

Dispositions of Teacher Scholars for Social Justice

(All IWU teacher candidates are expected to develop and demonstrate these dispositions.)

Reflection

Scholarly reflection involves asking questions, rethinking what one knows, posing problems, and generating possible solutions and self-knowledge. Collaborative reflection engages candidates in inquiry communities with their peers, their mentors, and their students. We expect candidates to re-examine their assumptions about learning and teaching, to be open to new ideas, to take seriously the tasks of self-assessment in considering how one engages all students in learning, and to engage in perspective taking to understand the experiences of students different from themselves. Teaching for social justice necessarily requires reflection about the educational implications of students' culture, ethnicity, class, language, and ability. Teacher scholars reflect upon their disciplinary knowledge and how to bring that knowledge to life for the students they teach. They examine their own practices as well as institutional practices with respect to creating inclusive, democratic classrooms.

Resourcefulness

Inquiring into one's students, one's discipline, one's teaching practices, and institutional practices while addressing the imperatives of social justice requires initiative, artistry, and creativity on the part of teachers. Resourcefulness requires a commitment to ongoing learning, the ability to draw from theory, research, and disciplinary knowledge when developing curriculum and pedagogy responsive to culture, ethnicity, class, language and ability. Resourcefulness involves searching for and modifying meaningful curricular materials, engaging teaching technologies, and collaborating with specialists, colleagues, families and community members to meet the learning needs of students.

Responsiveness

Inquiring into and reflecting upon the problems and prospects of schooling is not sufficient by itself if one is to adopt a commitment to teaching for social justice. One must engage in praxis. The concept of praxis comes to life in myriad ways as candidates respond to the lived realities of students in their classrooms. Responsiveness is required to develop authentic, reciprocal, and empowering relationships with students and their families and to develop multicultural, inclusive and democratic pedagogies. In turn, responsiveness requires an emotional capacity to enter into learning and teaching relationships, to appreciate and respect student and family diversity, and to willingly engage in collaboration with colleagues and students' families to meet students' needs. Responsiveness demands genuine care, and concern for all students' well-being and academic success. It includes taking time to know one's students and to thoughtfully create supportive learning environments. Responsiveness involves establishing caring, inclusive, inspiring and safe learning communities in which all students feel they belong. All of this in turn requires candidates to be reflective and resourceful; thus these three themes are integrally intertwined.