

1. INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

USM Teacher Education Mission Statement

The faculty of University of Southern Maine's (USM) College of Education and Lewiston-Auburn College believe that the process of teaching is actually a process of learning. Effective teaching is grounded in knowledge, experience, careful reflection, and a commitment to preparing children and youth for the future. Such teaching encourages inquiry that leads to independent thinking. Teaching is a complex enterprise. It is an art, a craft, a science, a collection of skills, and common sense. Teachers and students together foster a lifelong pursuit of learning that encompasses personal growth and global awareness. The College of Education and Lewiston-Auburn College are committed to providing experiences that promote this learning process. Our mission statement represents beliefs that form the foundation for USM's undergraduate teacher education program on the Gorham campus: Teachers (for) Elementary And Middle School (TEAMS) and on the Lewiston-Auburn campus: Collaborative Learning And School Success (CLASS).

The foundation of the USM professional development school (PDS) programs are based on the following key concepts (Goodlad, 1994):

- **Partner school:** The job of preparing the next generation of teachers is shared by educators who work in our K-12 schools and those who work with USM. Therefore, Sherwood Heights, Auburn Middle School, and USM's Lewiston-Auburn College (LAC) and the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) are all partners in USM's undergraduate teacher education program.
- **Stewardship:** Our view of stewardship is connected to our emphasis of preparing the next generation for citizenship in our democratic society as we see teachers as stewards (overseers) for the healthy development of our student. In addition to delivering a nurturing pedagogy this implies that teachers consistently demonstrate (model) those virtues advocated for compassionate and active citizens.
- **Simultaneous renewal:** Both partner schools and USM's CEHD and LAC are engaged in an effort to improve what we do. We aim to work together and share our talents so that the students served by each educational setting reap benefits. Working together to improve what we do is simultaneous renewal.
- **Nurturing pedagogy:** We intend to teach in ways that both enrich and encourage our students. The way we engage learners, the activities we plan and conduct, the feedback we give them are all designed to help them attain our high expectations and to encourage them toward continued learning.
- **Equal access/equity:** We believe that all children deserve a schooling experience that helps them reach their potential and welcomes them into full participation in a democratic society by providing the knowledge and skills needed by successful citizens.

CLASS PDS Program Introduction

The information in this handbook is written to provide preliminary general information about the CLASS program at USM/LAC. The development of the material within has been a collaborative effort of LAC, CEHD and partner school faculty, staff and administration.

Newly developed programs, by their very nature, are dynamic and evolutionary in that they are constantly undergoing change through the process of ongoing reflection and evaluation. It is hoped that this handbook will provide that information which all in the “learning community” will need to make this exciting and innovative project successful. It is expected that this handbook will be revised and expanded as a result of the program’s evolutionary process and the ongoing contributions/suggestions from those within the learning community.

Background Information

The Lewiston-Auburn College: Collaborative Learning And School Success (CLASS) innovative PDS program is the result of collaborative planning by university-based and school-based educators. It was originally called: Lewiston-Auburn College: Teachers (for) Elementary And Middle Schools (LAC: TEAMS). It is a college-school partnership professional development school model with the Sherwood Heights Elementary School in Auburn and the Auburn Middle School in Auburn. The core concept is that of “simultaneous renewal of education” both within the pre-service context of higher education and the in-service context of public education.

This exciting opportunity in undergraduate elementary teacher education was first offered at both the Gorham and Lewiston Auburn campuses of USM in the fall of 1998. Both the CLASS PDS and CEHD: TEAMS programs fall under the purview of USM’s Teacher Education Council (TEC) as its governing body. Although autonomous in several aspects, due in large part to their respective student populations and different partner schools, they do share identical admissions, candidacy reviews, pre-internship, mid-internship and final internship reviews. In addition to their individual campus program steering committees, they jointly coordinate and participate in the university wide USM: TEAMS-CLASS Steering Committee, have equivalent curricula and have cross membership in key committees; e.g., candidacy, internship exit, etc.

The CLASS PDS is a comprehensive and rigorous program that results in a bachelor's degree in an academic area and teacher certification. It is intended both for part-time and full time non-traditional and traditional students who have a strong interest in teaching at the elementary and middle school level at the time of their freshman or sophomore years. The program is designed so that students attain a strong liberal arts background to provide subject matter preparation for teaching. Students will graduate with a varying number of graduate credits which can be transferred into USM’s Master’s of Teaching and Learning (MTL) program through an approved articulation agreement. The CLASS PDS program students in professional coursework and field experiences/applied service learning regarding educational practice throughout their tenure at LAC. These provide the foundation for successful teaching in the elementary school. The program can be completed in 9 semesters of full-time study. The intent of the CLASS PDS program is to develop teacher-leaders in service to our State and our Nation for the 21st century.

CLASS is not a degree; rather, it is a multi-phase program which includes coursework in an academic major leading to a bachelor’s degree in a liberal arts field (Arts and Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, or Natural & Applied Sciences) and a professional program of teacher preparation which includes graduate credits that results in certification to teach in elementary and middle schools (K – 8).

The CLASS Program serves to support students in their development as teacher-leaders, and as those who can knowledgeably study their own practice by developing a learning community. Central to supporting the college students in functioning in this learning community as they become effective teacher-leaders, is the commitment to the program's content knowledge, skills and understandings. The four dimensions of the framework for designing, conducting, and evaluating programs that prepare adults to work in school settings are:

- *Connections and Partnerships*- Students and faculty examine the connections between theory and practice through ongoing, reciprocal relationships with schools, agencies, and businesses.
- *Reflection and Critical Inquiry*- Students and faculty actively engage in examining and questioning content knowledge and understandings, and their own professional development.
- *Performance Assessment*- Students demonstrate their content knowledge, skills, and understandings, particularly as they relate to course goals and program outcomes, through performance.
- *Diversity*- Students and faculty explore the impact of factors such as cultural background, age, exceptionality, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity on human development and learning.

Vision Statement

CLASS, a K-16 partnership, building collaborations for excellence in teaching and learning.

Mission Statement

The partners of CLASS seek the simultaneous renewal of school and college through shared experiences, professional development, inquiry, and research-based practices. Everyone benefits in the community of learners: children, college students, school staff, college staff, parents, and local residents. Our partnership creates a dynamic and reflective learning environment that energizes, nurtures, and respects its members.

Learning Community

An important feature of the CLASS program is that students participate as members of a community of learners focused on the educational enterprise through special courses and field experiences/applied service learning that begin during the first semester and continue throughout the program. This learning community is important because it is a key means of supporting students in understanding the aims, principles, and practices of the academic disciplines in the liberal arts and applied sciences. Community members share responsibility to help one another understand their own learning relative to academic subjects, especially in the early semesters of the program.

Later in the program when the focus is primarily on professional education, the learning community culture serves to support college students and teachers in understanding the aims, principles, and practices of education as a discipline, and teaching as a professional activity. In

this endeavor, community members also act as important resources for one another during their process of learning to teach and learning how to study teaching and learning. This element of the CLASS program serves to support students in their development as teacher-leaders, and as those who can knowledgeably study and reflect upon their own practice. There will also be a campus-based recognized student organization (e.g., SEAM: Student Education Association of Maine) for all students with an interest in teaching to support students during the semesters that they are on campus to promote a sense of community, dialogue and discussion of educational issues.

Everyone within the learning community needs to work together as a whole, in order for the individuals to be well served by the process. The emphasis for CLASS is on cooperation and collaboration, not the competition, which is often so pervasive at all levels of education. The holistic programmatic focus is on developing competencies for effective teaching (“best practice”), not on grades or just accumulating a list of courses for certification; the emphasis is on the *process* of learning.

An important and unique part of this process is the ongoing work to establish and maintain the vibrancy of the CLASS PDS learning community in each cohort individually and among all the cohorts collectively across the program. To help realize this goal, the program has set aside certain times of the year where all the students in the program are required to each be present and participate in specific program/s designed to promote communication, cohesiveness and community for the CLASS PDS. These include the “Summer Orientation” for new first year students and the “End of the Semester Seminars” occurring during exam week each semester. Students can obtain an “excused absence” waiver from the Program Coordinator up until two weeks prior to the event.

General Expectations

The most important expectations are that students are open minded, patient, committed to their work and a ready, willing and active participant in his/her own learning and in the school community. Ultimately, the student is the one responsible for his/her own learning; by design he or she is empowered in this process. Students are both encouraged and invited to pursue their own ideas, ask their own questions, and investigate their own problems within this general framing question of what it means to teach and to learn. CLASS is about exploring new ways of placing learners at the center of this process. It is sometimes hard to break away from the traditional teacher-centered models of teaching, but this program is about changing the status quo when necessary to best meet the educational needs of the 21st Century.

To do this students may have to totally change their ideas about teaching and learning. What one takes away from this experience is up to him or her; the learning is dependent on the risks students are willing to take and the effort they make. Part of the process of adopting innovative practices has to do with the willingness of each to take risks in his/her own teaching-learning. In every assignment and field experience/applied service learning, students need to be a critical thinker. Ask themselves questions, evaluate, analyze, and decide what he or she believes. There needs to be an ongoing discussion—orally and in writing—on what one has learned, how this experience has affected one as a teacher or learner, and how one comes to know in a different way as a result of this experience. An emphasis of the program is on the effective articulation, both written and verbal, about one’s learning process and how well one supports his/her conclusions.

To help in meeting these goals students will keep a reflective journal/learning log. This journal is kept principally by the student with the possibility of comments and reflections added by the mentor teacher and/or college resource person. More than just a written account of what is observed, the journal's most important role is to also record what is thought. This will help students to begin to develop a personal belief system/statement about what effective teaching-learning is, as well as to reflect upon it as everyone grows and evolves as professionals.

Communication

Any program that seeks to meet the needs of so many different populations within one setting: e.g. mentor teachers, partner teachers, college students and faculty; must be built around open, honest, effective and proactive communication. Everyone needs to make an effort to communicate meaningfully with each other and with the entire learning community. It is important to recognize that there is often "more than just one right way" and more than one valid perspective on a situation. As teachers/learners we must be proactive, not reactive, when it comes to communicating and anticipating.

This by its very nature, for some people, may mean taking a risk and/or experiencing failure. This is what real learning is all about. In fact, evidence of "risk taking" will be viewed as a sign of "ownership" of the pilot program. A central concept related to this is the reliance on the processes of consensus and shared decision making with regards to the CLASS program—we are all equal share holders in this learning process.

There are several mechanisms built into the project to foster an environment of communication and encourage the process many of which involve the active use of technology. At the center of the mentor teacher and college students professional relationship will be a reflective journal/learning log discussed in the previous section. There will be informal feedback on a daily basis pertaining to different aspects of student's experiences within the school culture.

Different avenues for communication exist. These may include mail boxes, email, voice mail, word processing, web sites/pages/conference boards and a CLASS dedicated space at the partner schools.

Confidentiality

It is important that CLASS students keep all information about students with whom they work during their field experience while at the partner schools **confidential**. Students and school personnel are required to abide by FERPA guidelines. Discussions in seminar should also be kept confidential. Students must always use a pseudonym for recorded information about a child or children in journal entries, observation notes, other written work and in discussing students away from the site.

Photographs of K- 8 children that are used by University of Southern Maine students who are part of the (CLASS) PDS program or by the CLASS program itself or by its teachers at a partner school should only be done as part of an effort to document the teaching and learning that takes place at that school. All necessary college and school district forms need to be completed (see the Appendix) and on-file **before** any images are used for any reason. CLASS students should always check with the partner school Site Coordinator/s with regards to this matter.

Code of Ethics of the National Education Association

Preamble:

The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. The educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards.

The educator recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process. The desire for the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of the members of the community provides the incentive to attain and maintain the highest possible degree of ethical conduct. The Code of Ethics of the Education Profession indicates the aspiration of all educators and provides standards by which to judge conduct.

PRINCIPLE I

Commitment to the Student:

The educator strives to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society. The educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.

In fulfillment of the obligation to the student, the educator:

Shall not unreasonably restrain the student from the independent action in the pursuit of learning.

Shall not unreasonably deny the student access to varying points of view.

Shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress.

Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.

Shall not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement.

Shall not on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social or cultural background, or sexual orientation, unfairly:

a. Exclude any student from participation in any program

b. Deny benefits to any student

c. Grant any advantage to any student.

Shall not use professional relationships with students for private advantage.

Shall not disclose information about students obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.

PRINCIPLE II

Commitment to the Profession:

The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professional service. In the belief that the quality of the services of the education profession directly influences the nation and its citizens, the educator shall: exert every effort to raise professional standards, promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgment, achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education and assist in preventing the practice of the profession by unqualified persons.

In fulfillment of the obligation to the profession, the educator:

1. Shall not in any application for a professional position deliberately make a false statement or fail to disclose a material fact related to competency and qualifications.
2. Shall not misrepresent his/her professional qualifications.
3. Shall not assist any entry into the profession of a person known to be unqualified in respect to character, education, or other relevant attribute.
4. Shall not knowingly make a false statement concerning the qualifications of a candidate for a professional position.
5. Shall not assist a non-educator in the unauthorized practice of teaching.
6. Shall not disclose information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.
7. Shall not knowingly make false or malicious statements about a colleague.
8. Shall not accept any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or action.

Statement on Diversity

As our society has become increasingly diverse in the cultures that comprise it, and as our economy has become increasingly global, schools have recognized the need to help the next generation of adults learn to work with others who are most likely to be very different from themselves. This requires attention to diversity and multiculturalism issues that are an important programmatic strand of the CLASS PDS curriculum.

The program initially formally addresses these issues early in the program with an interdisciplinary course that deals with interdisciplinary concepts in the humanities and provides multiple opportunities to learn about and discuss the implications of cultural and ethnic differences. These experiences serve as touchstones for learning in subsequent courses and field experiences in our partner schools that are rich in diversity as this strand is addressed across the program. Each subject matter course concerning Learning To Teach (LTT) addresses one or more aspects of diversity and multiculturalism that is readily examined in the particular subject area; hence, CLASS students will have the opportunity to address multicultural issues in a general way and with respect to teaching specific subject matter.

The following statement is the CLASS PDS learning outcome regarding diversity for pre-service teachers:

“The teacher models respect for cultural and individual differences among students and co-workers including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, learning style, age, religion, socioeconomic status, and ability/disability. S/he selects instructional materials from a variety of cultural perspectives and plans and creates learning opportunities and assessments that attend to issues of diversity and cultural responsiveness and ensure access and equity for all students.”

Background Check Process For University Students In Local School Districts

Under current law, school districts can adopt additional policies regarding background checks with regards to people working in their schools. If, and when they decide to do so, it would be completely administered and paid for by the District.

The school district will be responsible for both initiating and conducting the background check of university students. The administrative decision to remove a student from a course and or program under these circumstances, does not rest with the University, but with the local school district. If the result of a background check is one that the school believes is enough to disallow the university student from being in the school/s while school is in session, it is the district's responsibility to notify the student that he/she may not participate in programs conducted in the district's schools.

Under current law, the District is prohibited from sharing any results, including the specific background information, with the University. Thus, the University should never be privy to any circumstances with regards to the background check, nor play any role in the enforcement or administration of the District's policy. At this point, the student will either inform the university and withdraw from the course or not inform the university and just withdraw.

For their part, the university must give students applying for these programs or attending these courses advance notice that they may be subject to a background investigation and, therefore, their participation in the course/program is dependent upon the results of these findings. Advance notification of the school district's required background checking process must appear in the university's course catalogs and course schedules so that all students know when they register for the class that they will be subject to a background check and asked to complete the appropriate prerequisite paperwork and forms.

Students that learn as a result of the District's background check process that they are unable to fulfill individual course and/or program field requirements will receive a refund of his/her registration and/or application fee/s.

Process to Portfolio into the Program

Qualified students have the opportunity to apply to have their relevant prior learning assessed for academic credit with respect to Collaborative Learning And School Success (CLASS) PDS coursework: seminar and field experiences/applied service learning, through the preparation and submission of a comprehensive portfolio. This description provides a brief outline of the process, for more detailed information and an application a booklet called: **CLASS PDS Portfolio Process Handbook** is available at the LAC Office of Student Services.

The reasons why a student may want to apply to portfolio into the CLASS PDS program vary. It should be noted that the process has been used infrequently and only with particular students with significant related life and/or professional experiences with K – 8 aged children. In the past, these have included: students in the Education Minor program, educational technicians, substitute teachers, and/or teachers from private independent schools seeking State certification.

The process for receiving credit for relevant prior learning and/or life experiences for the CLASS PDS program consists of four distinct and structured pieces:

- 1) the completion and filing of the “Application of Intent to Portfolio”;
- 2) a successful admissions application (meeting all academic requirements; e.g., GPA, proficiencies, etc.) and interview; and
- 3) the preparation of a written comprehensive portfolio documenting in detail how all of the “outcomes” and “standards” of the relevant CLASS PDS coursework: seminars and field experiences/applied service learning have been satisfied;
- 4) a successful oral presentation of the portfolio given to the Program Coordinator and/or appropriate committee of faculty and partner school-based personnel that satisfactorily demonstrates one’s competency in the coursework and related field-based “essential qualities.”

Because of the sequence in which the courses are offered (only once every 12 months) it is **very important** students interested in portfolioing for relevant prior learning and/or life experiences credit into the CLASS PDS program follow the aforementioned steps very carefully.

The CLASS PDS program is a rigorous and selective cohort-based program with only a certain number of slots available in any given academic year. Therefore, it is *extremely important* that students contemplating portfolioing into an existing cohort begin the process by filing their “Application of Intent to Portfolio” the **semester preceding** their intended date of admittance into the program. The completed portfolio has to be **submitted and approved two weeks prior** to the starting date of the semester in which the student hopes to be admitted.

Except in situations where the applicant has had considerable classroom experience; e.g., educational technician, substitute teacher, or teacher in a private independent school, students will be requested to enroll in EDU 100 and do their fieldwork at Sherwood Heights Elementary (Auburn) and Auburn Middle School. (This will be determined based on the application.)

The Program Coordinator, along with the CLASS Committee to Assess Prior Learning, is responsible for assessing relevant prior learning with respect to both course work and field experiences/applied service learning. The committee will review the applicant’s request and communicate their decision in writing just prior to the beginning of the semester so the student should have alternative plans in hand.

A booklet called: **CLASS PDS Portfolio Process Handbook** has been adapted from the USM Portfolio Assessment informational packet prepared by the Office for Prior Learning Assessment, University of Southern Maine. This booklet is available at the LAC Office of Student Services. Portfolios are presented either for course-equivalency credits, or for general (GEL) university credit.

Students considering the portfolio process are required to first contact the CLASS Program Coordinator, Dr. Bumper White or Administrative Assistant, Jim Bradley, for an “Application of Intent to Portfolio” and his/her own Academic Advisor. Then, they must also contact the Director of the Office for Prior Learning Assessment, to discuss their individual portfolio construction. The director may be reached at 119 Payson Smith on the Portland campus, 780-4040 or 1-800-800-4876 extension 4683.