

Master in Teaching Program Focus 2011-13 Cohort

TEACHING, LEARNING AND SCHOOLING: SUSTAINING A JUST WORLD

Can prospective teachers become both educators and activists, embrace the complexities of global changes in the twenty-first century, and empower themselves and their students to move toward a just and sustainable life? The faculty of MiT **2011-13** believe that we must challenge our prevailing ideas about schooling, teaching, and who we serve to become advocates for all our students. The global changes already underway in the twenty-first century require a new awareness, different ways of action, and alternative visions from the dominant ones of the twentieth century.

Current demographic information strongly suggests that, by 2015, teachers can expect to see a more diverse population of students. They will work with students from a wide range of ethnic origins, languages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds. Their students will live in a society requiring people to engage in globally connected cultures through creative problem-solving, technological skills, effective collaboration with co-workers, and actively seeking information and resources. If public schools are to prepare students for public life in the future, our work demands that we teach students resilience; issues of fairness, equity and justice; and how to adapt to new, sustainable perspectives.

We invite people into this program who are eager to accept the challenge of discovering what it means to be a critically reflective practitioner. We want prospective teachers who are willing to question, challenge and transform the existing structures of schooling in order to create learning environments to support the needs of all students in the twenty-first century. Therefore, we seek candidates who are: (i) skilled in critical thinking as evidenced by reading and writing, (ii) passionately interested in multidisciplinary connections; (iii) open to giving and receiving critical, constructive feedback; (iv) committed to their own intellectual, political, and emotional growth; and (v) invested in serving the broader community.

Among the questions that will engage our study and practice are:

- What are the impacts of development, emotion, cognitive processing, differing abilities, cultural contexts, and recent brain research on teaching and learning?
- How can we as teachers encourage students' curiosity and lead them to shape their own questions and pursue their own answers in a cultural and societal context?
- How do learning theory and teaching practices inform each other and contribute to children's and adolescents' successes or failures?
- What are the implications of the State of Washington's standards for understanding sustainability?

- How will evidence-based education, including classroom-based assessments, affect what and how we trace positive impact on student learning?
- How can we as teachers educate students to ask their own questions and be able to articulate next steps in their own learning?
- How are questions of democracy, equity and excellence related to success or failure in our public schools and civic engagement in a democratic and sustainable society?
- How can understanding social and ecological justice help us help our students?
- How can we as teachers respond to and work with family and cultural belief systems that shape children's lives when those belief systems may or may not be the same as our own?
- How can we as teachers recognize and address our own biases so we can better serve all diversities in the twenty-first century?

Our exploration of educative practice, in John Dewey's terms, will be integrated with larger issues of social and ecological justice in our democracy.