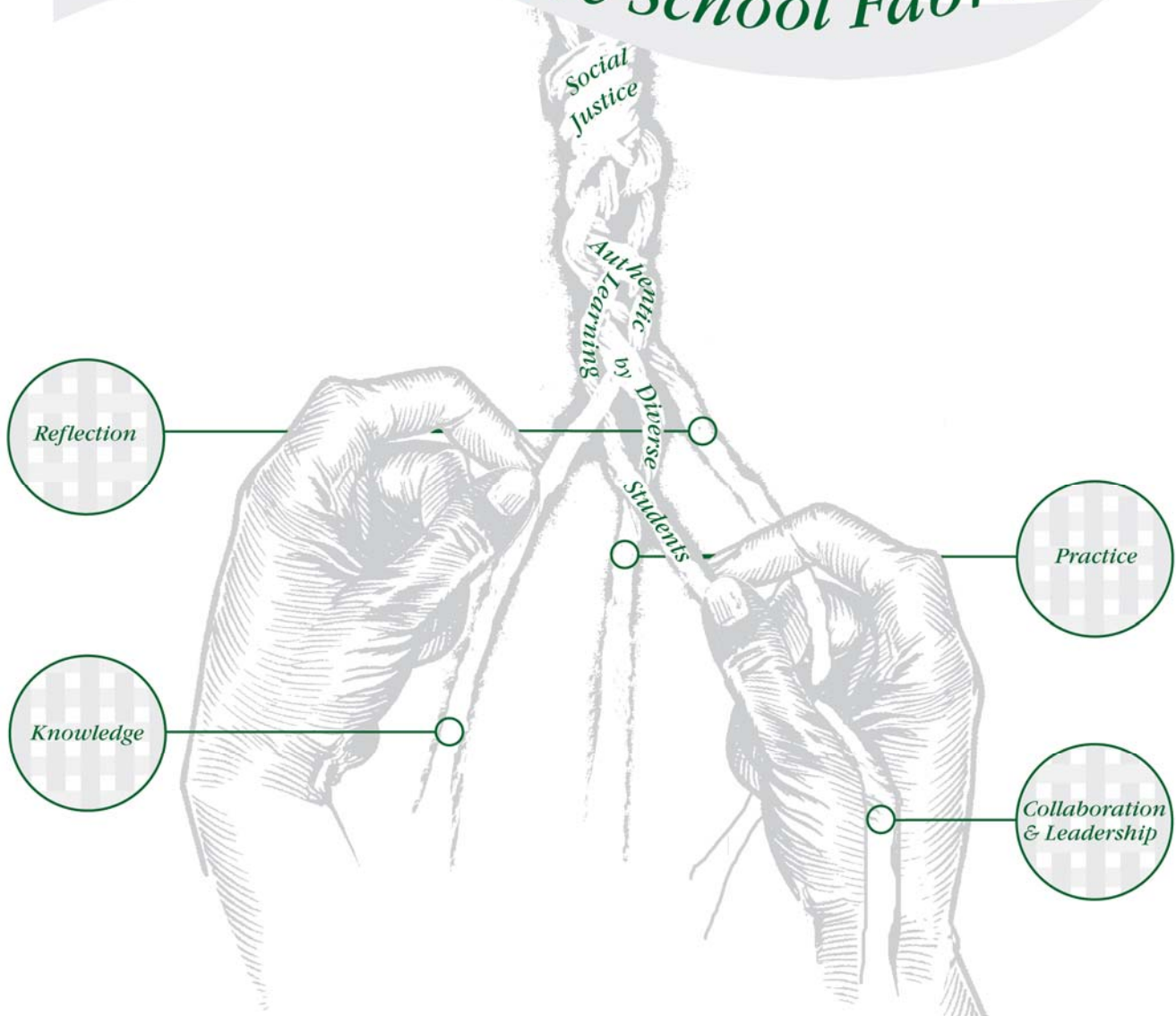


# WEAVING

*a Transformative School Fabric*



## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

School of Education

State University of New York at Oswego

June 2006

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

*Weaving a Transformative School Fabric*

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# SUNY Oswego ❖ School of Education

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### *Weaving a Transformative School Fabric*

#### Introduction

*Weaving a Transformative School Fabric* is the theme that undergirds the Conceptual Framework for all professional programs in SUNY Oswego's School of Education (SOE). Our faculty members use this Conceptual Framework in the design of curricula at both the initial and advanced levels endorsing these six principles that are central to the above stated overarching tenet:

- ❖ **Authentic Learning**
- ❖ **Knowledge**
- ❖ **Practice**
- ❖ **Reflection**
- ❖ **Collaboration & Leadership**
- ❖ **Social Justice**

During the initial design of the Conceptual Framework, which preceded our spring 2001 NCATE visit by several years, the entire faculty and staff of the SOE participated in a multi-year collaborative process (1997 – 2000) that entailed: professional retreats; an examination of scholarly and professional references; self-reflection essays related to learning, teaching, counseling, administration, and related educational activities; focus group conversations with candidates, P-12 colleagues, and SUNY Oswego's campus community members; and a review of our SOE mission statement. During this process, we first adopted and fully endorsed the current version of our Conceptual Framework in December 1998. We determined that the role of schools is to promote authentic learning by all students. The role of educators in meeting that goal is to function as socially conscious catalysts for change who create and sustain school environments where excellence is cherished and social justice flourishes.

The tenet of *Weaving a Transformative School Fabric* defines a professional perspective that is learning-centered and knowledge based, achieved through a thoughtful sequence of content and pedagogy courses, and integrated field experiences. The act of weaving a braid (as shown on the cover of this document) is a visual metaphor for the interactive, recursive and transformative nature of the learning and teaching process. Educators continually weave strands of knowledge, practice, reflection, collaboration & leadership, thus creating a complex braided school fabric wherein authentic learning is an everyday reality for diverse students. As is depicted in our Conceptual Framework illustration, concern for social justice anchors the entire educational process; it is therefore drawn as the knot at the top of the braid.

SUNY Oswego's SOE strives to produce graduates who can provide meaningful opportunities and appropriate support for all students to engage in authentic learning, by which we mean self-directed inquiry, problem solving, critical thinking, and reflection in both real world and creative contexts. The emphasis on **all** students implies special sensitivity to the unique characteristics and needs of each of the diverse individuals who are students in the urban, suburban, and rural schools of New York State.

We believe that educating (i.e., teaching, guiding, leading) for authentic learning, knowledge, practice, reflection, collaboration & leadership, and social justice are the essential characteristics of and performance expectations for effective educational and successful professionals:

- ❖ **Authentic Learning** – Educators must provide meaningful opportunities and appropriate support for all students to engage in self-directed inquiry, problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflection in real world and creative contexts.
- ❖ **Knowledge** – Educators must have a deep understanding of the organizing concepts, processes and attitudes that comprise the disciplinary knowledge base (including the NYS Learning Standards), the pedagogical knowledge base, and the pedagogical content knowledge base.
- ❖ **Practice** – Educators must have a rich repertoire of research-based strategies for instruction, assessment, and use of educational technologies, focused on promoting authentic learning by all students.
- ❖ **Reflection** – Educators must continually assess and reflect upon their professional practice in order to change and grow as life-long learners.

- ❖ **Collaboration & Leadership** – Educators must continually seek opportunities to work together, learn from one another, forge partnerships, and assume positions of responsibility and leadership.
- ❖ **Social Justice** – Educators are socially conscious catalysts for change who promote authentic learning by all students.

Since our spring 2001 NCATE visit, the SOE's faculty and staff members have re-affirmed their commitment to our robust and powerful Conceptual Framework:

❖ *Weaving a Transformative School Fabric* ❖

Through a series of cross-departmental writing team exercises, and both departmental and unit-wide interactive meetings, beginning in spring 2004 through fall 2005, we refined, articulated and adapted Conceptual Framework language relative to each program and within individual courses. Toward the end of this time period of critical reflection, each department's faculty members completed a comprehensive Conceptual Framework review in an effort to examine ways in which the individual principles in the Conceptual Framework are specifically reflected in their curriculum, field experiences, instruction, and candidate assessments. This exercise also required departments to describe the ways they communicate with and acquire feedback from their candidates and wider professional community (e.g., Arts & Sciences faculty, school personnel, P-12 colleagues, etc) about our Conceptual Framework and its principles. The products of these reviews reinforced our unit-wide dedication to and understanding of the SOE's Conceptual Framework: *Weaving a Transformative School Fabric*.

Our Conceptual Framework reflects the values and experiences of the 80 or more full time and part time faculty and staff of the SOE. It precisely represents not only what we want our graduates to be able to do as professionals, but also what we as a faculty intend to model in our classrooms, laboratories, and in the field with our current candidates. In part, it reflects the current emphasis on excellence in the learning-centered education programs at SUNY Oswego. However, its insistence on authentic learning and an overarching concern for social justice remain laudable goals that stretch us, compelling us to be continually striving for improvement in all aspects of our program offerings.

## Shared Vision & Coherence

### School of Education Vision Statement

May 2002; Revised May 2003

SUNY Oswego has an exemplary School of Education (SOE), that maintains NCATE accreditation status and is characterized by:

- ❖ **Diverse graduates who are responsive to changing instructional settings and stakeholder expectations** as a result of meeting rigorous SOE and national standards, receiving timely and effective individualized assessments, and experiencing excellent instruction with integrated field placements in programs that are regularly assessed and improved;
- ❖ **An exceptional and diverse faculty of teacher-scholars** who exhibit an esprit de corps as they collaborate with their extensive professional community; and
- ❖ **Communication and collaboration** promoted by cross-departmental and cross-institutional organizational structures that advocate for autonomy, optimal allocation of resources, and state-of-the-art facilities and physical space.

The SOE's dean designed and coordinated a two-day administrative retreat during the spring of 2002. All members of the SOE's administrative team, with the exception of our Field Placement Coordinator due to illness, worked with an external consultant to first develop and then articulate our unit's vision statement – this process involved reviewing action plans created by the SOE's five standing committees (Field Placement, Assessment, Diversity, Instructional Technology, Professional Development School Policy), and identifying numerous goals, objectives and program initiatives upon which various individuals or groups of faculty were working. The resultant vision statement was presented to the entire faculty and staff and to members of our professional community in the fall of 2002.

During the spring of 2003, the SOE's dean asked faculty members to respond to a survey titled "Building Departmental & Unit Identity" (adapted from Sullivan, 2003). This exercise was designed to probe the strengths and weaknesses of the SOE and its

individual departments and programs. The dean met with each department to gather feedback relative to the vision statement. There was broad support across the unit for the vision's three goals, and a clear consensus for retaining the name of the unit as the *School of Education* rather than changing it to the *College of Education & Allied Professions* as originally proposed by the administrative team during their spring 2002 retreat.

In our continuing quest to achieve the goals of the SOE's vision statement, we make the constructivist assumption that education candidates in all programs enter with significant content and pedagogical knowledge resulting from many years of formal schooling and myriad life experiences. As candidates in the initial programs complete general education requirements, discipline and education courses, and field experiences, they are encouraged to challenge their assumptions about authentic learning and social justice. They are given many opportunities to enrich their understanding of the interwoven nature of knowledge and practice through reflection and collaboration. The productive and integrative use of instructional technology to foster authentic learning and critical inquiry is emphasized and modeled by faculty in all programs. Candidates have numerous occasions to apply their emerging ideas about social justice and authentic learning for all students in a series of diverse field placements.

As candidates proceed into our advanced programs leading to a master's degree or certificate of advanced study, we expect a greater level of sophistication in thought and action for each of the six Conceptual Framework principles: authentic learning, knowledge, practice, reflection, collaboration & leadership, and social justice. Specifically, we challenge advanced candidates to apply their reflective assessment skills to identify specialized areas of knowledge and practice where they have an interest in and desire for improving their collaboration and leadership skills. Participating in various leadership roles and processes that are replete with novelty, difficulty, conflict and disappointment is often the source of the challenge needed for leadership development (Reeves, 2006). These advanced competencies and abilities are most fully learned and expressed as candidates complete an internship, project, or thesis, which are options for the capstone activity required in all of the SOE's advanced programs.

The SOE's Conceptual Framework provides a useful and effective template for the coherent design of program evaluation and candidate assessment. For each of the six

principles in our Conceptual Framework, we have identified candidate outcomes which form the basis for continuous review of programs, courses and candidates.

- ❖ **Authentic Learning** – Candidates provide opportunities for all stakeholders to engage in self-directed inquiry, problem-solving, critical thinking, and reflection in real world and creative contexts, as evidenced by: lesson and unit plans, written analyses, observations, samples of student work, and other descriptions of student or client outcomes; and effective real world practice validated by faculty and school personnel.
- ❖ **Knowledge** – Candidates demonstrate a deep understanding of the organizing concepts, processes and attitudes that comprise the discipline, pedagogical, and pedagogical content knowledge bases through high quality performance in content and professional courses, as exemplified by: written assignments, reflection, discussions, projects, portfolios, standardized exams, and real world practice.
- ❖ **Practice** – Candidates facilitate authentic learning by applying in real world venues a variety of developmentally appropriate, research-based, well-executed strategies for instruction, collaboration, and assessment using suitable educational technology (e.g., software packages for career counseling, adaptive technologies, assessment of diet and nutrition, global energy resources), and exemplified by: written assignments, journals, and real world practice.
- ❖ **Reflection** – Candidates continuously assess and reflect upon their professional practice in order to change and grow as lifelong learners, as evidenced by: written assignments, discussions, portfolios, functional behavioral assessments, issue analyses, and enhanced real world practice over time.
- ❖ **Collaboration & Leadership** – Candidates work productively together, demonstrate interactive learning, forge partnerships, and assume increasingly more responsible leadership roles to enhance learning within educational institutions and organizations, as examined through: alumni surveys, employer surveys and interviews, service to professional associations, and pursuit of graduate degrees.
- ❖ **Social Justice** – Candidates are socially conscious catalysts for change who promote authentic learning by students, as evidenced in: written assignments, discussions, projects, portfolios, lesson plans and real world practice. Decision making processes are informed by candidates' concerns for social justice as they become advocates for all learners, pro-actively addressing injustice within and beyond the classroom/laboratory/organization.

## Knowledge Base for Oswego's Conceptual Framework

### Authentic Learning

Learners must be able to apply their knowledge in new settings. Educators who empower students in educational settings to make connections to how knowledge is applied in real world situations foster such authentic learning. Maina (2004) discussed faculty and graduate student perceptions of the nature of authentic learning, identifying these components to include: activities mimic real world situations, learning takes place in meaningful situations that are extensions of the learner's world, and the learner is at the center of instruction. Several themes related to authentic learning are discussed in this section: 1) open-ended inquiry, thinking skills, and metacognition; 2) real-world problem solving that mimics the work of professionals in the discipline with presentation of findings to audiences beyond the classroom; 3) discourse and reflection by candidates in a community of learners; and 4) empowerment of learners through choice to direct their own learning in relevant project work.

**Inquiry & Critical Thinking.** Science is advanced through experimental and theoretical inquiry in which investigators engage in asking questions, conducting studies, drawing conclusions, revising theories, and communicating results to others; therefore, science teaching and learning should reflect the scientific process of knowledge construction. Such inductive teaching strategies also apply to the humanities, the arts, the social sciences and mathematics. Students subsequently learn through discovery, including inquiry training, concept attainment, the learning cycle, concept formation, unguided inquiry, and cooperative learning (Guillaume, 2004).

For example, traditional mathematics problems presented to students have merely required students to apply a known procedure, minimizing the need for interpretation. In contrast, authentic mathematical tasks provide realistic and complex mathematical data, address a wide range of background knowledge and skills, and often require solvers to use different representations in their solutions (Forman and Steen, 2000; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), 2000). Examples of such rich problems are *model-eliciting problems* (Lesh, Hoover, Hole, Kelly, & Post, 1999) that adhere to the following principles: personal meaningfulness to students; construction, refinement, or

extension of a model; self-evaluation; documentation of mathematical thinking; useful prototype for other structurally similar problems; and generalization to a broader range of situations.

In the field of literacy education, expert readers employ similar thought processes: using prior knowledge to set reading goals, thinking strategically, following intentions to the end of a passage, monitoring comprehension, and reflecting on the author's purpose (Block, 2004). Teachers, therefore, must model these thinking processes to assist less-able readers (Israel, 2002; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Effective think-alouds by the teachers can increase students' comprehension, vocabulary, decoding, and fluency and have these components: overview of text, identification of important information, connection to author's big idea, activation of related prior knowledge, putting oneself in the book, revising prior ideas and predicting, noticing the author's writing style, determining word meanings, asking questions, recognizing novelty, relating the book to one's life and anticipating use of new knowledge (Block and Israel, 2004). Elementary teachers can motivate students by relaying their passion for literature, providing exciting alternatives to traditional book reports, finding relevant books, bringing in guest speakers, and enlisting family support, while secondary teachers should take time for read aloud, mentor students, give choices, and promote reading as recreation (Powell-Brown, 2004).

Similarly, metacognition - thinking about one's own thinking, can provide effective self-assessment in vocational education (Scott, 2000) in which students determine limits of their knowledge (Fogarty, 1994) and assess their personal responsibilities along with attitudes toward goals of the work (Burke, 1994). Research shows students who were exposed to metacognitive instruction with cooperative learning outperformed counterparts who had no metacognitive instruction (Kramarski, Mevarech, & Arami, 2002).

Art education can foster healthier lifestyles when students use thinking skills to deconstruct the visual and textual information in media advertisements (Chung, 2005). Correspondingly effective technology instruction applies "technology to develop students' higher order skills and creativity" (International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), 2002, Standard III C). School administrators, counselors,

psychologists and wellness professionals encourage their clients and colleagues to use inquiry strategies to address both personal and institutional issues.

**Problem-Solving in Real World & Creative Contexts.** Instruction in all disciplines should involve authentic tasks that address real-world problems encountered by professionals, allowing students to investigate problems in their own lives. Likewise, learning experiences that employ technology to solve real-world problems of interest to the learner with an audience beyond the classroom allow learners to construct conditionalized knowledge (MacEntee & Wells, 2005).

The concept of *critical literacy* forms a bridge between literacy, real world social justice issues, and social studies. Critical literacy practices enlighten the reader regarding the multiple perspectives and ulterior designs of texts and how these writings may be challenged (Luke & Freebody, 1997). Critical literacy activities examine multiple perspectives, find one's authentic voice, recognize social barriers, cross borders of separation, help regain one's identity, and listen and respond to the call of service (Cairdiello, 2004). Model lessons that address authentic learning in social studies include an interdisciplinary unit of study on archaeology (Eisenwine, 2003) and high school students' analysis of primary documents related to the United States' Pledge of Allegiance (Pezone and students, 2002).

Authentic pedagogy of both instruction and assessment tasks is a strong predictor of student achievement (Newman & Associates, 1996). Authentic assessment tasks require students to organize information, consider alternative perspectives, work with significant concepts, develop written communication, connect to the world beyond the classroom and display knowledge to an audience other than the teacher (Avery, Freeman, Grustafson, Coler, Hardy, Bargainer & Jones, 2001).

Literacy resources must be expanded beyond texts to such real world sources as bus schedules, maps, diaries, and interviews with people to allow multiple perspectives and full engagement, with activities presenting pertinent skills in context to support lifelong learning rather than superficial or passive learning (Bergeron & Rudenga, 1996).

**Reflection within a Community of Learners:** The importance of the learning community to authentic learning has several aspects. One part is the group of learners who work together to unravel the problem. Another aspect is the community setting in

which the project is based. For education candidates, this community is encountered during field experiences and involves facets such as diversity of language, culture, and social mores. An even wider community includes the professional community of investigators related to the discipline of the investigation.

Vygotsky (1978 [seminal work]) emphasized a sociocultural perspective in which students use language and social discourse to make sense of the world. Interaction and discussion of ideas with partners when guidelines are given (e.g., describing observations clearly, reasoning about causes and effects, posing precise questions, formulating hypotheses, critically examining competing explanations, and summarizing results) during science inquiry activities provide a scaffold for the development of reasoning and scientific understanding (Mercer, Dawes, Wegeriff, & Sams, 2004). Science investigations should link students to scientists through data sharing, writing critiques and direct communication, and involve the argumentative processes scientists use to achieve common understandings (Lee & Songer, 2003).

Computer-supported collaborative learning communities investigating model-eliciting problems help students pose and explore conjectures, understand mathematical concepts, and improve mathematical models (Nason & Woodruff, 2003).

For preservice teachers to make meaningful changes in assessment beliefs and practice, they need classroom and practicum opportunities to apply their new understandings about dynamic assessment as part of a culture of learning with explicit assessment criteria, student self-assessment and evaluation of teaching (Shepard, 2000). The higher the level of authentic learning that focuses on higher levels of thinking, disciplined in-depth inquiry, substantive discourse, and connections to the real world, the higher the level of all students' performance regardless of achievement level or demographic characteristics (Avery, 1999; Newman & Associates, 1996). Practicum experiences allow preservice teachers to experience and learn to pose worthwhile mathematical tasks that require students to reason, communicate, represent, problem solve, and make mathematical connections (Crespo, 2003; NCTM, 2000). Multiculturalism can be brought to mathematics class in many interesting ways such as exploring numbers in other languages, symbols of ancient societies, games of skill and

chance from around the world, and the geometry of different architectural designs (Zaslavsky, 1994).

Today's teachers must "be students of human behavior, social events and their causes, and the characteristics of the citizens they serve" (Blair & Jones, 1998, p. 77). During practicum experiences, preservice teachers must become involved in the local placement community to glean understandings not available in college classrooms (Brown & Kysilka, 2002). A focus on both professional (e. g., classroom discipline, pupils, curriculum, school culture) and cultural topics (e.g., pupil's living conditions, cross-cultural communication, historical understanding) helps novice education candidates see the multiple realities of a classroom and its community setting (Stachowski & Frey, 2003).

Cognitive apprenticeships in vocational education venues involve experts in modeling the strategies and procedures needed for problem solving to coached novices in a constructivist setting (Farmer, Buckmaster, & LeGrand, 1992). Community apprenticeships in art can provide practical learning that differs from traditional classroom learning, involving higher order thinking, diverse modes of thought, manipulation of concrete objects, autonomy, problem formation, multiple strategies for solutions, incorporation of the environment, cognitive teamwork and understanding of social relations of the workplace (Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004; Charland, 2005). Collaboration between novice art educators and community members can achieve more learning outcomes and bring richness to the projects (Rutherford, 2005).

Effective research-based strategies that can make inclusion of students with disabilities receive the support they need within the general education classroom include teacher commitment, availability of both general and special education teachers to students with agreement of them on language and concepts for lesson, collaboration of student and teacher with instructional conversation and directive questioning, differentiated instruction with student input, use of conceptual anchors to provide a shared experience and framework for building and cooperative learning emphasizing instructional conversations and responsibility for mutual learning (Bucalos & Lingo, 2005).

**Empowerment through Authentic Learning.** Authentic literacy tasks address purpose, choice, audience, resources, and relevance (Bergeron & Rudenga, 1996). Such literacy projects need to be embedded in relevant experience focused on communication of meaning rather than evaluation, and tasks must allow student choice for empowerment and motivation, including choice of audience for the work.

In the field of health promotion and wellness, educators provide information in a caring and trusting relationship so that individuals may make informed choices (Brouse & Basch, 2004; Peterson, Cooper, & Laird, 2001). Choice also occurs when students make their own interpretations of literature and art, using these to analyze how lifestyle affects their health (Brouse, 2005).

Similarly, the International Society for Technology in Education (2002) standards for teachers ask that teachers "use technology to support learner-centered strategies that address the diverse needs of students" (Standard III B).

Research related to effective instructional practice emphasizes the need for greater personalization and individualization of instruction (Carroll, 1994) because learning is an individual experience. Instruction can be personalized by starting with where the learner is in relation to knowledge of the topic, providing choice of a rich variety of pathways, providing multiple instruction approaches, and empowering students to make decisions, self-assess, and reflect (Kellouth, 2003).

SUNY Oswego's SOE strives to produce graduates who support authentic learning environments that engage students in real-world inquiry problems involving higher order thinking skills with an authentic audience beyond the classroom. Relevance and choice in the project, along with discourse within a community of learners empowers students to increase their knowledge. Practica and apprenticeships provide important opportunities for interacting with the wider community and reflection upon experiences, thereby solidifying new understandings.

## **Knowledge**

Knowledge is discipline specific content, authentic process, and learning-centered skill guiding SOE candidates into the professional arena well-equipped to promote authentic learning in a socially justice educational setting. Knowledge is more than facts























































