

# The Teacher Educator Standards

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## **STANDARDS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS: WHY THE STANDARDS**

Members of the Commission are convinced that the teacher education profession is eager to make the changes needed to reform itself for the rapid and accelerating changes occurring in every aspect of American life. For example, most school districts have broadened their professional development programs, organized mentoring for beginning teachers, provided more time for focused staff development experiences, and emphasized student outcomes and consequences. Universities have made major changes in preparation programs, extending the time prospective teachers spend in schools, adding clinical professors to their faculties, and extending the professional development of their faculties to encompass recent trends and technology. Every teacher educator whom we have queried is engaged in some form of professional development, and most have revised syllabi within the past two years to respond to new realities in schools. There is a groundswell of activity under way to ensure the preparation and maintenance of more relevant and effective teacher educators. A more systemic orchestrated approach to selection, preparation, and renewal of teacher educators is needed.

Teacher Educators have also indicated that they see the need to define their role more clearly. Traditionally, professors in higher education have been hired and evaluated on the conservative process of tenure and professor ranking. Categories of teaching, scholarship, and service are typically used for evaluation. From one college/university to the next, balance and criteria for completing promotion requirements varies between these areas. For new roles of teacher educators, other systems of communication about work accomplishments may be used. The very diversity in the task of educating teachers provides both opportunity as well as confusion. Simply the lack of knowing options for helping candidates can cause question. The question at hand: are there other ways of defining our roles in teacher education, regardless of evaluative practices? How does one know that outstanding work has been achieved in the profession? How does the profession address the needs of candidates served on various levels of training and development?

Teacher educators are exploring new options for determining their roles and how those roles in working with teacher candidates are defined. Opportunities exist for professional development, evaluation, program development, and advocacy using a new set of articulated standards for this level of teaching. The following sections will explore areas of history, content, uses, and meaning for the ATE Teacher Educator Standards.

## **HISTORY OF THE STANDARDS**

In 1992, the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) initiated a process to identify standards for teacher educators. The Task Force chose to solicit input from a wide range of distinguished educators. All of this input was reviewed, organized, and incorporated into the standards document by Task Force members. The Standards were approved by the ATE in February 1996, and the Commission on Teacher Educator Standards was appointed to explore broad use of them.

In 1993, a new commission was formed with the charge to further develop and implement the teacher educator standards prepared by the previous ATE Commission on Teacher Educator Standards. The ultimate goal is to provide national and international leadership in demonstrating that teacher education is vital to the health and success of the nation's education plan.

In 2003 President van Tassel appointed a second Commission to review the standards and to develop a process for using the standards for assessment. The Commission was reappointed by President McCarthy for another three years to continue the developmental process.

In the first three years, the Commission made presentations at each of the ATE national meetings to solicit input from those who attended the sessions. A survey of higher education institutions was conducted.

The Teacher Educator Standards Commission (TESC) organized a group of Teacher Educators, representing higher education faculty and professional development school teachers working with future teachers to review the standards. Fourteen educators compiled their own Teacher Educator Portfolio, using the ATE standards as the foundation for organization. Participants were put into small groups to collaborate online and via phone to support and suggest ideas for improvement on colleagues' portfolios. Over two years, participants met to analyze and construct the knowledge of what they thought the portfolio should look like, meaning, purpose, etc. Data was collected from the participants at the end of the process through individual writing, group interviews, and questionnaires. Since then, various people involved in the process have compiled research on identify of the individuals, the organization of the portfolios, and analysis in the form of self study to gain more information about the reflective process.

The Commission refined the standards based on these activities. The standards were expanded into nine standards, adding two new topics. From there, indicators and suggested artifacts were refined. Introductions were written to briefly explain the meaning of the each standard. These sections of the standards were further refined. A book is being compiled to further explain standards use and explanation of the areas covered in the standards. The revised standards have been approved by the ATE Board of Directors and will be shared widely at the 2008 winter meeting.

## WHO IS A TEACHER EDUCATOR

The development of standards for teacher educators has helped to distinguish the role of teacher educators from the role of other professionals in the education of teachers. Presentations about the ATE Standards for Teacher Educators have always generated intense discussions that begin with a broad interpretation of the term. For example, everyone agrees that the college instructors who teach content courses for prospective elementary teachers have a high level of influence on what those future teachers will do in teaching those disciplines to young children. Subsequent discussion then distinguishes the role of this individual from the university professor who engages the future teacher in planning and implementing instruction in the classroom. The content instructor is not expected to research in the field of teaching, conduct workshops for teachers on how to teach, or attend ATE conventions.

A simple definition of *teacher educator* is anyone who educates teachers. Such a definition is too general to be useful in establishing standards for teacher educators. Moreover, it diminishes the professionalism of teacher educators and impedes the profession in distinguishing highly qualified teacher educators from others who contribute to the education of teachers. The purpose of the Standards is to promote more effective practice by these teacher educators.

For the purposes associated with the ATE standards, teacher educators are identified as those educators who provide formal instruction or conduct research and development for educating prospective and practicing teachers. Teacher educators provide the professional education component of preservice programs and the staff development component of inservice programs. Teacher educators may be categorized as:

- Faculty in higher education who provide course work and conduct research as described by NCATE as *professional studies*, including clinical experiences
- Personnel in schools who provide instruction or supervision of clinical experiences of prospective teachers
- Personnel in schools who administer or conduct instructional activities designed to provide advanced professional study for teachers
- Personnel from other agencies who design, implement, and evaluate professional study for teachers (e.g., state department certification officers, U.S. Department of Education personnel, researchers in R&D centers, and professional association leaders).

## WHAT IS TEACHER EDUCATION

A basic step in defining *teacher educator* is rendering precise the concept of *teacher education*. Learning to teach is a career-long endeavor. For many practitioners the first exposure to it is an early "craft" stint in some type of teaching or counseling role, for example, as a high school student teaching music lessons or as a camp counselor teaching swimming. Such a stint is important, for it provides life experience in an instructional role, but it illustrates teaching as an act learned by imitating or modeling, rather than by professional study.

Teaching today is no longer a craft passed on without change from one generation to the next. Teaching as one has seen teaching done, or teaching as one has been taught, is as outmoded now as is practicing engineering with a slide rule or accounting with an adding machine. Recent research in cognitive psychology, for example, provides concepts and principles that challenge traditional thinking about learning.

Teacher education, then, begins when the prospective teacher enters a teacher preparation program, usually in the last two years of undergraduate study or in an intensive year or more of post-baccalaureate study. The preparation program extends prior experiences and sometimes contradicts them. General education courses, courses in a major area, and teacher education courses all contribute to learning to teach. Teacher education courses focus on the knowledge base of the behavioral sciences but also include analyses of the nuances of learners' behavior, study of strategies and tactics for accelerating and enhancing learning, examining curriculum, testing one's ability to teach, receiving feedback, and learning to become a more effective teacher.

Teacher education is a lifelong endeavor; growth in knowledge and skills continues throughout a teacher's career. Practicing teachers learn informally through their daily experiences in the classroom and their work with other teachers, formally through staff development activities and graduate study.

# **STANDARDS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS**

## **THE ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS**

**To help all teacher candidates and other school personnel impact student learning, accomplished teacher educators demonstrate the following nine standards:**

**Accomplished Teacher Educators...**

### **STANDARD 1 Teaching**

**Model teaching that demonstrates content and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions reflecting research, proficiency with technology and assessment, and accepted best practices in teacher education.**

### **STANDARD 2 Cultural Competence**

**Applies cultural competence and promotes social justice in teacher education.**

### **STANDARD 3 Scholarship**

**Engage in inquiry and contribute to scholarship that expands the knowledge base related to teacher education.**

### **STANDARD 4 Professional Development**

**Inquire systematically into, reflect on, and improve their own practice and demonstrate commitment to continuous professional development.**

### **STANDARD 5 Program Development**

**Provide leadership in developing, implementing, and evaluating teacher education programs that are rigorous, relevant, and grounded in theory, research, and best practice.**

### **STANDARD 6 Collaboration**

**Collaborate regularly and in significant ways with relevant stakeholders to improve teaching, research, and student learning.**

### **STANDARD 7 Public Advocacy**

**Serve as informed, constructive advocates for high quality education for all students**

### **STANDARD 8 Teacher Education Profession**

**Contribute to improving the teacher education profession.**

### **STANDARD 9 Vision**

**Contribute to creating visions for teaching, learning, and teacher education that take into account such issues as technology, systemic thinking, and world views.**

## PROVIDING EVIDENCE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION STANDARDS

The examination of our practice as teacher educators through the creation of a professional portfolio based on the standards will serve to better develop and articulate aspects of practice that might form part of a knowledge base that can be tested, modified, and revised when appropriate. The process of creating a professional portfolio serves to fashion a link between reflection and practice that has for some time been essential to views of good practice (Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990; Grimmett & Erickson, 1988; LaBoskey, 1994; Loughran, 1996).

Providing artifacts is only the first step in presenting evidence of how the standards for teacher educators may be addressed. In order to better communicate how those artifacts may illustrate effective practice, accompanying written commentaries should be included to provide insight into the rationale for the events and processes represented by these samples. These written explanations are the final observable results of a great deal of less perceptible work. In the documents that accompany your artifacts, you should describe, analyze, and reflect on your work as a teacher educator as it relates to the standards. As with any research document, the reflective commentary will be the identifying difference between a portfolio developed around the standards for teacher educators and an album of pedagogical specimens. The description, analysis, and evaluation inherent in the reflective process form the basis for professional understanding and improvement. The reflective process has been recognized as being important in sustaining one's professional health and competence and that the ability to exercise professional judgment is in fact informed through reflection on practice (Day, 1999; Loughran, 2002, Schon, 1983, 1987, 1992).

*Description* is the first step in reflective process. This stage briefly describes the relevant context for your practice and provides a basis for the other two segments of the reflection. This step should include the relevant features of your professional context that influenced your selection of artifact(s).

*Analysis* of the evidence should identify both positive and negative findings from your data. Equally important are accurate assessments of the quality and significance of the evidence, and explanations of how the artifacts included address the standards.

*Reflective commentary* on the aspects of your practice represented in your portfolio involves a synthesis of your findings. These pieces should comment on the impact of your practice on you and/or your students, and justify why a certain artifact provides evidence of your practice. Because reflection is a process that facilitates the development of future action from the contemplation of past and/or current behavior, it is also important to note the implications of your findings for your future practice as a teacher educator.

Portfolios can be developed to provide evidence of how teacher educators are meeting the standards. These portfolios may be in the form of e-portfolios as was done

with the TESC group using *TaskStream*, one available online electronic management system. Important elements for development of a portfolio include many parts. Finding artifacts to meet indicators within a standard is crucial for providing evidence for meeting the standard. A portfolio is more than just individual pieces put together under a standard. A rationale, reflection, or some other media must provide “the glue” so to speak on binding the pieces into one cohesive product. Electronic media can provide useful and creative ways to show how compliance to the standards. Paper portfolios are not capable of the level of complexity and reflective opportunity that electronic portfolios can be. If a teacher educator wishes to tie content area strengths into the portfolio, the electronic version has options for cross referencing many other groups of standards into the platform.

Process is as important for a developmental portfolio as the product. The use of collaborative friends or colleagues either at the institution or other institution can provide another eye and questioning strategies that will enhance the compiling of the portfolio as well as the learning accompanying the process. The collaboration is a critical part of the process that cannot be overlooked.

The standards currently do not provide rubrics or compliance assessment regulations. That information is up to the individuals and institutions using the standards.

Finally, the portfolio is an item that changes and grows with the individual. It is never static and can provide opportunities to document historic, current, and potential future growth of its author.

## USES OF THE STANDARDS

Developing standards for teacher educators may appeal to some as a useful theoretical exercise that can provide us better insight on who teach teachers, but there are more practical uses for the standards as well. The standards and indicators can serve as a catalyst to spark debate and discussion about the definition, roles, and expectations of teacher educators. Even if the other uses of these standards fail to materialize, the debate within our profession has been most worthwhile and should continue.

Another use is conducting research on teacher educators. The Standards might be an impetus for collecting data on the performance, expectations, and/or working conditions of teacher educators. Data could be collected for each standard that would be useful for the profession in self-study. For example, how are these expectations met at different sized institutions? If so, what are the ramifications of such findings?

The ATE Standards for Teacher Educators might be used as one basis for determining expectations or assessing the performance of teacher educators. Those who employ teacher educators, universities, schools, and others, can benefit from having an external set of benchmarks about the quality level of teacher education. In recent years ATE has used the standards for the selection of a "Distinguished Teacher Educator of the Year".

Examples of uses for the standards

1. Guide to the search process for hiring individuals who will have a primary role as teacher educator.
2. Guide to design of a staff development program for teacher educators.
3. Guide to the annual evaluation of an individual who is a teacher educator.
4. Promoting dialogue among their members about the issues of teacher education.
5. Guide to the development of portfolios for teacher educators.
6. Guide to the construction of curriculum vitae and referenced.
7. Use of the standards and the Workshop Manual exercises in graduate level courses that prepare teacher educators.
8. Guide to the development of programs that are designed to prepare teacher educators.
9. Guide to offer professional development on the standards
10. Workshops or clinics at ATE meeting to instruct about the standards
11. Consider certification or assessment of the performance of teacher educators
12. Basis for research group such as TESC and others
13. Disseminate the standards to other ATE work group
14. Promote reference to the standards for presentations at ATE conferences
15. Serve as a catalyst to spark debate and discussion about the definition, role, and expectations of teacher educators
16. Use as a reference to collect data on the performance, expectations, and working conditions of teacher educators
17. Design a doctoral program for the preparation of teacher educators
18. Define the role of school personnel who have responsibilities in teacher education such as in the Professional Development Schools
19. Selection of an ATE Distinguished Teacher Educator of the Year

## FACTORS WORKING AGAINST THE STANDARDS

Commission members have encountered some resistance from teacher educators for using the teacher educator standards to guide their own professional lives. Here are some comments encountered in presentations and workshops about the standards.

*“Not my job!”*

Some personnel who have the responsibility for the continuing education of teachers decline to relate their role to the standards. An administrator of a school has many responsibilities that get in the way of helping teachers in their building to continue to grow professionally. Some university faculty members see their role more narrowly than identified in the standards.

*“I have a Ph.D. and that is all of the validation I need!”*

It is interesting to note that the doctoral degree is seen as a lifetime validation of educational worth. Obviously the professor is evaluated on scholarly work, but is often not willing to be evaluated on their teaching. Some resist the standards as an imposition not worthy of their role.

*“Not accountable - not a data driven orientation to the task!”*

Teacher education is not a data-driven culture. We tend to not value the evaluation of our product, let alone attribute their success as a teacher to the teacher education process. We don't need information about the quality of teacher educators to make decisions about improving teacher education.

Here are some other comments we have noted:

1. “Teacher educators from small colleges have too many other responsibilities.”
2. “The Cooperating teachers’ primary role is not teacher education.”
3. “The standards appear to represent the status quo rather than the dynamic and changing roles of teacher educators.”
4. “The standards are tailored for research institutions.”
5. “Standards constrain individualism and creativity.”

## UNDERSTANDING AND PROCESSING THE STANDARDS

### Activity #1 Examining the standards

1. Review the standards by topic and definition for a quick overview of the content of the standards
2. Then choose and examine one standard by definition, introduction, indicators, and artifacts.
  - What does this standard mean to you?
  - How have you addressed this standard yourself?
  - If you were putting together a portfolio of your own, what would be some of the artifacts you might want to include?
  - What other artifacts might be possible to address this standard?
  - To which indicators do particular artifacts align themselves?
  - What other items might be added to the list of indicators and artifacts?
3. Share information about the standard you reviewed with other groups to learn more about other standards.

### Activity #2 How teacher educators can use standards at their institutions

Use the list of how standards might be used.

1. Examine your philosophy: How do you see yourself as a teacher educator? What roles do you play in the profession currently?
2. Look over the list from the section labeled “Using the Standards.” Pick out two or three possible ways that you could see yourself, colleagues at your institution, or administration at your institution using the Teacher Educator Standards. Why are these ideas useful/appealing to you?
3. Share these ideas with small group members. How might you go back to your institution to begin sharing the ideas with colleagues there? What developmental or evaluative purposes might be served using the standards? How might the standards help you and your colleagues to serve the higher education community on behalf of candidates learning to be teachers?

### **Activity #3 Sharing the Standards with others**

Use the list of standards with the indicators and artifacts.

1. What benefits can you use to introduce the standards to colleagues at home?
2. What questions or obstacles can you predict you will have to overcome?
3. Which standards would be easy for providing evidence that would be used as a starting place at home? How might you begin compiling this information?
4. Who would be key people to contact at your institution about the standards?

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