

Background

In 2006 the Community to Reimagine Educational Alternatives for Teacher Education (CREATE) began its work of developing [a new vision for teacher education](#) at UBC. Participating Faculty members in the CREATE Program Development Committee changed from year to year, modeling through this evolution, the notion of a teacher education program with a living curriculum, constantly changing to meet the demands of the profession, schooling, and society.

The CREATE Curriculum Development Committee formed in the fall of 2009. Original CREATE members as well as faculty new to the CREATE planning process took part in this stage. The committee's work was grounded in continuing discussions with individuals, departments, the Faculty, the Faculties of Arts and Science, special interest groups, school districts, the Ministry, and other higher education institutions that partner with us. Input from these constituents helped enrich the new program.

Philosophical Basis

[UBC has committed](#) to prepare teachers for their roles as educators in both local and global contexts. As Faculty at a research-intensive university, UBC teacher educators consider Inquiry to be a hallmark of teacher education and development. Our revised program is compatible with the [Association of Canadian Deans of Education's Accord on Initial Teacher Education \(2006\)](#) which states, "An effective initial teacher education programme supports a research disposition and climate that recognizes a range of knowledge and perspectives" and "provides opportunities for candidates to investigate their practices." The CREATE Teacher Education Program revision draws attention to our own research orientation and encourages teacher candidates to inquire systematically into their own practices.

Effective practices sustained from our past program:

- a) elementary [cohort](#) structure
- b) secondary cohort structure, strengthened and expanded ([broad themes and/or secondary subject areas](#))
- c) [faculty research linked to cohorts](#) faculty research that informs the basis of many learning experiences
- d) inquiry based approaches, strengthened
- e) teachers seconded from the field work to work with faculty

Key CREATE programmatic changes include:

- a) emphasis on inquiry and research throughout the program*
- b) emphasis on [diversity, and social and ecological justice](#)**
- c) [A mandatory course on aboriginal education](#) plus an infusion of aboriginal perspectives throughout the program.
- d) A 10-week in-school practicum.
- e) A 3-week enhanced practicum***.

- f) Secondary students will only need one teachable subject area but may choose to have two concentrations

A commitment to inquiry can be found in the [inquiry seminars running through the program](#) and, more importantly, infused throughout the program. Ideally, thematic cohorts in both the elementary and secondary programs will sustain the inquiry orientation for all groups of teacher candidates.

***Inquiry-oriented teacher education:**

In order to sustain and improve their practice, teachers should routinely ask critical questions about their curriculum choices and pedagogical decisions. “Inquiry-oriented” teacher education aims to develop this habit of inquiry in teacher candidates, to cultivate discernment and wise judgment about what is desirable in the name of education. It is assumed that educational phenomena (e.g., teaching, curriculum, classroom events, school textbooks, educational standards, educational systems) are socially constructed, complex and uncertain enterprises, and that inquiry is necessary if educators are to understand whether current educational practices serve identified human needs and satisfy important human purposes.

A series of four inquiry seminars are critical to the overall research/inquiry orientation of the program. Following are three possible examples of how the inquiry seminars may be approached. Next, inquiry seminar descriptions and additional learning experiences are described (credit allocations are suggested). These learning experiences (modules, courses, field experiences, etc) are listed in alphabetical order for the purpose of this review.

Elementary and Secondary Learning Experiences

Inquiry Seminar I, II, III, IV (4 terms; 18-24 students per section)

The Inquiry Seminar is designed to engender in teacher candidates a strong sense of professional inquiry and an appreciation of the importance of research in understanding teaching and learning. Teacher candidates will learn to engage in practice-based and other forms of inquiry in a systematic and critical manner. Inquiry may include, but not be limited to, empirical investigation emphasizing close observation and other forms of data generation, reflection, analysis, and reporting. By so engaging, teacher candidates will demonstrate understandings and skills acquired during learning experience work, generate fresh understandings of a particular area of educational study, and demonstrate their capacity to move beyond learning experience content to develop a deeper understanding of a particular issue or topic. Students will also contribute to ongoing efforts towards teaching and learning at field sites.

Inquiry seminars play an integral role in the teacher education program, echoing the content base of other learning experiences in a given term. Over the duration of the

program, teacher candidates will work through various cycles of inquiry—questioning, observing, reflecting, discerning—becoming increasingly conscious of their own learning while becoming skilled at engaging the learning of others. A synthesis of the various cycles will be reflected in teacher candidates’ professional e-portfolios, prepared during the final stages of the program.

Inquiry Seminar Examples

EXAMPLE 1: Teacher-candidate focused

Term 1: School/Field Portrait (Collaborative)

School/Field Portraits provide teacher candidates the opportunity to explore what it might mean to work in schools and other educational sites. A portrait is a written and/or visual representation of the site organized around a given theme. Themes might include: respecting cultural difference, supporting multiple literacies, and addressing students with special needs. Teacher candidates learn about and represent the roles and responsibilities of site personnel, as well as their issues and concerns, by shadowing and interacting with them and by use of interviewing, surveys, observations and document analysis.

Term 2: Child/Youth Study

Child/Youth Studies ask teacher candidates to look closely at a child or youth and to link what they learn from observations and interviews to learning experience readings, discussions and lectures on social-emotional, cognitive, physical, moral, emotional, and imaginative growth. The goal is to understand one child’s or youth’s thinking and learning, motivation to learn and commitments, aspirations, behaviours, and interpersonal relations as they experience and negotiate the landscape of the school.

Term 3: Teacher Research (Collaborative)

Teacher Research invites teacher candidates to inquire into their own and other school/community practices in collaboration with others (including students, other teacher candidates, teachers, community leaders, parents), with the intent of understanding and perhaps changing curriculum and pedagogy, and engaging in ongoing learning about practice. Such projects are primarily concerned with the exigencies of everyday life in schools and other educational institutions. Teacher candidates take responsibility for identifying the question or problem driving the project, in collaboration with significant others at the field site.

Term 4: Independent Inquiry of Choice

Independent Inquiries are driven by the teacher candidate’s own questions, developing areas of interest and/or areas of need. The projects are situated within a specific area of study such as social studies, elementary language arts, special education, or history of education. In-depth study in the identified area should be worthy of the term “specialization.” Teacher candidates will formulate a proposal

for the independent inquiry of their choice and submit the proposal for approval to the seminar leader. On completion of the inquiry, teacher candidates will present the 'findings' in oral and written form.

EXAMPLE 2: Case-based

In this instance the inquiry seminar is organized around the study of cases that present “real-life” learning and teaching scenarios and issues to be analyzed, discussed, and (temporarily) resolved. Case based work involves a cycle of framing the inquiry, carrying out library research, engaging in extensive critical dialogue, and deciding on appropriate action, all of which are recorded and reported.

Term 1: Understanding Practice: Teacher candidates learn to move between the particulars of educational contexts and the larger social and cultural discourses influencing the purposes of education in those contexts. Cases will examine historical and contemporary understanding of education.

Term 2: Taking up Practice: Cases will address development, learning and culture with particular attention to disciplinary and interdisciplinary curriculum practices. Several cases will be situated, for example, around the pedagogy and assessment of mathematics, language arts, art, music and social studies.

Term 3: Dis(orienting) Practice: Cases will examine the needs of diverse learners, indigenous peoples and education, authority and relationships in the classroom, power, politics and curriculum, and troubling common-sense theories of learning & learners.

Term 4: Entering Professional Practice: This inquiry seminar will be dedicated to the creating and examining the teacher candidate's program synthesis e-portfolio. While the e-portfolio will detail the BCCT standards, it will also be an opportunity for cohorts to bring together their thematic orientations (if they are guided by any) and/or to review the understandings gained throughout the program.

EXAMPLE 3: Inquiry Focused on Teaching for Social Justice as a Theme

This example assumes a cohort (community of inquiry) approach in an after-degree teacher education program centered on the theme of teaching for social justice.

Preamble: One advantage of working in a cohort or community of inquiry is the ability to focus learning experiences—and inquiry into those learning experiences—around a theme through such mechanisms as: a cohort-wide orientation and other periodic activities; instructors sharing major assignments across two or more learning experiences; collaborative projects; early and sustained connections between teacher candidates' on-campus learning and field experiences; school-based seminars and end-of-program conferences that bring teacher candidates together with school and faculty advisors, and other university instructors.

Within a thematic focus on social justice, teacher candidates will think about their identities vis-à-vis who is privileged and who is disadvantaged across a variety of

contexts. They will consider the identities of their students and the neighbourhoods of the schools where they will teach. They will link beliefs to action within the contexts of classroom teaching and working in schools. They will consider various theories of social change, including the role of teacher and school in the change process. Teacher candidates will ponder such questions as: In what ways, implicitly or explicitly, do various teaching practices (e.g., managing a classroom or facilitating a discussion of controversial issues) support or intervene in an inequitable status quo? How do various markers of teachers' identities—gender, race, social class, or sexuality—shape what and how they teach?

The role of the teacher educator in the inquiry process includes helping teacher candidates to frame or reframe inquiry topics in light of current research, policy debates, and conceptual tools. The teacher educator aims to: (a) enhance the teacher candidates' awareness of the institutional practices and power dynamics within schools that sustain or challenge inequality; and (b) deepen their understanding of how these power dynamics play out within classrooms and schools through systematic analysis of data collected or generated with a social justice question in mind.

Details: Although organizing one, big, sustained inquiry project for each teacher candidate might not be possible, cohort organizers would have in mind the following structured phases of inquiry, which might play out across a number of smaller--yet possibly linked--inquiry projects. The phases of inquiry include: (a) posing a question, (b) reading and learning about literature that examines that question, (c) anticipating and addressing ethical issues, (d) generating data (through close observation, analysis of texts or media representations, informal interviews with parents, compilation of basic statistics, videotaping student-teacher interaction, and so on), (e) reflecting and analyzing, (f) taking transformative action (that challenges an inequity and results in further study and action), and (g) making inquiry results public through such means as school-based seminars, an end-of-program conference, and the e-portfolio.

From a social justice perspective, teacher candidates will be encouraged to view children and youth, family and community members as knowledgeable co-inquirers. This approach would from the outset raise questions about who creates what knowledge and for what purposes. In terms of specific inquiries: who analyzes the data generated? Whose voices are heard, and whose might be silenced? These questions could be explored, for example, in the proposed "Education, Knowledge and Curriculum" learning experience.

Teacher candidates can elect different initial inquiry options. For example, they might elect to describe and critically evaluate: (a) a policy document (e.g., a school district's safe schools policy); (b) a curricular document (e.g., English 12 First Peoples); or (c) a learning resource that pertains to teaching for social justice (e.g., the BC Ministry of Education's *Making Space: Teaching for diversity and social justice throughout the K-12 curriculum*). Teacher candidates will explore the ways their

pedagogical decisions are shaped by their understanding of who their prospective students are. How, for example, will they adapt a social studies unit on poverty according to the social class composition of the class they will be teaching? How will they take into consideration instructional and assessment strategies adapted to a range of student learning styles and levels of ability?

Teacher candidates will observe an experienced teacher teach a lesson, paying particular attention to how students' diverse social locations and various power asymmetries shape patterns of classroom interaction. Based on their observations, they will retrospectively create the plan for the lesson, reflect on their observational field notes, and discuss both of these with the in-service teacher. Teacher candidates will conduct a semi-structured interview with an experienced teacher about teaching for social justice (challenges, strategies, examples).

Inquiry assignments later in the program will link inquiry to an awareness of arenas and possibilities for action and individual (and, later, collective) agency. For example, in a follow-up to the observation of a lesson, teacher candidates will propose alternative ways to address some elements of social justice within the lesson. Their suggestions in the "re-created lesson" will focus on what was taught (e.g., which new resources to use) or how it was taught (e.g., how to divide the class into groups that take into account the language makeup of the class).

Toward the end of the program, a culminating project will ask teacher candidates to reflect on what they have learned across the various smaller inquiry projects (some of which have been done collaboratively, others individually). Teacher candidates will explore how they will work with what they have learned as they consider their first few years of teaching.

****Education, social and ecological justice and diversity, and inclusion:**

The CREATE process has ensured that the entire teacher education curriculum is committed to the themes of social and ecological justice, and diversity. To do this, our Faculty developed the strands embedded within the program. We also provide ongoing professional development opportunities for CREATE's Graduate Teaching Assistants, sessional instructors, and adjunct teaching professors, to ensure a depth of understanding across the curriculum.

***** EDUC 430: *The Enhanced Practicum***

Research confirms the benefits of experiencing educational contexts beyond the conventional classroom. The CREATE curriculum includes a 3-week practicum which enables teacher candidates who have successfully completed their qualifying practicum, to apply their new competencies in new contexts. Not only does this benefit them as beginning teachers but the Enhanced Practicum also maintains and illuminates the relationship of schooling and education to the community.