Conceptual Framework for the Teacher Preparation Program

The Teacher Preparation Program at Young Harris College originates from the College Mission, Goals, Values, and Vision combined with Professional, State, and Institutional standards for the preparation of prospective teachers. With the robustness of a Liberal Arts background woven throughout, the institutional motto of “Educate, Inspire, Empower” fully supports the developmental milestones entailed by the conceptual framework of the initial teacher preparation program at YHC. These program foci, which will be internalized by teacher candidates in a manner similar to the emulsification process the nautilus undergoes to form the chambers of its shell, may be defined as: (a) YHC mission and values; (b) experiential meaning making; (c) pedagogies that address the art and science of teaching; (d) professional transformation; and (e) advocacy.

Experiential meaning-making is facilitated for students in the YHC TPP through opportunities to apply, analyze, evaluate and create experiences and connections.

Pedagogical practice that values the art and science of teaching is modeled for students and explored through coursework and research-based practices. Candidates internalize pedagogical understanding and transfer this knowledge to the field.

Professional transformation is an ongoing undertaking based on experience and learning. The student entering the YHC TPP will not be the same candidate recommended for certification. Cognitive dissonance is a valuable condition that promotes learning, and the opportunities to collaborate and communicate over the program of study support teacher candidates as they grapple with and embrace new information and experiences.

Advocacy in education takes on many forms. The strength of the YHC TPP conceptual framework is to organize higher education and teacher preparation for candidates such that they are able to go forth as professionals who advocate for their discipline, their colleagues, their students, and their communities. Strength of knowledge, skills and conviction provides the structure and support for an educator in the field to be able to advocate for the ideals with which he/she identifies.

With continuous assessment providing on-going feedback and monitoring of all components of the teacher preparation program, the development of a professionally-informed pedagogy based on a strong liberal arts background that will lead to the capacity for advocating for self, the community, the profession, and enriched educational outcomes for all characterizes both the approach of the Young Harris College faculty as well as the program expectations/outcomes for teacher candidates. Thus, the image of the nautilus shell, that spirals toward the outer environment from a resilient core and continuously develops throughout a lifetime, is the icon for effective educator preparation at Young Harris College.