

2012 AILACTE Call for Proposals: The Impact of the Liberally Educated Teacher

In *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (2010), Diane Ravitch states, “Students need a coherent foundation of knowledge and skills that grows stronger each year. Knowledge and skills are both important, as is learning to think, debate, and question. A well-educated person has a well-furnished mind, shaped by reading and thinking about history, science, literature, the arts and politics. The well-educated person has learned how to explain ideas and listen respectfully to others” (16).

Because our P-12 students need to develop these essential capacities, they require teachers who have experienced this broad education themselves and can model these skills within their own practice. Elementary and secondary schools need professional educators who can think creatively, critically and disciplinarily. In short, education for tomorrow’s challenges is best served by teachers with a strong liberal arts foundation today.

Teacher preparation that is grounded in the liberal arts begins with an intentional relationship between the arts and sciences and professional knowledge. It values strong disciplinary content while it values the expertise which makes this knowledge accessible and inviting to students with diverse backgrounds and interests. Secondly, liberal arts teacher education fosters moral and ethical dispositions to enable its graduates to establish caring and participatory learning communities. Thirdly, the preparation of the liberally educated teacher recognizes that professional educators require more than content knowledge and pedagogical expertise. It values and connects the world of theory and practice through partnering with P-12 educational leaders in order to provide positive yet realistic clinical experiences. Finally, it recognizes the relationship between the P-12 classroom and the world, giving its teachers opportunities to develop global awareness which can transform their practice.

The 2012 AILACTE Annual Meeting and Conference will enable us to present, discuss and reflect on key features and practices of schools, colleges and departments of education (SCDEs) that are inherent in this liberal arts tradition. To engage in the conversation, please follow the guidelines to submit proposals according to the following strands:

Strand I: Liberal Arts

The liberal arts provide our candidates with the ability to value and connect bodies of knowledge across the curriculum. However, current pressures to increase reading and math achievement often narrow the curriculum in P-12 schools. Now, more than ever, liberally educated teachers need to demonstrate the value of a rich and engaging curriculum.

Proposals in this strand might address some of the following key questions:

- How do education faculty members collaborate with arts and sciences faculty to ensure that candidates have strong content knowledge as well as a robust pedagogical knowledge of the discipline?
- How do we determine that candidates have breadth as well as depth of knowledge in order to make adequate interdisciplinary connections for young learners?
- How do we determine the impact of the liberally educated teacher? What assessments enable you and your candidates to identify how well they and their students are achieving their learning goals?

Strand II: Moral and Ethical Dimensions of the Learning Community

Teachers make hundreds of decisions each day of practice with many having ethical and moral implications. Preparation programs need to address issues of access to a rich curriculum and equity of learning opportunity as well as helping candidates establish appropriate professional behaviors.

Proposals in this strand might address some of the following key questions:

- How do candidates make their content knowledge accessible to students from diverse backgrounds?
- How do secondary education programs ensure that their candidates can assist all students in developing sufficient literacy skills for understanding their content area?
- How do we assess candidates' dispositions throughout their program?
- How do we help our candidates develop the resiliency needed for long term, effective practice?

Strand III: Partnerships

Effective teacher preparation cannot be defined as merely studying educational theory or serving an apprenticeship. Rather it is a balance of content knowledge, child and adolescent development, and research-based best practices for teaching and learning combined with well-mentored, guided clinical experiences. This design requires strong collaboration with P-12 educators, arts and sciences faculty, and community members.

Proposals in this strand might address some of the following key questions:

- What challenges exist in creating a reciprocal partnership between P-12 faculty and university faculty? How have you successfully addressed these challenges?
- How does the community contribute to your teacher education programs? How do your programs contribute to the community?
- How do small programs connect with others to establish partnerships that are mutually beneficial?

Strand IV: Global Awareness and Action

Due to immigration, technology and the impact of a global economy, P-12 education has greater access to and need for international connections. Many teacher preparation programs are establishing key collaborative experiences that link the classroom to the outside world.

Proposals in this strand might address some of the following key questions:

- What types of international experiences best help candidates develop global awareness and action?
- What types of domestic experiences also develop global awareness and action?
- What international or domestic partnerships has your university forged to enhance your teacher education program?
- How do candidates bring global experiences into their own classrooms?