

CSU Chico SOE Mission and Vision Statements, and Conceptual Framework

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Vision Statement

The School of Education is a recognized leader in preparing educators to meet the needs of a diverse, democratic, and sustainable society through inquiry, collaboration, and service toward a socially and ecologically just world.

Mission Statement

We believe in the power of education to create a strong democratic and sustainable society that honors diversity and inclusivity. The mission of the SOE, in collaboration with our community partners, is to support the development of effective, reflective, and engaged educators who value the identities of all students, their families, and the communities they serve. We are committed to scholar-practitioner inquiry and responsible praxis-based pedagogies that serve as tools toward cultivating socially and ecologically just practices in classrooms, local communities, and beyond.

Conceptual Framework - Social and Ecological Justice

Inclusivity - Honoring inclusivity requires acknowledging that diversity is dynamic and ubiquitous and encompasses the abundance of differences among all living things. The acknowledgment and affirmation of diversity serves as the foundation for appreciating and building an inclusive community. Employing a social and ecological justice lens extends diversity beyond traditional consideration,¹ to include biodiversity. Diversity stems from the relationships and interactions among all these facets and when embraced, is at the core of an inclusive and resilient community. Inclusivity requires teachers to actively and intentionally engage with these understandings of diversity toward developing socially just, and sustainable communities.

Democracy - In a strong democracy, people participate individually and collaboratively, and act responsibly in the best interest of their communities and the public good. The fundamental principles of a strong democracy include: a) the right to participate, b) the responsibility to participate, and c) the will to make decisions that are fundamentally for the good of the whole. This “whole” includes all living and nonliving aspects of Earth’s systems. Mutual engagement in inclusive communities requires that teachers and students utilize restorative justice practices to negotiate and resolve conflict, in order to make anti-oppressive decisions that sustain democratic practices while advocating for social and ecological justice. Teachers play a central role in supporting students to engage with

¹ Diversity based on, but not limited to, ability, age, culture, disability, gender identity and expression, language, race/ethnicity, sexuality, regional and national origin, political affiliation, religion, socio-economic background, and intellectual diversity.

democratic practices. These practices promote inquiry, individual and collective agency, critical dialogue and debate, civic engagement. These are rooted in ecological and anti-oppressive literacy – in service for and with oppressed communities.

Sustainability - Sustainable communities work toward intentionally cultivating socially and ecologically just systems. Sustainable communities recognize that humans are part of and mutually dependent upon ecological systems and that underserved communities are increasingly and directly impacted in harmful ways by oppressive policies and practices. Mutually engaging with living economies, cultures, and democracies supports the development of healthy, socially just communities within a diverse global context. Teachers play a crucial role in supporting students to act responsibly toward sustaining and respecting life and the environment in all its forms.

Service - Service in education is a core value to a democratic society vested in principles such as empathy, individual responsibility, and collective action. Service is indicative of understanding how each person is part of a socio-political network, interconnected to a global community. Service goes beyond one-time community volunteerism to a more inclusive vision in which teachers work for and with diverse communities to communicate issues and ideas, solve problems, promote civic engagement, and enhance the wellbeing of all members of the community. Service draws from a vision of a socially and ecologically just society. Understanding the global interrelationships of environmental, geopolitical, economic, and social networks supports continual growth toward a more just and sustainable democracy. Teachers and students design and enact curricula that support underserved communities toward social and ecological justice.

Inquiry - The inquiry process is a fundamental framework for teaching and learning. Critical inquiry provides a structure wherein teachers and students co-construct knowledge through exploration, analysis, synthesis, and creative thinking. Critical inquiry and knowledge construction honors and draws on indigenous knowledge and cultural and ethical practices that support the preservation of the public commons and the public good.² Cultivating knowledge through questioning encourages transformative practices that draw on reasoning and analysis³ toward a strong democracy. Inquiry that fosters healthy social and ecological relationships includes cultural, political, economic, environmental, and geographic factors. Centering social and ecological justice at the core of the inquiry process contributes toward co-creating the knowledge, dispositions, and practices toward a just world. Teachers and students develop critical inquiry questions and engage in research projects while taking action toward cultivating meaningful solutions in response to problems they identify within their local communities.

Pedagogical Approach

Praxis-based Pedagogy - Praxis-based pedagogy draws on the tenets of critical pedagogy and cultural organizing in order to engage educational practitioners in action and reflection.⁴ By linking theory with practice, teachers work alongside students employing liberatory

² Doing so preserves the rich cultural practices that promote the cultural and ecological commons while avoiding constructing knowledge that is oppressive and anthropocentric.

³ Utilizing multiple perspectives, formulating questions, literary analysis, evaluative thinking, and connections between inter- and intra-relationships. Students develop evaluative skills that include the use of evidence, logic, source analysis, reasoned and ethical judgment, hypothesis development, testing, drawing conclusions.

⁴ Cammarota, 2010; Freire, 1970.

practices in their classrooms, local communities, and beyond. Praxis-based pedagogy requires grappling with knowledge, power, and language with the intention of abolishing systems of oppression and dispossession. Students and teachers critically engage with socio-political, economic, and ecological analyses of oppressive policies and practices while leveraging their collective knowledge from a historical context as historical beings. As change agents, students and teachers draw on their lived experiences, critical consciousness, and collective agency with a commitment toward social and ecological justice by naming and confronting the oppressive systems and practices that exist today. Creating and sustaining classroom communities that embrace practices rooted in cultivating hope, healing, and care are crucial components of building thriving communities driven by action and reflection. It is within this context that legacies are shared, realized, and new stories have the potential to transpire. Classroom communities engaging with praxis-based pedagogy imagine their communities as they ought to be, while teaching and learning for social and ecological justice.

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