



The PROFess Framework

A Model for Christian Educator Formation

Introduction

Franciscan University's Educator Preparation Program (EPP) is guided by the PROFess Framework (McVey and Poyo, 2019), a model that reflects the distinct and holistic role of the Christian educator as one who provides professional and pedagogical expertise (P), exercises relational charity (RO), offers formational guidance (F), and facilitates evangelistic education (Ess) for students. Integrated within the PROFess Framework are the *Five Essential Marks of Catholic Education* (Miller, 2006). These marks offer a succinct articulation of the Church's vision that Catholic EPPs can communicate to pre-service teachers. These Five Marks convey fundamental truths that lay at the foundation of an authentic, dynamic, and orthodox Catholic Education. Such an education is inspired by a supernatural vision, founded on a Christian anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout the curriculum, and sustained by Gospel witness (Miller 2006, p. 17). Below you will find a description of each domain of the PROFess Framework. Throughout, you will notice the integration of the Five Marks.

Professional and Pedagogical Expertise (P)

The Church acknowledges the need for educators to be trained professionals. In the words of Pope Paul VI, "[Teachers] should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world." (Paul VI, 1965). As such, professional standards and emerging practices in the field serve as a guidepost for the training of the EPP's pre-service teachers, who must take care to evaluate standards, practices, and strategies in light of Christian anthropology and Church teaching and apply those that nurture students' integrated nature and foster the growth of faith and reason.

Relational Charity (RO)

Created in the image and likeness of God, who is a communion of persons, human beings find fulfillment in self-giving relationships and communities. As such, teachers must help young people develop the capacity to relate, cooperate and collaborate. A thriving school community is one that produces the warmth and closeness of family life (Congregation, 1988; Miller, 2006). Producing such a community requires that teachers develop strong relationships with parents, who are children's primary educators, and colleagues, so they can effectively plan together and

improve the effectiveness of the school's mission, operations, & outcomes (Congregation, 1997). Cultivation of a strong school community also necessitates that teachers develop positive relationships with students – relationships that foster dialogue (Congregation, 1982). In particular, a teacher's approach to classroom management and organization and the physical environment of the school and classrooms themselves are crucial to developing a school culture that is animated by communion and community (Congregation, 2007; Miller, 2006). This relational component, which is reflected in the development of professional dispositions, virtues and Christian values, is integrated throughout the clinical experiences and coursework taken by the EPP's pre-service teachers.

Formational Guidance (F)

An integral education seeks to influence and form every aspect of a student, attending to their physical, social, emotional, psychological, intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions (Miller, 2006). Efforts to address the “whole child,” those that do not merely educate the mind but also shape the entire person are considered “formational.” Although training in best instructional practices, including best practices for teaching the faith, is essential to pre-service teacher formation, it is imperative that pre-service teachers realize that human formation is not exclusive to theology classes. Rather, it is a practice that is integrated across all experiences as educators seek to make connections between content, faith, culture, and life. Professional training in integral formation includes not just educating teachers about the unity of mind-body-spirit but also entails instruction about incorporating the Catholic faith into various subjects and ultimately integrating the subjects themselves to make interdisciplinary connections (Donohue & Guernsey, 2023; Franchi & Davis, 2021).

The Church reminds her teachers that, “Each discipline is not an island inhabited by a form of knowledge that is distinct and ring-fenced; rather, it is in a dynamic relationship with all other forms of knowledge, each of which expresses something about the human person and touches upon some truth.” (Congregation, 2013). A teacher's own formation provides a model for offering students an integrated education. As a means of equipping them with this important professional responsibility, the EPP requires its pre-service teachers to complete the University's “core” curriculum, which is designed to instill in students both eternal truths as well as a love for the quest for truth. Through the core curriculum, the EPP's pre-service teachers receive a dynamic, orthodox education in faith and philosophy through courses such as, Christian Moral Principles, Ethics, Foundations of Catholicism, and Philosophy of the Human Person. In addition, EPP faculty model integration and provide pre-service teachers with instructional opportunities to implement integrated educational experiences into their own instruction.

Evangelistic Education for Students (Ess)

The lived example of teachers is crucial to evangelizing students. This is particularly true when it comes to the transmission of a Catholic worldview and the practice of Christian virtue (Congregation, 1982). In the words of Pope Paul VI, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (Paul VI, 1975). As such, a school community must be sustained by a witness to the Gospel

message from faculty and staff. Without this witness, even the most brilliant instruction falls short in forming the whole child (Congregation, 1982). Relationship with Christ, the source of truth, is at the heart of evangelization and thus of all teaching. Given this reality and great responsibility, the EPP provides its pre-service teachers with opportunities for developing their personal relationship with Jesus throughout their education. Pre-service teachers are encouraged to cultivate a strong prayer life, participate in Mass, and frequent the sacraments. They are also given the opportunity to engage in various service learning and co-curricular activities that enable them to live and share their faith and grow in evangelistic zeal.

Conclusion

In sum, the PROFess Framework provides a coherent and integrated vision for the formation of Christian educators at Franciscan University. Rooted in the Church's understanding of the human person and animated by the Five Essential Marks of Catholic Education, the framework ensures that professional excellence is never separated from relational charity, authentic formation, and Gospel witness. In this way, it reflects the fullness of the teacher's vocation as both educator and disciple.

This framework is not merely aspirational. It is enacted through deliberate and ongoing practices within the EPP, including the development of concrete, domain-specific goals that respond to the contemporary realities of both Catholic and public education. Through these efforts, the EPP seeks to form educators who are prepared not only to meet the demands of their profession, but to transform the communities they serve through truth, communion, and faithful witness. Ultimately, the PROFess Framework stands as both a guide and a commitment: to prepare educators who teach with clarity, relate with charity, form with integrity, and evangelize through the joyful witness of their lives.

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