

PARTNER TEACHER HANDBOOK



Educators as Architects of Change

Department of Teacher Education

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A MESSAGE

FROM OUR DEAN

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Dear Principals and Partner Teachers,

Every Teacher Candidate who enters your classroom represents our College's enduring belief that educators are Architects of Change, professionals who advocate for students and continually reflect on their practice to improve learning. That belief is not formed solely on our campus. It comes to life because you open your classrooms, share your expertise, and invest your time in developing the next generation of educators. At the John H. Lounsbury College of Education, we believe exceptional teacher preparation is built through authentic partnership. It is shaped by University Faculty, School Leaders, and Partner Teachers who share high expectations and a common purpose. School Leaders create opportunities for candidates to learn within their schools, while Partner Teachers provide the daily modeling and feedback that help candidates grow into confident, reflective professionals. These experiences prepare educators who are ready to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and communities across Georgia.

We are nationally accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC). These recognitions reflect our commitment to preparing educators who are ready to serve students with confidence from their very first day in the classroom. We are deeply grateful for the School Leaders and Partner Teachers whose mentorship makes that preparation possible.

This handbook is designed to support the work of preparing future educators. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of School Leaders, Partner Teachers, Teacher Candidates, and University Faculty while providing guidance to ensure a meaningful and successful clinical experience for everyone involved. More than a handbook, it reflects our commitment to supporting you throughout the clinical experience.

If you have additional questions or need assistance at any point, please contact our Partnership and Field Placement Director, Ms. Keisha Foston, at keisha.foston@gcsu.edu or 478-445-4546, or contact me directly at loleta.sartin@gcsu.edu or 478-445-2518.

Thank you for opening your classrooms, sharing your expertise, and investing in the next generation of educators. Every lesson you model and every opportunity you provide helps shape the educator each candidate is becoming. That influence will be reflected in countless classrooms and communities for years to come. We are honored to partner with you in this important work.

Sincerely,



Dr. Loleta D. Sartin
Dean
John H. Lounsbury College of Education

OVERVIEW OF THE MENTOR-LED, FIELD-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

The mentor-led, field-based teacher education program of the John H. Lounsbury College of Education of Georgia College (JHL COE) has enjoyed a long history as one of Georgia's most celebrated teacher preparation programs. Teacher Candidates (TCs) inherit a tradition of excellence that is recognized throughout the Southeast.

Our teacher education program is solidly grounded in the guidelines of nationally recognized professional organizations and is fully accredited by the Council for Accreditation and Educator Preparation (CAEP). The CAEP accreditation certifies that the JHL COE teacher education program meets or exceeds its rigorous standards of excellence. Our program is also fully approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC). The initial teacher education programs are nationally recognized by the following organizations: Elementary Education is recognized by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); Middle Grades Education is recognized by the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE); and Special Education is recognized by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). In 2026, Georgia College's undergraduate Elementary Education program earned an A+ from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) for its preparation of future teachers in evidence-based reading instruction.

The rationale for our program and the guiding principles that drive it are derived from our Conceptual Framework, a comprehensive statement of the vision of the JHL COE to assume a leadership role in America's colleges and universities. More particularly, the Conceptual Framework details the plans of Georgia College to enhance our role as "Architects of Change," preparing teachers to

improve the current state of education by collaborating with all stakeholders to solve problems creatively and to set the course for future trends in education. In essence, the Conceptual Framework identifies and explores the following core concepts: a foundation in liberal arts, a foundation in professional preparation, a foundation for addressing human relations and diversity issues, the development of dynamic leadership abilities, the differences in undergraduate and graduate programs and the solid foundation provided by the various components of the teacher education programs.

The Conceptual Framework of the JHL COE appears in its entirety near the back of this handbook. In reviewing this framework, Partner Teachers can gain a clear picture of the philosophy, guiding principles and organizational structure that have been interwoven in the preparation of our TCs as teachers for the future and as "Architects of Change."

What is a Field-Based Program and What are its Benefits?

All of our programs for initial certification are field-based, which means that our TCs spend numerous hours in a variety of schools before graduation. The GaPSC is the licensing agency in the state and sets the minimum requirements of TCs in field placement settings. These varied settings provide the opportunity for TCs to have field experiences that are sequenced, increasing in complexity until the final semester, when teacher candidates assume primary responsibility for instruction under the supervision of a certified Partner Teacher and University Supervisor. The field placements and internship provide an opportunity for TCs and Partner Teachers to co-plan and co-teach as the Partner



Teacher guides and supports the learning of the TC. The Master of Arts in Teaching Program (MAT), which offers initial certification at the secondary level, also places cohort students in schools for a significant amount of time.

Ga PSC Rules

The benefits of experiencing a variety of school settings and Partner Teachers and having extensive exposure to hundreds of children from diverse populations are numerous. Teacher Candidates draw from each aspect of their experiences to create their own understandings of the demands, challenges and rewards of teaching. They see many different teachers work with children of various ages and abilities in schools that vary in climate, location and administrative philosophy.

The wealth of experiences with the inquiry and reflection that occurs for all of our students through interaction with their Mentor Leaders, the rich liberal arts emphasis that is prevalent throughout the university and practice in pedagogy and technology create a group of new teachers ready to become

“Architects of Change” to meet the needs of diverse students in 21st century America. Our TCs are uniquely prepared to meet that challenge.

Who are Partner Teachers?

Many Partner Teachers wonder what the designation means and what it will entail for them as they take on the role. This handbook is written to help clarify the expectations and responsibilities associated with serving in this role.

Partner Teachers **model** their ability to reflect upon their teaching and help to make explicit for the TC the many variables that affect decision-making. This does not mean that Partner Teachers have everything “right.” In fact, effective Partner Teachers are well aware that they will continually refine their practice in response to student interests, ability levels and data collected. Effective Partner Teachers understand TCs are not necessarily to mimic the Partner Teacher’s practices, even when practices are successful, but the candidates are encouraged to engage in inquiry themselves as students of teaching.

A Partner Teacher is a **coach** who both encourages the TC as she works to achieve goals, and holds her accountable for reaching those goals. The Partner Teacher would likely be involved in helping the candidate set those goals and together, they would engage in frequent and regular dialogue about the goals. Observed behaviors would be recorded and become the basis for evaluations made of the TC. The Partner Teacher needs to be able to discern what approach is necessary and communicate the appropriate feedback whether it is praise or constructive criticism.

A Partner Teacher is a **collaborator** with the TC. In this collaborative relationship, the knowledge and skills of each is valued and significant in teaching the P-12 students. The process of collaboration changes throughout the experience as teaching roles shift. Contributions of each individual help to create ownership, responsibility and success. Because they are collaborators, the Partner Teacher should refrain from correcting the TC in front of students unless absolutely necessary.

A Partner Teacher is a **leader** who is committed to the improvement of the profession of education. Time and talents are given to assist in inducting new professional educators into the field in a positive and encouraging way that pays respect to teaching as a career and promotes the education profession.

How are Field Placements Made?

Undergraduate TCs in the JHL COE spend 1300 - 1600 hours in field experiences, including their internship. Field placements and internships are made in school systems in which the COE has a formalized partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Teacher Candidates are placed in schools by the Partnership and Field Placement Director with guidance from the Mentor Leaders and school administrators. The exact nature of field placements depends upon whether the TC is a junior, senior, or graduate student.

Junior TCs have three to four field placements through the academic year; seniors begin with the pre-planning experience and have a single placement in the fall semester with a student teaching internship during their final semester. Secondary MAT TCs may be enrolled in a one-year or two-year program. The timeline for their field experiences will vary based on the program of study, but the TCs will have both middle school and high school placements followed by a

student teaching internship in their final semester. Middle Grades MAT TCs have experiences with 4th and/or 5th grade students in an elementary school setting and 6th - 8th grade students in a middle school setting.

Placements are made in specific grade level settings and/or content areas to meet the GaPSC's requirements for TCs.

- For elementary education programs (P-5), field experiences are required in three grade bands: PK-K, 1-3 and 4-5.
- For middle grades education programs, field experiences are required in two grade bands: 4-5 and 6-8.
- For programs leading to P-12 certification, such as special education, field experiences are required in four grade bands: PK-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12.
- For secondary education programs (6-12) field experiences are required in two grade bands: 6-8 and 9-12.

Who are Mentor Leaders and What do they Do?

Mentor Leaders are members of the faculty of Georgia College who teach, coach, supervise and professionally "parent" the members of their cohort of TCs. The Mentor Leader and his/her cohort work together for two years (only one year for some MAT TCs), during which time TCs experience three semesters of field placements and their final placement for student teaching. The Mentor Leader works with the Partnership and Field Placement Director and school administrators to decide how TCs are paired with Partner Teachers. In addition, Mentor Leaders work with university supervisors to assess the TC's performance during the placement, confer with the Partner Teachers and award a grade to the TC's field experience.

The names, phone numbers and email addresses for all the Mentor Leaders appear in this handbook. Please know that they are eager to be of service to you as you work with the TC. Do not hesitate to request a visit, a conference or information from the Mentor Leader at any time during the TC's placement with you.

What is Expected of our Teacher Candidates?

Teacher Candidates in the JHL COE teacher preparation cohorts are emerging professionals. As such, we expect them to conduct themselves with dignity, decorum and consummate professionalism. While they are still students and entitled to make the kinds of mistakes we all made as novices, the TCs have been carefully selected and have been exceptionally well prepared to enter teaching. All TCs in the JHL COE, whatever their area of certification, share the following expectations:

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

- Teacher Candidates are expected to conduct themselves as welcomed guests and professional colleagues in the public school, and as such to be observant of the same rules, regulations and expectations that all professional educators in the public school observe.
- Teacher Candidates are expected to sign in and out every time they enter or leave the school. They are also expected to be on time and to stay until the specified time every day unless a variation is pre-approved by the Mentor Leader and/or Partner Teacher.
- If TC's must be absent, they are expected to notify the Partner Teacher, Mentor Leader and University Supervisor as early as possible before the school day begins. Make-up hours will be assigned by the Mentor Leader and approved by the Partner Teacher, as well as the school administrator if necessary.
- Teacher Candidates are expected to dress professionally, following the dress code specified by the administrator for the faculty in the school of placement. When in doubt, TCs should comply with a dressier, rather than more casual, standard.
- Teacher Candidates are expected to inquire about and follow the school's policies for use of copy machines, laminators, computers and other types of instructional equipment.
- Teacher Candidates are not to use the school's telephone, computers or fax machines for personal business.
- Teacher Candidates should not use their cell phones during school hours.
- Teacher Candidates may not smoke on school premises.
- All TCs are expected to direct their Partner Teachers to the JHL COE webpage and to the link for the Partner Teacher Handbook on the first day of each placement.
- Satisfactory field-based experience evaluations must be achieved during each placement in order to continue in the program.
- Teacher Candidates may never serve as a substitute teacher. The state of Georgia requires that a certified teacher or substitute teacher be available to supervise a TC's classroom performance.
- Teacher Candidates should adhere to the

GA CODE OF ETHICS

PERSONAL INTERACTIONS

- Teacher Candidates are expected to establish and maintain proper and cordial relationships with all school personnel, learning names and responsibilities to the degree allowed by circumstances.
- Teacher Candidates are to establish and maintain proper professional relationships with students and students' families or caretakers.
- Teacher Candidates are expected to avoid inappropriate language or conduct in the school setting and at any school-sponsored function.

TEACHING DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Teacher Candidates are expected to honor the confidentiality of information about students' grades, test scores, disciplinary records or any other personal information.
- Teacher Candidates are expected to seek prior approval for any learning activities they implement.



TEACHING DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES CONTINUED

- Teacher Candidates are expected to learn and follow guidelines and practices used by the Partner Teacher for classroom management. Any modifications need to be discussed with the Partner Teacher.
- Teacher Candidates are expected to seek the level of involvement expected by the university instructor, but with the full cooperation of the Partner Teacher.
- Teacher Candidates are expected to provide the Partner Teacher with timely and complete information about tasks assigned by university instructors to be carried out in the field placements.
- Teacher Candidates are expected to take the initiative in making their placements successful and getting the most out of each new learning experience.
- Teacher Candidates are expected to be observant of opportunities to be useful in the Partner Teacher's classroom and to volunteer her services as needed.

PARTNER TEACHING GUIDELINES

AN ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOME

- Provide a separate desk or space, a chair, a name card, student handbook, class roll, etc.
- Add the TC's name under yours outside the classroom.
- Prepare your students for the TC's arrival, making sure they know the TC is an authority figure and must be treated with the same respect shown to you. Be mindful of the TC's blossoming sense of authority; please take care not to undermine the TC in front of the students.
- Introduce the TC to each class, allowing a few minutes for him or her to tell about himself or herself.
- Take the TC on a tour of the school, pointing out key locations and introducing the TC to others.
- Provide copies of textbooks, faculty handbooks, etc.
- Discuss expectations for arrival and departure times, dress, do's and don'ts, copy machine policies, parking, etc.
- Give the TC one or more duties within the classroom from the first day.

A PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP

- Explain the decision-making process in classroom practices as you go, so the TC can begin to gain insights.
- Ask the TC open-ended questions about the observation of the teaching that is occurring to prompt analysis and stimulate creativity.
- Include the TC in planning sessions, parent conferences, student support team meetings, etc.
- Share materials and ideas. Let the TC make a copy of your best lesson plans, handouts, bulletin board files, parent letters, classroom rules, etc. Try to remember what it was like to be a beginner!

RULES AND POLICY GUIDANCE

- Whenever the opportunity arises, make references to school policies, district rules or laws that affect decisions.
- Caution the TC about the demands of confidentiality and the legal liabilities that might be encountered as a result of breaching confidential information.

- Monitor comments for indiscretions. Avoid unprofessional characterizations of students, their parents, colleagues or superiors.
- Caution the TC about establishing and maintaining appropriate relations with students and avoiding even the appearance of impropriety.

INFLUENCING THE TEACHER CANDIDATE

- Model the behavior that is expected.
- Set clear expectations for planning, materials, and evaluation. Point out what you are doing as you go.
- Plan with the TC and the Mentor Leader the gradual assumption of responsibilities based on the TC's performance and experience.
- Create the kind of climate in the classroom in which experimentation and mistakes are acceptable.
- Share advice and constructive feedback.
- Fill out the TC's evaluations in a way that honestly reflects the performance. Every TC is not expected to perform at an excellent or even proficient level at all times in every placement, especially in the beginning. Honest feedback will allow the Mentor Leader and the TC the opportunity to track growth and improvement.
- Review any teaching evaluations with the TC. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable doing this, communicate this concern with the Mentor Leader and/or university supervisor that is supervising the TC.
- Encourage the TC to be reflective about his or her professional growth.
- Increase feedback as the TC assumes more responsibility.
- Accentuate the positive! However, do not withhold important information that could be useful to the TC because you are afraid it might be discouraging.
- Congratulate yourself for influencing the future in a powerful way!

EVALUATION OF TEACHER CANDIDATE PERFORMANCE

The assessment of TCs, both formative and summative, is a very important responsibility of the Partner Teacher. This feedback supports the professional growth of the TC and promotes meaningful reflection over his or her development. One of the forms of assessment that will be completed by the Partner Teacher is the teaching observation. You will be asked to complete several formal teaching observations of the TC whom you are mentoring. You will evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson and provide comments based on a TC's performance in that specific lesson. It is recommended that after the lesson is taught and you have provided feedback, that you engage in dialogue with the TC to discuss the effectiveness of the lesson in supporting student achievement and to encourage the TC to share his or her perspectives of his or her performance.

In addition to feedback provided through teaching observations, you will be asked to complete formative assessments provided to you by the TC. These assessments are more holistic in nature, seeking observable information based on a TC's willingness to take initiative, build rapport with students, uphold professional standards, demonstrate content knowledge, ethics and so on. Please ask your TC to provide information regarding all assessments to be completed during his or her time in your classroom.

In addition to the assessments mentioned above, the JHL COE seeks to learn more about the growth of the teacher candidates across the college. In an effort to gather this information so that we can involve ourselves in continuous improvement, we evaluate all JHL COE TCs on two assessments: 1.) Initial TC Field Experience Performance Assessment; and 2.) Initial TC Candidate Professionalism Assessment.

PBDA USAGE GUIDELINES

Partner Teachers are also asked to complete the Professional Behaviors and Dispositions Assessment (PBDA) on each candidate at multiple intervals throughout the candidate's program. This assessment evaluates a TC's success in exhibiting Professional Dispositions and Skills. You will complete the rubric based on observable behaviors of the TC.

MENTOR/COOPERATING TEACHER GUIDE

This link provides information for Partner Teachers to successfully complete the PBDA assessment for teacher candidates in Watermark.



COMMON QUESTIONS OF PARTNER TEACHERS

What if there are concerns about the Teacher Candidate's performance?

Georgia College's COE prides itself on preparing TCs who are ready to teach before their actual student teaching internship in their final semester. During their first three semesters of field experience, TCs have many opportunities to practice their skills, try out the techniques and strategies they've seen modeled for them and create a few of their own.

Occasionally, once the formal student teaching opportunity arrives, TCs will encounter difficulties in various aspects of their performance. It is at this point that you, the Partner Teacher, become most valuable and that you and the Mentor Leader can work together to intervene and ease the TC through the difficulty and onward toward a promising career. When you first notice that the TC is not progressing as quickly as you would like, try the following strategies:

- Meet regularly to review the TC's plans for instruction.
- If there are several areas of concern, concentrate on just one or two of them (example: "Today I will be watching to see if you state the objective of your lesson before you begin" or "Today I'll be watching to see if you have the students' attention before you begin.")
- For problem areas of performance, clarify your expectations with specific directions (example: "I expect you to stand at the door as students enter, direct them to their seats, make eye contact and have them begin the activity you have written on the board. As you give those directions, move and speak with authority as you circulate among the students. Mentally take the roll as you walk and begin your introductory remarks.")
- Document any resolved OR unresolved matters on the TC's evaluation form.
- After a lesson, ask the TC to reflect on what was taught and explain how it can be modified the next time.
- Share your own experience in the area of concern.
- Provide resources you might have that could improve the TC's performance.

- Ask the TC to observe you and some of your colleagues who have mastered the area of concern and to take notes of specific strategies used to avoid the problem being addressed. Review these observations with the TC soon after the lesson and give an opportunity to practice the new behavior soon.
- Have the TC videotape himself or herself and review it together, letting him or her take the lead in critiquing it.
- If necessary, reduce the overall teaching responsibilities so that your TC can concentrate on the problem areas.

What if the candidate is stronger, better prepared than usual and essentially ready to teach when she arrives?

We often find that the extensive field experience of our TCs equips them so well for the classroom that they are "ready to teach" prior to their internship experience. In that case, you may want to consult with the Mentor Leader and/or university supervisor and move the TC into more responsibility quickly and into a variety of enriching activities. Some suggestions are as follows:

- Accelerate the schedule described in the timeline you received for the student teaching (internship) semester.
- Help the TC find new ways to meet students' individual needs.
- Encourage the TC to assume additional extracurricular activities (parent conferences, book fairs, etc.).
- Ask the TC to observe other teachers who have areas of expertise that would be helpful.
- Encourage the TC to attend professional meetings or conferences.
- Share a thought-provoking professional book or journal article.
- Help the TC compile files of ideas, articles, lesson plans, bulletin boards ideas, etc.

ARCHITECTS OF CHANGE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Educators as Architects of Change

Graduates of the JHL COE, both graduate and undergraduate, take their places as Architects of Change in the public school systems of Georgia, working in the interest of all young people. While preserving the best of our liberal arts heritage, our graduates are equipped with the intellectual and social skills they need in order to serve as advocates for all PK-12 students.

The "Educators as Architects of Change" Model

In 1996, the faculty adopted the model, "Educators as Architects of Change" to guide our curricular and instructional decisions. Educators as Architects of Change is a model that exemplifies our dedication to careful, reflective and purposeful improvement of schools through the preparation of professional educators. The Architects of Change model demonstrates our belief that effective educators require a discrete set of skills, including the ability to advocate for students, to become mentors and leaders within schools, and to reflect on the meaning of the social practices they find in schools. Our faculty reaffirms its utility, distilling our commitment to the principles of reasoned, artful and purposeful improvement of schooling.

Conceptual Framework

The faculty of the JHL COE believes that our schools must fulfill the educational needs of our populace while emphasizing fairness, democracy, and intellectual curiosity. Amid a climate of change and uncertainty, we inspire educators to create student-centered learning environments as the primary expression of strong pedagogy. We use the Educators as Architects of Change model to guide the development of an inclusive and diverse community of stakeholders, consisting of students, educators, TCs and the public.

Since the inception of Educators as Architects of Change as our guiding principle, the faculty has continually reassessed our programs. Informed by research and reflective analysis, we have continued our intensive cohort model for our undergraduate programs as well as some of our graduate programs. We

encourage professional educators to reach out to stakeholders to develop citizens who value formal education, literacy in its many forms and individual differences.

This framework is designed to produce change agents, based on the following core principles:

- the Liberal Arts and integrated learning
- professional preparation
- human relationships and diversity
- leadership for learning and teaching communities

In its programs of study, the Georgia College faculty affirms the importance of programs that situate educators as researchers, leaders and Architects of Change in the schools and the larger community.

Liberal Arts and Integrated Learning

The Architects of Change model demands that our graduates understand themselves as both "doing" and "thinking" about their professional practice (Hutton, 2006). We seek to preserve the intellectual commitments of the liberal arts college: "to pose questions to the world, and to reflect on what is presented in experience" (Greene, 1998, p. 21). We see development as encompassing the cognitive, emotional, moral and civic dimensions found in the liberal arts.

Professional Preparation

Teacher candidates in most of Georgia College's professional educator programs join cohorts of peers, allowing them to learn from and interact with each other in intensive, field-based courses. Integral to the cohort is a Mentor Leader who acts as a role model, advisor and facilitator of learning for each student. Consequently, faculty and students both live education grounded in action, community, and collaboration. Through participation in our programs, TCs not only acquire a strong foundation in major content and pedagogical areas, but also learn to connect theory to practice by applying and conducting classroom research.

We recognize that "skilled teachers are the most crucial of all schooling inputs" (Ferguson, 1991, p. 490). Our field-based cohort model serves as a powerful vehicle



to integrate theory and practice by fostering close collaboration among faculty, TCs and professionals in the field. We understand teaching to be complex, requiring systematic reflection on practice. In order to become true Architects of Change, educators must go beyond simple bureaucratic solutions, learning to make instructional and curricular decisions based on the exigencies of real life in schools (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Human Relationships and Diversity

Building upon strong liberal arts, professional and pedagogical bases, TCs in the Georgia College professional education programs are encouraged to construct a well-grounded framework for appropriately addressing human relations and diversity issues in schools. As democratic educators, we understand schooling to be part of the real world and part of children's lives. "We share the knowledge gained in classrooms beyond those settings, thereby working to challenge the construction of knowledge as always and only available to the elite" (Hooks, 2003, p. 41) Our TCs are exposed to theory and practice that foster the belief that all students can learn and should be treated as individuals with unique and various needs, skills, talents, interests, histories and beliefs. As Architects of Change, educator candidates learn to design inclusive, culturally sensitive and relevant learning experiences in order to create learning communities in which all people are respected and appreciated, and in which academic achievement, positive intergroup relations, and critical consciousness are expected.

Leadership for Learning and Teaching Communities

By modeling successful teaching, questioning assumptions, and posing challenging problems, instructors in the Georgia College professional education programs encourage educator candidates to construct their own understanding of education. In this way, candidates may feel empowered to continue learning throughout their lives, to be flexible in adapting to difficulties, to imagine creative solutions, to communicate effectively, and to take necessary risks in meeting future needs. The professional preparation programs seek to create empowered educational leaders who have the ability to cultivate partnerships within the schools and community, act as advocates for the students under their care, and collaborate with others to creatively solve problems and make decisions. Our programs foster commitment to equity and social justice, and provide students the opportunity to develop as leaders and Architects of Change.

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*Resources for the Partner Teacher Handbook were borrowed from a similar publication by James Madison University (1998-1999).

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION DIRECTORY

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