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# Initial teacher education in Ontario: The four-semester teacher education programs after five years

Canadian Association for Teacher Education (CATE)

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# **INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN ONTARIO: THE FOUR-SEMESTER TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS AFTER FIVE YEARS**

*Edited by*

Julian Kitchen & Diana Petrarca

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How can we prepare those who enter the profession  
to *teach for deeper learning*—and, in so doing,  
to *teach for equity and social justice* as well?

~ Linda Darling-Hammond and Jeannie Oakes  
*Preparing Teachers for Deeper Learning, 2019, p.4*

Miigwech, merci, thank you to Ontario's teacher educators who have tirelessly continued to redevelop, improve and implement teacher education programs so that our future teachers will be equipped to teach for deeper learning and to teach for equity and social justice.

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## CHAPTER 17

### **TEACHER EDUCATION AT TYNDALE: FAITH-BASED, PRIVATELY FUNDED, PUBLICLY ACCOUNTABLE**

*Heather J. S. Birch and Carla D. Nelson*

Tyndale University

Tyndale University, a private Christian institute of higher education, offers a post-baccalaureate teacher education program that leads to teacher accreditation in Ontario. This program, explicitly rooted in the Christian faith tradition, does not receive any provincial funding but is accountable to the public through the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities and the Ontario College of Teachers. The program operates with the approval of the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) and is accredited through the OCT. All qualified applicants, regardless of background, graduate as teachers certified to teach in Ontario. As of November 2019, 11 graduating cohorts (633 graduates) have earned the Tyndale B.Ed. degree.

Our purpose in this chapter is to describe the intentionality with which this unique teacher education program was designed. First, we offer a brief history of Tyndale and a description of the impetus to add a B.Ed. degree program to its list of offerings. Then, we present an explanation of the program's format and structure, emphasizing a series of program distinctives including: the holistic approach that acknowledges the spiritual aspect of teacher formation; the 16-month consecutive semester format; program coherence and through-lines; the intentionally structured and supported practicum experiences; and the well-defined conceptual framework that informs program practices. Finally, we identify the various research-based theoretical frameworks that informed and continue to inform the intent of the program.

Throughout the chapter, the above listed distinctives will be described, alongside quotations from Tyndale B.Ed. graduates who are referred to by pseudonyms, and whose words illustrate their lived experience of the program. The included quotations represent data from an ongoing research inquiry titled, "Storying Tyndale's B.Ed. Program." This qualitative inquiry represents three main data sources, including two assignments that teacher candidates complete in light of their developing worldview and their developing teacher identity, as well as the transcripts from audio recordings of Final Conversations, i.e., an official opportunity for each teacher candidate to meet with two or three Faculty members, and to bring full circle the relationship that was begun when the teacher candidate first arrived on campus to be interviewed as an applicant.

## EDUCATIONAL LEGACY AT TYNDALE

Tyndale University is an institution of higher education that stands in the Protestant Evangelical tradition. Tyndale is located on a 56-acre campus on Bayview Avenue—the former home of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto. It is not surprising, then, that it is sometimes mistaken for a Catholic institution; while the Sisters and Tyndale represent different Christian traditions, they commonly embody the mission of advancing Christian education and community service. The chapel on campus continues to be used as a sacred space to which all members of the Tyndale community have access for prayer and reflection. Tyndale offers undergraduate degrees in the humanities, social sciences, and business, as well as graduate degrees, including the Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies, and Doctor of Ministry. The institution boasts a history as a place of scholarship and professional religious training for over 125 years, having undergone a number of name changes until most recently being officially named Tyndale University. Tyndale has shown steady growth since 2010, and total enrollment is currently approaching 1,600 students.

Almost from its inception, Tyndale has been involved in the preparation of teachers. In the early years, this preparation was primarily for education in the church context and the degrees granted were religious degrees, including the Bachelor of Religious Education and Master of Divinity in Educational Ministries. More recently, interdisciplinary programs of Psychology, Sociology, and Religious Studies were developed (including a Bachelor of Arts in Human Services that is conjointly offered with a Diploma in Early Childhood Education from Seneca College in Toronto). As a result of offering these programs, a significant number of Tyndale alumni, over the last 100+ years, have worked and continue to work in private, religious, and public educational spaces in the Province of Ontario and beyond.

Tyndale is deeply committed to the central Canadian values of a critical liberal democracy: values of diversity, equity, and social justice for all people. As such, after receiving degree-granting status in 2005, Tyndale was well-positioned to initiate plans for a program that could empower its graduates to seek provincial certification within an educational landscape that also embodied these values. Tyndale's vision is to prepare graduates for teaching excellence regardless of the context—be that public, private, or faith-based schools in Ontario, Canada, or abroad.

No matter the type of school, Tyndale B.Ed. graduates must be equipped to address the needs of all their students, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. For Tyndale, this is in response to the mandate of God that we love our neighbour as God loves us. There is a recognition at Tyndale of the importance of preparing our graduates to understand the particular needs of minority and marginalized populations, students at risk, and those with special learning needs, not just as a matter of best practice, human rights, or educational mandate, but also as springing from our deeply held belief in the value and uniqueness of each person with a destiny and with the right to live their life to the fullest. We strive to embed within our program opportunities for understanding the need to cultivate a nurturing learning environment that values and respects the whole human person, and that enables children to mature intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. We believe this allows our graduates to be fully prepared to teach in the schools of Ontario, through appreciating and embracing their role in the formation of children who will become both informed citizens and responsible participants in a civil society.

As previously stated, Tyndale is privately funded. Without government financial support and without any guaranteed financial commitment from a specific Christian denomination or group of churches, Tyndale meets its obligations through the acquisition of funds from four sources: tuition and fees; ancillary funds from the operation; Annual Fund; and Capital Campaigns. Thus, the number of new B.Ed. enrollments each year is not tied specifically to provincial funding. New enrollments are limited, however, because the program operates by virtue of the consent of the Minister of Colleges and Universities of Ontario, whose office, in conjunction with the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB), grants permission for Tyndale to offer the program.

While Tyndale is a private institution, virtually every person who teaches in the program has experience as an Ontario public school educator. Thus, Tyndale faculty are fully committed to the value of publicly funded K-12 education and to the mission of preparing our teacher candidates to enter that system. At the same time, we enjoy the freedom to explore how our faith impacts who we are as educators, and the freedom to help our teacher candidates discover how their own beliefs will impact them as public educators. Resources on the Ontario Ministry of Education website, including *Stepping Stones: A resource on youth development* (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2012) and the Health and Physical Education curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 2019b), acknowledge the reality of the potential for spiritual experience and spiritual understanding to impact learners. The documents feature an image of the *Stepping Stones* framework, which depicts the multidimensional nature of development as inclusive of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical dimensions of development, and which are ultimately rooted in an “enduring (yet changing)” self that impacts growth and understanding (p. 2). That self includes the spirit (See Figure 1). The description of the framework mentions Indigenous communities as examples of those who have traditionally viewed development in this holistic way, conceiving the whole self as including the spirit, and acknowledging a deep interconnectedness between the cognitive, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual aspects of learning and growth. Tyndale also acknowledges this holistic approach and takes seriously the integral connection between the spiritual and the self. Teacher candidates are given specific opportunities to reflect on their spiritual development during in class activities as well as culminating activity assignments. The value of such opportunities is demonstrated in the following excerpts from Final Conversations:

I have come to the realization that my faith journey has also had an influence on others around me. One example of a time where my faith journey influenced my daughter is when she said, “let’s say a prayer before you submit your Tyndale application online.” This was the first time my youngest daughter had ever suggested us praying together for something that was important to me. I realized in that moment that this journey to become a Catholic educator was not only my journey. The journey of faith brings people together. (Penny, Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2019)

I now see that faith can be incorporated into teaching in simple ways; it doesn’t have to be grandiose or blatant, but rather, we can interweave the values that all faiths teach into our lessons—caring, love, kindness, compassion, humility, positivity and other constructive virtues can all be reinforced by the examples we choose to highlight or the words we decide to use when teaching. (Warun, Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2019)

**Figure 1**

*Stepping Stones Framework diagram depicting development as centrally influenced by the self/spirit (Used with permission from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/copyrigh.html>)*



## PROGRAM FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

### SCHEDULE

While the program has historically had as many as 66 teacher candidates in a cohort, since the implementation of the enhanced teacher preparation program in 2015, ministerial consent to offer the program has been conditional upon annual new enrolment to a maximum of 53. Since then, 53 candidates are admitted and begin the program each year, which is scheduled as four consecutive semesters. From start to end, the program length is 16 months, with teacher candidates beginning in August, and if the program is followed as planned, completing the program the following November.

The four consecutive academic semesters, beginning in August, have been intentionally structured to facilitate certain benefits for teacher candidates, besides expeditious completion given the enhanced program's four semester mandate. First, the consecutive approach fosters the development of a professional community and an immersive approach to the teaching profession. Second, our teacher candidates, having taken two courses during the month of August that focus on creating safe and inclusive educational spaces as well as differentiated instruction, enter their first placement during the first week of school in September with some experience of teacher education. Thus, they have the twin benefits of being present during the first week of school in a classroom to view the culture-building, routine-establishing practices of the teacher, and they arrive at that experience with some preparation and with a sense of being part of an established (even for a short two months) teacher educator community. This may manifest as increased ease of use of professional vocabulary, heightened attentiveness to the development of community within the placement classroom, and an informed willingness to participate and learn within the

placement. These are the benefits at the outset. A third benefit, during the last four months of the program, is that teacher candidates will have completed nearly all their coursework and thus have the opportunity to focus on their final practicum placement to invoke all of the learning garnered throughout the program and concentrate on consolidation of that learning. It is here, in the area of program and structure, that we see the greatest benefit of the enhanced program for the preparation of Tyndale's teacher candidates. The four-semester structure allows us to offer a concentration of courses in the summer months and access over 100 in-school days interspersed with additional courses when school is in session.

## COURSES

The following table lists the courses that each teacher candidate takes throughout the four semesters, and also depicts the intentional organization of the courses into three categories: concept courses, emphasizing theoretical approaches and foundational knowledge of educational ways of knowing and acting; content courses, focused on pedagogical approaches appropriate to each curricular area and developing familiarity with the Ontario curriculum; and context courses, addressing knowledge of contemporary educational environments and the implications for practice.

The shift from Tyndale's three-semester (12-month) program to the enhanced four-semester (16-month) program in 2015 allowed us to redesign several courses. However, Tyndale's program was already requiring nearly 60 credit hours of coursework and practicum days prior to the launch of the enhanced program.

## PROGRAM COHERENCE AND THROUGH-LINES

Program coherence is achieved through various means, most notably through a commitment to the program's conceptual framework, as will be described in the following section. Other ways of ensuring program coherence are considerations of topics and skills and how these are covered. For example, assessment is covered through a spiral curriculum approach and is addressed in multiple courses throughout the program, allowing for an investigation of the topic through the lens of various course foci. Thus, assessment in math and assessment in the arts can be explored specifically. Teaching and learning of specific skills are also planned to occur within designated courses, i.e., in Social Studies, teacher candidates will learn to create a Unit Plan.

There are two aspects that are specifically conceived of as program through-line threads, each running across a series of courses. These aspects include FSL (French as a Second Language) and Indigenous perspectives. Teacher candidates enrolled in the P/J FSL program complete several in-class activities and assignments in French to provide opportunities for engaging in language-specific conversations and vocabulary development.

The Indigenous through-line is supported by Tyndale's program Elder. This role is envisioned as providing spiritual and cultural leadership, as well as practical guidance, enacted through relationships. The program Elder brings his perspective based on his knowledge of traditional ways, teachings, and ceremonies. This perspective informs the program faculty and staff to increase understanding and provide input into decision making. The teacher candidates learn culturally appropriate approaches to curriculum through interactions with the program Elder in the

context of informal conversations, presentations, and meetings over lunch. With the role of Elder, he is able to, as described by Gladys Kidd, “show you what you can do in a good way” (as cited in Stiegelbauer, 1996, p. 57). The program Elder uses his life experience to provide guidance to teacher candidates as they learn about how to best support Indigenous learners within their classroom, and to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing among all learners. Instead of teaching a single course, the program Elder contributes to several courses, providing an Indigenous perspective in each particular context. For example, the program Elder teaches about an Indigenous theory of development within *The Developing Learner* course, about an Indigenous understanding of patterns and symmetry in Mathematics, and about storytelling in Language.

## PRACTICUM

Teacher candidates in Tyndale’s program are involved in a variety of in-school experiences in each of the three practicum components. In total, teacher candidates complete between 107 and 110 days of practical experience. Each practicum component has two phases, Phase 1 being Observation and Participation, and Phase 2 being Practice Teaching. Observation and Participation consists of at least one full week plus one or two days weekly in the placement, while Practice Teaching constitutes a 3- to 6-week block of daily commitment to the placement classroom.

The Observation and Participation phase coincides with the coursework the teacher candidates are engaged in throughout the given semester and is intentionally structured as an opportunity for teacher candidates to observe and participate, but not to take over the instructional responsibilities in the classroom. The phase enables active participation and time for reflection on the connections between theory and practice. It provides the host teacher with opportunities to model effective practice and for each teacher candidate to become familiar with the students and classroom routines. This arrangement continues into the Practice Teaching Phase with a gradual release of responsibility. This weaving of placement and coursework throughout the Observation and Participation phase allows for the application of theory and pedagogy. For example, certain assignments for courses involve collecting assessment data from a student in their placement class and creating responsive plans for instruction that are appropriate to that student’s needs. Thus, the teacher candidate receives descriptive feedback from their host teacher, as well as from an instructor who is focused on pedagogy in a certain curricular area.

Intentionally, one dedicated Faculty Advisor is assigned to supervise a teacher candidate for all three of their practicum placements for the duration of the program. Each Faculty Advisor takes on the crucial role of mentoring their teacher candidates by providing support through visits to their placement schools to observe, assess progress, and communicate with the host teacher. Faculty Advisors are considered partners who help teacher candidates navigate the increasing demands of each practicum placement, apply coursework learning to in-class practice, and embrace the learning opportunities in each practicum experience, no matter the challenges. During the first week on campus, the new cohort is introduced to the Faculty Advisor team and hears about their individual achievements in education such as their experiences as administrators, instructional coaches, and classroom teachers; areas of research interest; as well as their awards and recognitions earned. Then each Faculty Advisor meets with their teacher candidate group of between 5 and 10 teacher candidates, where they share “First Impressions,” an activity that is part of the course *Creating Safe, Engaging and Inclusive Learning Environments*. Each teacher candidate, as well as each Faculty Advisor, participates in “First Impressions,” bringing an artifact

to represent themselves and using that artifact to introduce themselves to the group. This activity has several purposes: to prepare teacher candidates to introduce themselves to the learners in their practicum placement classroom; to encourage teacher candidates to reflect on their identity at the outset of their teacher preparation program journey; and to establish the smaller learning community with a common Faculty Advisor within the larger community.

**Table 1**

*Program Requirements*

STRANDS	COURSES (Credit hours)		
<b>CONCEPT</b> (Theory and Foundation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Democratic Values, Christian Perspectives and Education (3), OR</li> <li>• Religious Education: Democratic Values, Catholic Perspectives and Education (3)</li> <li>• The Developing Learner (3)</li> <li>• Reflective Practice (3)</li> </ul>		
<b>CONTENT</b> (Methodology)	Primary/Junior and P/J FSL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language and Literacy Pt 1 (3)</li> <li>• Language and Literacy Pt 2 (3)</li> <li>• Mathematics Pt 1 (3)</li> <li>• Mathematics Pt 2 (3)</li> <li>• Science and Technology (3)</li> <li>• Health &amp; Phys Ed (3)</li> <li>• Social Studies (3)</li> <li>• Arts (3)</li> </ul>		Junior/Intermediate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language and Literacy – Pt 1 (3)</li> <li>• Language and Literacy – Pt 2 (3)</li> <li>• Mathematics Pt 1 (3)</li> <li>• Mathematics Pt 2 (3)</li> <li>• Science and Technology (3)</li> <li>• Health &amp; Phys Ed (3)</li> <li>• Soc St J and History/Geography I (3)</li> <li>• Arts (3)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Years (3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• French as a Second Language (6)</li> </ul>	One Intermediate Teachable from (3): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• French as a Second Lang I</li> <li>• Science-General I</li> <li>• English I</li> <li>• Music I</li> <li>• Mathematics I</li> <li>• History I</li> <li>• Geography I</li> </ul>
<b>CONTEXT</b> (Foundation and Applied Theory)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating Safe, Engaging and Inclusive Learning Environments (3)</li> <li>• Differentiated Instruction for Diverse Learners – Part 1 (3)</li> <li>• Differentiated Instruction for Diverse Learners – Part 2 (3)</li> <li>• Education Act and <i>Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession</i> (3)</li> <li>• Educational Technology (3)</li> </ul>		
<b>PROFESSIONAL SEMINAR and PRACTICA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Seminar (3)</li> <li>• Practicum 1 = 2 (2) Literacy and Numeracy, ~30-31 days</li> <li>• Practicum 2 = 2 (2) Full Associate Teacher's Assignment, ~41 days</li> <li>• Practicum 3 = 2 (2) Full AT's Assignment including Focus, ~36-39 days</li> </ul>		

## THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, the conceptual framework that embodies the vision of Tyndale's B.Ed. program is described, which includes a model of differentiated instruction, institutional mission statement, program mission statement, and program outcomes.

### HUME'S MODEL OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

The conceptual framework is based on the work of Karen Hume (2008), which is not specifically religious, nor was it developed in connection with anyone from Tyndale. But the framework was found to be particularly resonant with Tyndale's vision for teacher education. Hume's educational career was based in Ontario and reached an international audience. Her framework for understanding differentiated instruction was described in the book *Start where they are: Differentiating for success with the young adolescent*. Hume did not originally envision that this framework would be used to inform and guide a program of teacher education, but she subsequently visited Tyndale, and acknowledged and approved of the framework's use in such a context. Hume has been a guest on the Tyndale campus on several occasions for the purpose of interacting with the teacher candidates. Upon her retirement in 2015, she donated her professional library to Tyndale.

Hume's adapted model, depicted in Figure 2 below, encompasses the teaching and learning process, is accessible for beginning teachers, and allows for the examination of the influence beliefs have on teachers' educational decisions. According to the framework *Teacher Beliefs and Knowledge*, one of the dimensions that impacts every learning environment is depicted at the bottom of the framework as the foundation of our effectiveness – our knowledge of the essential understandings and our beliefs about teaching, learning, and students – beliefs that emerge from the worldview we each hold. This foundation can include religious beliefs, or in other words, beliefs about God and humanity's relationship to God. We have found that reflecting on one's worldview and how that impacts every learning space a teacher creates is accessible to all teacher candidates from various faith backgrounds, and those with no particular faith affiliation. Not only is this kind of reflection accessible, but it is crucial for fully understanding one's own teacher identity and the impact that identity has on learners in the classroom. Hume's model therefore aligns with our institution's grounding in foundational beliefs.

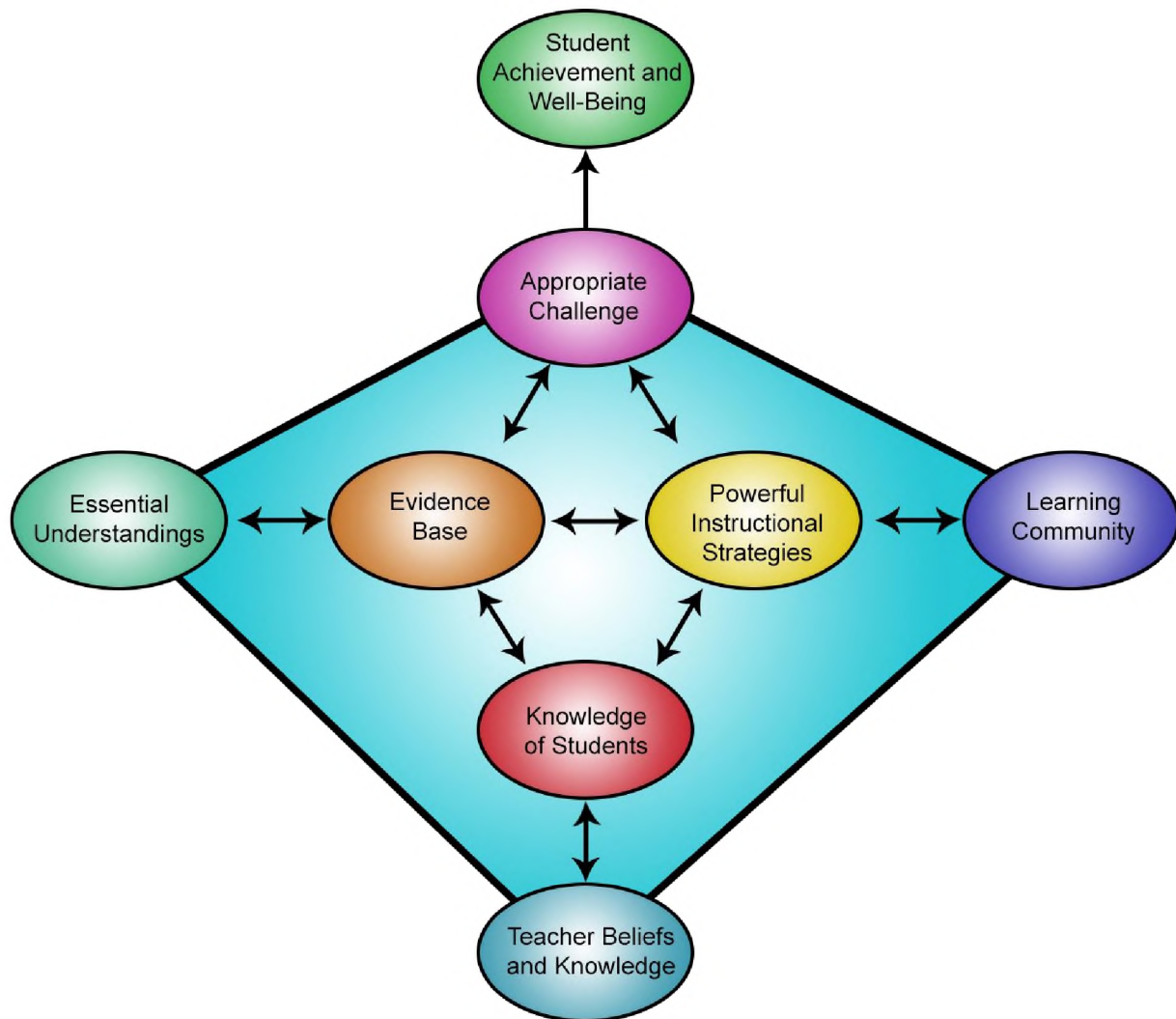
The rest of Hume's model is also resonant. The model identifies eight aspects of the teaching/learning process, graphically represented in domain ovals. The domain ovals in the outer diamond represent the conditions of effectiveness that are preconditions for good instruction. The *Essential Understandings* on the left side specify the content of what is being taught and the *Learning Community* on the right side gives the context for the learning to take place. Both are important considerations for all teachers. Differentiation is not about what is taught but about how it is taught; differentiation is dependent on the teacher's commitment to meeting the unique learning needs of each student. The *Appropriate Challenge* at the top is about the art of teaching: how to plan instruction to the right degree of challenge and support for each individual. The three ovals in the inner diamond offer the specifics about how we do differentiation with *Knowledge of Students*, *Powerful Instructional Strategies*, and *Evidence Base*. This last term emphasizes the wide variety of evidence that a teacher who has become proficient with differentiating instruction takes into account, including self-evaluation, teacher reflections, and an ever-increasing



knowledge of individual students, along with the full range of formal and informal assessments. As our understanding of education has evolved in the context of new emphases and new aspects to regulations, we have adapted the top oval, with permission of the author, to indicate that all components of the framework are in relation to and will lead to “Student Achievement and Well-Being.”

**Figure 2**

*Eight ovals in Hume’s adapted model representing the essential elements of educational environments. (Used with permission of the author.)*



The conceptual framework is salient within the program in a number of ways. Hume’s (2008) model is included on every course outline, along with the instructor’s indication as to which of the domain ovals that particular course will focus on. Hume’s model serves as the organizing framework on the evaluation surveys of courses and instructors, as well as on the summative

assessments of the practicum components. Hume's model also serves as the organizing framework for Parts 1 and 2 of the courses entitled *Differentiated Instruction for Diverse Learners*. And the five domains of the mission statement serve as the organizing framework for each cohort's collective commitment.

We understand that Hume's adapted model is a starting point that empowers us to service the public good by intentionally planning for our graduates to be well-equipped to teach in Ontario schools, through knowing who they are and knowing how to best serve their diverse learners, as they uphold the *Standards of Practice* and *Ethical Standards* to which all OCT certified teachers are held accountable.

## MISSION STATEMENTS

### *Institutional Mission*

Tyndale's vision of teacher education also aligns with Tyndale's broader mission: "dedicated to the pursuit of truth, to excellence in teaching, learning and research, for the enriching of mind, heart and character, to serve the church and the world for the glory of God." At Tyndale, one of our 'teacher beliefs' is embodied in this mission statement, that is, that whatever we do, we do "for the glory of God." This is based on our strong belief in two central Biblical commands, both of which are "for the glory of God". These two commands flow out of the *Teacher Beliefs and Knowledge* oval of Hume's model, as seen in Figure 3 below.

### *Program Mission*

The first command is to "*love God with our whole selves.*" This implies that we maintain a high degree of professionalism and excellence for in everything we do, we desire, as acts of devotion, to do and be our best. This involves, among other aspects of teacher preparation, applying current educational theory, encouraging critical thinking and inquiry, and reflecting on practice. The second command is to "*love our neighbour as ourselves.*" This implies that our teacher preparation program includes a focus on collegiality and community, equity and social justice, and service and stewardship including that of the environment.

Faculty and staff at Tyndale believe that it is for the glory of God that we execute our mission of educating and equipping graduates to teach with the utmost commitment to professionalism, excellence, collegiality, equity, and service. When teacher candidates are immersed in the Tyndale community for 16 months, they have opportunities to articulate what these domains mean to them, to practice them in community with one another, to reflect personally on their growth in each domain, and to receive peer and faculty feedback about their growth in each domain. One way that teacher candidates are encouraged to grow in these areas is through the faculty and staff choosing to embody these characteristics themselves and making decisions based on the value of each of these domains.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER BELIEFS

As stated, Hume (2008) includes teacher beliefs in her model; other researchers in teacher education do as well. Fullan (1993) implored education faculties to acknowledge and attend to the development of teacher candidate beliefs and understandings. Research in the area of teacher

beliefs is likely not referring to a narrow definition of religious beliefs. More likely, the attention to teacher beliefs is referring to the stance that Palmer (1998) articulates:

Whoever our students may be, whatever subject we teach, ultimately, we teach who we are. When I hear teachers ask whether they can take their spirituality into the classroom with them, I wonder what the option is: As long as we take ourselves into the classroom, we take our spirituality with us! Our only choice is whether we will reflect on the questions we are living – and how we are living them – in a way that might make our work more fruitful. (p. 10)

Tyndale's program of teacher preparation attempts to offer teacher candidates a space in which to consider how they are living and how they will live the beliefs that they hold. For example, they are invited to do readings, in-class assignments, and reflections on Palmer's (2007) *The Courage to Teach*. Many teacher candidates expressed their appreciation for the space to consider beliefs:

For me it has been a great experience coming to Tyndale because it has been more than just the teacher education. The religious component is there, and it is crucial. It has been interesting to see what other teacher candidates bring to their placements. A faith background impacts how you approach your students and the classroom. It has benefitted me being here. (Edward, Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2016)

Throughout the program too I realized that faith is not just religion and beliefs. It is also the values you have and what motivates you to act regarding social justice and equity. (Simone, Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2016)

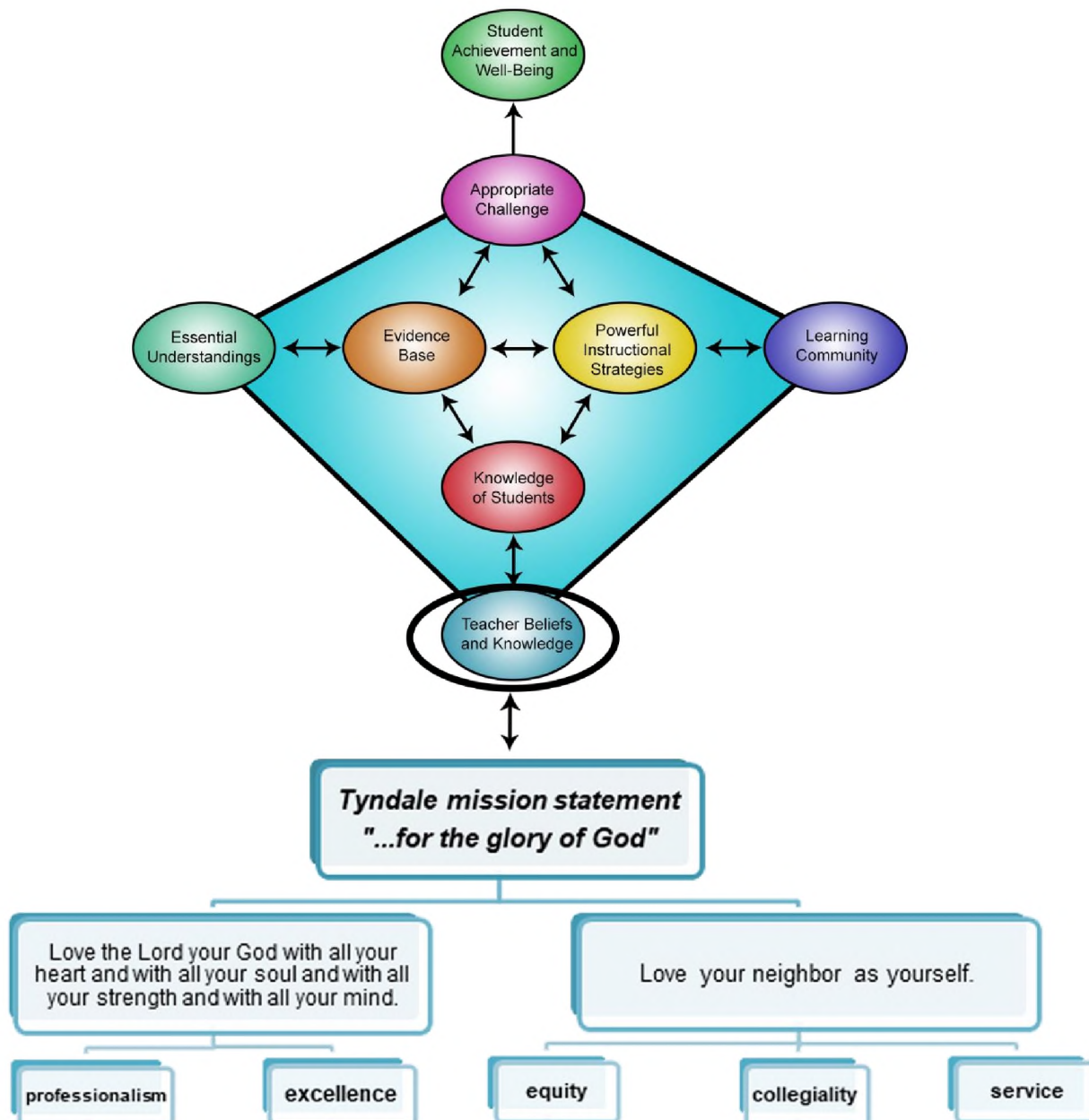
I am a different person than I was two years ago. The way that I work, the habits that I have. I used to panic about my plans... But then, I got to the point of asking who the plan is for – it is for them. I have grown so much. If I am in the middle of a lesson that is going sideways, which it does, give myself permission to stop, pause, and change direction because that is for the students. Teaching-wise, I am completely different. My core, my beliefs are still the same. The way I enact those beliefs – completely different. (Analisa, Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2017)

The beliefs held by a teacher are reflected in the way that a teacher interacts with students and structures various learning environments (Edmunds et al., 2015). For example, what does a teacher believe about human nature? Are children, by nature, basically good (beneficent, charitable, cooperative), bad (egocentric, self-seeking), or neutral (dependent upon experience to form character)? What does one believe about knowledge and how we come to know? Is knowledge justified true belief, the sum total of all the beliefs in a society, or is knowledge something that is constructed through experience? Understanding their own personal philosophy will help a teacher move from executing the many practical details of teaching to a reflective examination of the reason for their decisions, as well as the reasons their colleagues and superiors may provide for the decisions they make. The importance of understanding the reasons for teaching is emphasized by Bartolomé (2004) who suggests that teacher candidates must be taught and encouraged to critically reflect upon their own beliefs. More recently, Routledge's Educational Psychology Handbook series has published the *International Handbook of Research on Teachers' Beliefs*

(Fives & Gill, 2015), an edited volume that explores the foundations of, methodologies used in, and application to teaching practices as a result of research in this area.

**Figure 3**

*Hume's adapted model, mission statements, and learning outcomes*



Tyndale's program of teacher preparation offers teacher candidates a space in which they can consider how they are living and how they will live the beliefs that they hold. As stated earlier, we are cognizant of the fact that research in this area is likely not referring to a narrow definition of religious beliefs. However, we are energized and enthusiastic about the fact that, indeed, it can apply to religious beliefs, giving us the chance to freely allow teacher candidates to discuss these beliefs as part of their identity and in particular, as part of their developing teacher identity. As Fatima reflected on one of her practicum experiences, which occurred while she was fasting during Ramadan, a time observed by Muslims as a means of focusing on reflection and prayer, as well as strengthening relationships with God and with family, she commented:

Actually, conquering my second practicum was a big deal for me, so it's a very proud time for me. I was fasting. It was a difficult practicum. I was incredibly tired. We had students who had behavioural situations that were not comfortable. And it was a test of patience at that time and especially for my faith... because especially during that time you're not supposed to be unkind to others. Not that you're not supposed to be unkind in general but during that time... it was a test for me... And breathing exercises came in big at that time, not just for students but for myself. And that was one of the proudest moments for me, I would say. (Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2019)

And Serena reflected, "There have been so many challenges. It starts with peeling away the biases I hold. Why do I have the values and beliefs that I do?" (Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2017). The intent in Tyndale's program is to create a space where beliefs, religious or not, are expected and celebrated aspects of conversations, such that a holistic approach to learning is experienced. We acknowledge that everyone has a worldview that encompasses various beliefs.

## THE FIVE DOMAINS OF THE MISSION STATEMENT

Emerging from the conceptual framework's two central Biblical commands and the institution's mission statement are the five domains that represent the program outcomes. Each domain will be described here in order to show how Tyndale envisions the importance of each.

During the first week of the program, each Tyndale cohort is asked to collaboratively generate descriptions of each domain, so they have their own roadmap for how to enact those domains for the next 16 months as they live in community with one another. The assumption is that if our graduates are to exhibit the five domains once they graduate and are working in schools, they need opportunities to practice doing so during their preparation program. The five domains are professionalism, excellence, equity, collegiality, and service.

### *Professionalism*

Professionalism is envisioned as the adoption and embodiment of the Ontario College of Teacher's *Standards of Practice* and the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession*, as well as the integration of current educational theory and research in teaching practice. Tyndale faculty commit to continual growth and modelling in these areas, and to integrating teaching about professionalism into each course in the specific ways that professionalism impacts the particular understanding and practices related to that course topic. Teacher candidates are required to gather artifacts throughout the program to include in an e-portfolio that demonstrates evidence of their commitment to the standards of practice.

### *Excellence*

With regard to excellence, Tyndale imagines its teacher candidates striving for a high degree of competence in various aspects of teacher preparation, including critical thinking, inquiry, assessment and evaluation, the use of information technology, and the habit of improving one's practice based on personal and professional reflection. Faculty members, instructors, and faculty advisors embrace a developmental progression towards achievement and take seriously assessment *as, for, and cf* learning as they support teacher candidates in their progression towards the demonstration of excellence. An example is the read-aloud lesson plan assignment in *Language and Literacy Part 1*. All teacher candidates receive quality descriptive feedback on their read-aloud lesson plan. If the lesson plan is not assessed as exceeding expectations, teacher candidates are encouraged to revise their work based on the descriptive feedback they have received, as they strive to achieve a high standard. As the language professor has been heard to say, "We want everyone graduating from Tyndale to be able to write excellent lesson plans in language and literacy."

The development of and continuous improvements to various aspects of the program are collaborative efforts between team members and teacher candidates towards excellence. The ethos of the program is to welcome input and ideas from all stakeholders and to make improvements based on this input.

### *Equity*

By equity, Tyndale refers to the responsibility of teachers to be alert to and address issues of equity and social justice in our society as outlined in the Ministry of Education's document, *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools* (Ministry of Education, 2014). We acknowledge that becoming alert to and addressing issues of equity and social justice is a process. We speak of it as a movement along the equity continuum and as an area of growth that requires both concentrated study and an examination of personal experience. Tyndale faculty engage along this continuum through professional development at team meetings, during continuous discussions, and by viewing ourselves as engaged in this journey along with the teacher candidates. Across several courses, teacher candidates examine both provincial laws and various school board policies that support various marginalized communities; they are introduced to the concept of cultural proficiency in the classroom context; they learn about Indigenous perspectives, cultures, histories, and ways of knowing; and they develop familiarity with assistive technologies. It is our goal that teacher candidates will have continuous opportunities to confront the challenges of identifying and defeating bias, barriers, and power dynamics that hinder learning.

### *Collegiality*

Collegiality refers to the valuing of each individual as a contributor to community, to the critical importance of the community to all individuals, and to the intentional offering of collegial support in educational communities as modelled at Tyndale. All department members work diligently and intentionally to offer a welcoming and hospitable atmosphere for the teacher candidates—coffee is readily available and doors to offices are open. In courses, teacher candidates are invited to co-create success criteria, to engage in learning activities and complete assignments in pairs and small groups, and to participate in community circles. Other opportunities for developing collegial relationships include two 'Thank You' rocks that travel among the cohort as a means for them to express appreciation to one another, as well as the practice of attending chapel services together.

The Representative Council, consisting of three to six elected teacher candidates, oversees community-building activities such as potluck lunches, First Aid and *TRIBES* training, and visits from therapy dogs. The collaboration that Tyndale's program enjoys with the Teacher Education Advisory Committee (TEAC) also demonstrates the core value of collegiality. Recently, we sought to amend our bylaws regarding TEAC in order to increase the designated maximum number of members, since we had so many interested parties who wanted to join that committee and be part of the collaborative support to the program.

### *Service*

By service, we mean the willingness and intention to serve the unique learning needs of students, and the demonstration of stewardship in all areas of life, including interaction with people, culture, and communities; use of resources; and care for the environment and our world. The emphasis Tyndale's program places on differentiated instruction speaks to our commitment to serve the unique learning needs of students. The course *Science and Technology* allows teacher candidates to investigate topics that demonstrate how sustainability, stewardship, and the environment are interwoven within a curriculum unit relevant to their division (i.e., soils in Primary/Junior and climate change in Junior/Intermediate) and includes learning about Indigenous perspectives of global sustainability as a worldview. Teacher candidates are encouraged to consider the stewardship of their talents, unique abilities, resources, and skills in the service of their students and colleagues, and to consider the classroom environment as an ecological and ethical space to be stewarded with careful attention to administrative, parental, and interpersonal influences. As a program, we are mindful of paper and printing usage; resources, for the most part, are posted online. We encourage sustainability through gifting each teacher candidate a Tyndale travel mug on their first day on campus.

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH-BASED EMPHASES

As a result of Tyndale's inherent focus on teacher beliefs as a key essential element of any educational environment, there are five accompanying emphases that shape Tyndale's program, including: Reflective Practice, Developing Teacher Identity, Cohort Community, Curriculum of Lives, and Integration of Theory and Practice. A description of each of these emphases is offered here.

### REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Acknowledging that teacher beliefs are an essential component of any educational environment necessitates an emphasis on providing time and opportunities for reflection, and for explicitly teaching teacher candidates the importance of reflective practice. As articulated by Edmunds, Nickel, and Badley (2015), the attitude of being "the best teacher each of us can be" (p. 5) comes with a corollary: "*as you think about yourself as teacher, you will be*" (Sokkett, 2008, p. 7). Adopting the attitude is the first step but

... [w]hat has to be adopted next, and this is the sticky part, is coming to grips with your own honest perceptions of who you are as a teacher, having the courage to accept that what is known about good teaching is forever changing, and summoning the determination to reshape your teaching until it matches your inspirations. You have to be willing to identify and scrutinize your assumptions and perceptions about teaching and, after having done so,

go back to teaching with renewed and revised assumptions and perspectives. And then you have to be willing to do it all over again. This cyclical process is called reflective practice. (p. 7)

Reflection-in- and reflection-on-practice is rooted in the work of Schön (1983, 1987). Many researchers since Schön have identified that reflection is a critical element in teacher education and a critical quality of effective teachers (Clandinin, 1986; Fullan & Connelly, 1987; Marzano, 2007). Tyndale's lesson plan template includes the step of reflection as a way of tangibly practicing this habit of mind. The cohort community periodically takes time to reflect on how the community and how we, as individuals within it, are fulfilling our collective commitments. This is accomplished through activities such as community circles, online polls, peer sharing, and self-assessment forms. As well, the program requires all teacher candidates to take the course *Reflective Practice*, which allows teacher candidates to engage in reflective work through a case study approach. Based on Brookfield's (2017) four interrelated lenses through which teachers can look at their practice (i.e., the autobiographical, learner, peer/colleague, and research lenses), the instructors of *Reflective Practice* propose six lenses through which educational events can be reflected upon: the lenses of the philosophical, political, pedagogical, professional, parental, and personal.

Narrative inquiry as a process of reflection is referenced in a publication by the Ontario College of Teachers, *Living the Standards* (2007). Grounded in the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Connelly and Clandinin (1998), it refers to the making of meaning through personal experience by way of a process of reflection in which storytelling is a key element. Tyndale's program attempts to understand the months of teacher preparation as being an intentional part of the larger story of the teacher candidates' lives. This is one reason why the application process to the program requests applicants to include two statements, each approximately 500 words in length, as to how their experiences prior to applying for the program have fostered their development towards living the College's *Standards of Practice*. In narrative inquiry terms, Tyndale's program of teacher preparation intends to be an experience that facilitates the composing of their teaching lives.

## DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER IDENTITY

The idea that teachers are "in the making" is key to the Tyndale experience, and has been noted by many researchers (Britzman, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Huber et al., 2014; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007; Vinz, 1997). Teacher education programs are encouraged to provide a space for teacher candidates to consider this new professional identity that they are developing, whether it is termed as "composing an identity" (Vinz, 1997) or "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Huber et al., 2014) or "uneven development" (Britzman, 2007) or "professional identity" (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007).

Identity development is an unfolding process that has begun prior to the official start of the teacher preparation program and is not finished by the time the teacher preparation program ends. This "incompleteness" (Greene, 2001) bumps up against the expectation that graduates of teacher education programs have "finished" their preparation. While we at Tyndale intend that our teacher candidates have confidence in their preparation, we also intend that they leave the program with a sense that their development is just beginning as they launch the adventure of their professional lives. We hope that our teacher candidates embody a vision of and a commitment towards



becoming the very best teachers they can be based on what they have experienced while in the program, while at the same time continuing to refine that vision in whatever professional context they may enter.

Defensible teacher education programs facilitate an educational process that understands the personal and educational need to develop ends, revise them, work on them further, and sometimes simply change educational and life paths. Beginning teachers need to be a part of that educational process. We cannot hope to call our endeavour a profession unless we guide candidates through a process that honours the conversation of valued ends and recognizes the multiple ways in which teaching implicates the teacher's self (Liston et al., 2009). Teacher education researchers who consider teacher identity development narratively speak about the development in terms of negotiating the interaction of their personal and professional knowledge landscapes. As they mediate these understandings, they must "continually rediscover who they are and what they stand for through their dialogues and collaboration with peers, through ongoing and consistent study, and through deep reflection about their craft" (Nieto, 2003, p. 125).

As an example of how Tyndale teacher candidates are encouraged to consider their own developing teacher identity, they are asked to chart this development as one of the assignments in the course *Reflective Practice*. Another example as to how the exploration of teacher identity is facilitated is through instructors sharing their own development of becoming a teacher. In addition, there is a session of the course *Professional Seminar* scheduled after the conclusion of each practicum placement in order to give teacher candidates the opportunity to discuss, as a community, their developing understanding of who they are as educators.

## COHORT COMMUNITY

As prompted by Tyndale's conceptual framework, the program design includes the intentional development of cohort community—within the full class, within the Primary/Junior and Junior/Intermediate division groupings (20 to 40), and within even smaller areas of focus, such as FSL and Intermediate teachables. Spending the month of August together, as the program begins, provides the opportunity for the entire cohort to be together and begin to forge relationships. And, under the facilitation of the instructor of the course *Creating Safe, Engaging and Inclusive Learning Environments*, the Collective Commitments are established through a collaborative exercise.

The potential benefits of cohort groups have been established as diminished effects of isolation, higher retention rates, and better understanding of the diversity of classmates, which in turn build a sense of community and an experience of collegiality (Koeppen et al., 2001). Small programs have inherent benefits and limitations. Faculty members in small programs often need to teach beyond their area of primary expertise and therefore have limited time for research. While we at Tyndale have experienced some tension in this regard, we have still managed to include many part-time instructors whose areas of expertise are consistent with the course content and at the same time, support full-time instructors in productive research agendas.

## CURRICULUM OF LIVES

An understanding of the “curriculum of lives” has influenced Tyndale’s program. Several researchers connected with the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development at the University of Alberta (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Hefflin, 2001; Huber & Clandinin, 2005) suggest that curriculum “might be viewed as an account of teachers’ and children’s lives together in schools and classrooms” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 392). Tyndale’s program of teacher preparation attempts to enact this broad understanding of curriculum as the experience of the teacher candidates while they are in the program as well as the vision of the teaching/learning process they will facilitate as certified teachers alongside students. We remind ourselves that what we do in the program should model an exemplary classroom.

What happens in schools is an identity-shaping process; lives are written and rewritten, storied and re-storied. The identities, the stories to live by of children, teachers, administrators, and families are all being expressed, and, in those expressions, become open to being re-storied, to being silenced, to being erased, to being shifted in educative and mis-educative ways (Clandinin, 2006, pp. 15–16). In this view of curriculum, the teacher is an integral part of the curricular process “in which teacher, learners, subject matter and milieu are in dynamic interaction” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 392). The instructors in Tyndale’s program enact this understanding of curriculum both in their own engagement with teacher candidates and in the vision of the teaching/learning process they offer. They demonstrate attention to the curriculum of lives through open office doors, intentional communication, modelling respect, honouring differences, enjoying the beauty of our campus, hallway laughter, ‘Thank-you’ cards, read-alouds, picnic quilts, and coffee pots. One teacher candidate describes,

I had such a great time here. People say – 16 months?! That sounds nerve-racking. I say, ‘It was amazing.’ You have to come here. We have these small groups and we are able to make a connection with every single one of our professors. I was lucky if one of my professors in undergrad knew my name. It really makes a difference. You want to come. You want to do your best because you have relationships. (Eleanor, Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2017)

And Mahati confirms, “Tyndale has been so important in my life. One of the biggest milestones – so many good friends, great professors one-on-one, became friends with them; [it is] not a program [but] a family.” (Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2016).

## INTEGRATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Tyndale’s B.Ed. program, as influenced by the conceptual framework, has been impacted by Connelly and Clandinin’s (1999) research in the sense of understanding teachers as knowers: “knowers of themselves, of their situations, of children, of subject matter, of teaching, of learning” (p. 1). They base their work on the importance of linking knowledge, context, and identity in the ongoing composition of teaching lives. This is their way of speaking of the linking between theory and practice. As Fullan and Connelly (1987) observed,

Teacher education scenarios that are merely practical are routine, dull, and mind-stifling. Programs that are merely theoretical are abstract, irrelevant, and meaningless. Lively

interactions of theory and practice are needed... Theory and practice must become interconnected in the minds of teachers. The mental test of whether theory and practice interact, with neither assuming priority, is not in the logical structure of teacher education programming, but in personal experience as reported by teachers. The question for teacher educators is whether what they do in the name of teacher education contributes to a unity of theory and practice in the minds and practices of student teachers and teachers. (pp. 46-47)

There are certainly some graduates of Tyndale's program that express the view that the theoretical components of their education as less relevant than their practicum experiences, as affirmed by Goodnough, Falkenberg, Macdonald, and Murphy (2017). Research in support of this perspective is long-standing (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981) and pervasive (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Wideen et al., 1998). However, there are also some graduates who, in the Final Conversations, challenge the dominant story of having learned nothing in the program except learning through doing in the context of practice teaching blocks. For example, Fidelia described,

You do learn a lot in practicum certainly, but it is what you are taking from the theory and putting it into practice. I don't think you can have one without the other. You would be missing a crucial part of it. I would be missing key tools and would be going to practicum completely blind. You need both supporting each other. We can't do theory without practice because you have to see it in action. It is the only way to really know what you are getting yourself into. (Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2016)

And Jenica confirmed:

The biggest thing was realizing, when I was in my practicum, I realized that all the theory, everything we have learned here [at Tyndale] applies to a tiny little 40-minute teaching block! It was very rewarding to think of that. It is all relevant to that one block – your planning, your knowledge of students, your assessment – everything. (Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2015)

Teacher candidates have been shown to need help integrating the “seemingly disconnected experiences of the university and the school” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005, p. 456). Tyndale's program offers this help in at least two ways. First, we take seriously the preparation and role of faculty advisors on the program team. As described earlier, they regularly meet with instructors in order to understand the content being presented. Some core faculty members have faculty advising responsibilities. Communication protocols are three-way, involving instructor, faculty advisor, and teacher candidates. Faculty advisors often join in classes, are present at team meetings, and engage in reflective practice through open dialogue. And, second, we replicate several practices at Tyndale that are encountered in schools. For example, the *Evaluation of Course and Instructor* is similar to the *Teacher Candidate Practicum Evaluations*. Both are based on NTIP (Ministry of Education, 2019a) assessments. Assessment and evaluation in each course are aligned with the 4-Level grading scheme so that teacher candidates can experience the same grading system that the Ministry of Education has implemented in K-12 schools. Practicum components in schools are scheduled to be interspersed with coursework components. Several of the courses (*Professional Seminar*, *Educational Technology*, and *Reflective Practice*) are structured to extend over more

than one semester. This provides extended time for conversation, reflection, and input from various educational stakeholder voices, including that of our program Elder as he offers an Indigenous perspective on the topics of several courses.

Tyndale's attempt to replicate structures and procedures that teachers encounter in school is meant to avoid what Tom (1997) refers to as "stockpiling", or the tendency of programs to introduce "professional knowledge prior to – and often separated from – teaching practice" (p. 139). Our intent is to have instructors model the practices they desire the teacher candidates to embody. Teacher candidates are more likely to adopt the pedagogical strategies they have experienced (Ertmer, 2003). Comments from the Final Conversations demonstrate that this has indeed been the experience of many Tyndale teacher candidates. One example is this explanation by Lexie, where she refers to an activity she led in her third practicum, during which the students contributed ideas for what they wanted their classroom culture to look like, and where they were invited to sign a collective commitment. She said:

So we started with asking them what they wanted or what was important to them from their teacher - their learning environment. It modelled a lot of what I learned in Tyndale. I think that's why I was so comfortable doing it. It was practiced for us, right? (Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2019)

Kenneth explained his inspiration to model his future classroom after the Tyndale model, saying:

The most important thing I learned at Tyndale was building a classroom where everyone should feel safe in. That's one thing. Even when I was coming here, I felt safe talking to everyone. Everyone's door was open. And I thought, this school does that very well and I think that I should do that as well. Being a teacher, I should be open to listening to all of my students and hearing what they have to say... If something's happening outside of school, they can feel comfortable talking to me. I felt comfortable talking to everyone here. That was one thing that I learned here that I want to do especially, as a teacher. (Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2019)

## CONCLUSION

Tyndale's privately funded program serves the public good through preparing teacher candidates who have engaged in reflection and embarked on a 16-month journey of intentional identity development. The continuity of the 16-month journey, the holistic approach that acknowledges and values the spiritual dimension of learning, experiences with the program Elder, as well as a supported and intentionally designed practicum, emerge from the conceptual framework. The Tyndale B.Ed. program tends to be characterized as a tight-knit community. Reflecting on their 16 months, teacher candidates refer to the strong sense of community, personalized attention, and supportive atmosphere they discovered at Tyndale. Some teacher candidates will attribute these aspects of their experience purely to the small size of the program; their lived reality of the holistic, reflective, and intentional nature of the program is believed to be a direct result of the program's size. Admittedly, it is more reasonable to imagine enacting an approach such as this with a small cohort. Small programs have been shown to have an increased sense of collegiality, unity of purpose, and critical deliberation (Goodlad, 1990, pp. 235-236). But we believe that small size alone is not a sufficient condition to result in the unique Tyndale experience. Some teacher

candidates do speak to the faith-based aspect of the Tyndale program and its ripple effect throughout all aspects of the program, which made their experience different than they may have expected. For example, as Joshua explained,

Because we demonstrate the love that God has for humanity to the rest of humanity, like we model that, then it's hard to get it wrong, in a sense. But that's what I see that the leadership has modelled for the cohort. It models the fact that care and... a love for them and their learning and their journey. And that radiates through them. So, despite the fact that we have so many different faith groups, so many different beliefs, it seems like we're all still united as one, because of that commonality of care and love. (Tyndale B.Ed. Graduate, 2019)

The space that Tyndale desires to create is one in which foundational, theological, and philosophical beliefs are examined in the context of scholarship, conversation, and reflection. The purpose is to instill in each teacher candidate a reflective stance on beliefs and teaching practice that leads to integrity and to wholeness (Palmer, 2007). Our vision is for each teacher candidate to engage in thoughtful and humble consideration of their own professional voice and practice as a person who holds a belief system of some kind, religious or not. The Ontario College of Teachers offers a “vision of professional practice” through the articulation of four Ethical Standards – *Care*, *Respect*, *Integrity* and *Trust*. Tyndale’s program endorses these Ethical Standards as more than qualities to be identified, demonstrated, promoted, and admired. The Ethical Standards emerge as authentic professional practice when they come from a rooted place, one that is developed through an intentional reflective process of examination of beliefs and their implications.

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