

MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING
STUDENT HANDBOOK
2021-2022



University of Houston-Downtown
Department of Urban Education
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Graduate Program Contacts	3
Introduction	4
Degree Options	5
Certification	6
Admission Information	6
Application Deadlines	6
Admission Status	7
Post-Baccalaureate (PB) Admission	7
Scholarship Funds	7
Academic Progress	8
Course Schedule Rotations for MAT Degrees	8
Time Limit	8
Transfer Credits	8
Academic Standards	9
Academic Honesty	10
Academic Modifications for Students with Disabilities	11
Graduation	11
Capstone Thesis Guidelines	12
Working on Your Capstone Thesis	13
Capstone Thesis Style Criteria	14
Quality Criteria for Capstone Thesis	15
Currently Approved Capstone Thesis Products	16

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INTRODUCTION

The Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) is available to certified and uncertified teachers in urban classrooms. The emphasis on urban teaching makes this degree truly unique. To meet the special needs of children in urban classrooms, students completing the MAT degree will demonstrate competency in the following areas of knowledge:

- Characteristics and needs of learners in a multicultural setting;
- Effective teaching practices that enhance student achievement for all students regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or language spoken;
- Factors related to the development of effective environments in urban classrooms;
- Classroom-based research methodology to support “best” instructional practices; and
- Enriched understanding of academic content areas of English language arts and reading, social studies, mathematics, natural sciences, bilingual education, English as a Second Language, or advanced instructional technology.

In congruence with state certification requirements, students seeking certification through the MAT degree will demonstrate the following professional development skills:

- Designing instruction appropriate for all students that reflects an understanding of relevant content based on continuous and appropriate assessment;
- Creating a classroom environment of respect and rapport that fosters a positive climate for learning, equity, and excellence;
- Promoting student learning by providing responsive instruction that makes use of effective communication techniques, instructional strategies that engage students in the learning process, and timely, high-quality feedback;
- Fulfilling professional roles and responsibilities and adhering to legal and ethical requirements of the profession (SBEC Professional Development Standards, 2000).

DEGREE OPTIONS

There are two types of programs associated with the MAT degree, in which classes are taught using a hybrid of face-to-face and online instruction:

MAT Curriculum & Instruction (C&I), with area of expertise

- The MAT C&I degree is for those individuals who are already degreed and certified teachers. This degree is designed to further the knowledge of those individuals who are already teaching in the classroom. The degree plan focuses on the application of theory and research to expand the expertise of the practicing teacher in a specific content area.

MAT with Certification (EC-6 Generalist, 4-8 Generalist, or Secondary)

- The MAT with Certification is for those individuals who do not have a certified degree in education. This degree is designed to further the knowledge of those individuals who aspire to become classroom teachers. The degree plan focuses on application of theory to the classroom-learning environment and understanding action research in the classroom.

Degreed and certified teachers, take 36 hours and work toward:

- Master of Arts in Teaching in Curriculum and Instruction with an area of expertise in
 - Early Childhood Studies,
 - English Language Arts and Reading
 - Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
 - Instructional Technology
 - Educational Leadership
 - Math Education
 - History Education
 - Spanish Education

Individuals seeking certification (see “Certification Note” below) with the Master of Arts in Teaching degree, take 30 hours of coursework and complete 6 credit hours of full-time student teaching in an approved school. Choose from:

- Master of Arts in Teaching: Core Subjects EC-6 with ESL Supplemental Certification
- Master of Arts in Teaching: Core Subjects 4-8 with ESL Supplemental Certification
- Master of Arts in Teaching: Secondary (7-12) Subject Area (select from the following areas of specialization: English/Language Arts and Reading, History, Life Science, Mathematics, Physical Science, Science, Social Studies)

Certification Note:

1. *MAT with Certification requires passing the Texas Examinations of Educator Standards (TExES) exams and results in a Texas teaching certificate. No other general teaching certifications will be granted through this program.*
2. *All MAT with Certification students must pass the relevant TExES exams.*
3. *All MAT with Certification students must complete all program requirements in order to receive a final confirmation of certification from this department.*
4. *Students seeking MAT with Certification for other states should check for reciprocity/application of a Texas certification to other states.*

CERTIFICATION

The Department of Urban Education (UE) Teacher Education and Certification programs are governed by regulations from the Texas State Legislature, the Texas State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the University of Houston-Downtown (UHD). Any new rulings or changes made by any of these entities in interpreting the rulings on educator certification may supersede the requirements of a student’s existing certification plan (Urban Education (UE) Department Policy, 2001).

ADMISSION INFORMATION

All applicants submit admissions materials via Apply Texas, www.applytexas.org, or to the Office of Graduate Admissions (GradAdmissions@uhd.edu). All students must meet the application deadlines in full in order to be considered and accepted for the following admissions cycle.

Office of Admissions—Graduate Admissions
 University of Houston-Downtown
 One Main Street, Suite 325-North
 Houston, Texas 77002-1001
 713-221-8093

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Master of Arts in Teaching Curriculum and Instruction	
Fall July 31st	Spring December 15th

Master of Arts in Teaching w/Texas Teacher Certification	
Fall July 15 th	

Admission Requirements
1. Minimum overall GPA of 2.5
2. Graduate Records Exam (GRE) if GPA < 3.0 or if undergraduate degree > 10 years old; minimum scores of 150 each for quantitative and verbal sections; analytical writing score 4 or higher (MAT w/ Certification only)
3. An official transcript which depicts an earned baccalaureate degree from an accredited university and any graduate credit earned. UHD graduates must request a transcript from the UHD Registrar’s Office.
4. Personal statement of 700 words or more on how you believe your educational and professional background will contribute to your success in this program
5. Three professional letters of recommendation
6. At this time, the MAT program cannot accommodate international applications
7. Applicants for MAT with certification must complete the Application for Teacher Candidacy following completion of <i>ApplyTexas</i> application
8. One year of teaching experience and/or teacher certification is required for applicants seeking admission for the MAT in Curriculum & Instruction.
9. Admissions interview
10. Applicants whose baccalaureate degree was conferred by a university whose native language is not English must demonstrate English proficiency by taking the Test of English as a Foreign

Language (TOEFL) exam. The following minimum scores are required: 24 for speaking, 22 for listening, 22 for reading, and 21 for writing on each of the subscales. A TOEFL waiver is granted for students who have earned a B or better in Composition I & II taken at a US college or university. (Waiver not applicable for MAT w/ Certification)

ADMISSION STATUS

Complete applications submitted by the deadline are reviewed by members of the Graduate Committee and Graduate Program Director for Urban Education. Qualified applicants will be invited to an interview. In-person interviews are preferable, but accommodations can be made for applicants outside of the Greater Houston area. Students will be notified of their acceptance or denial to the program by email following their interviews.

Note: All admission applications undergo a juried review process. Satisfying admissions requirements is not a guarantee of admission. Final admission decisions rest at the discretion of the Graduate Committee and Graduate Program Director.

POST-BACCALAUREATE (PB) ADMISSION

PB students may take no more than 6 hours of Urban Education graduate course work without applying to the program. The 6 hours will transfer into the program as long as the courses are in the UHD Urban Education degree plan, are taken at UHD, and meet the grade requirements (final grades of C, D, or F in PB courses will not be accepted). Please note that successful completion of coursework taken prior to admission does not guarantee admission to a master's program.

PB students may apply to the MAT Curriculum & Instruction programs at any time during their first six hours of course work. It would be advantageous to begin the application process as soon as possible.

Note: PB applicants who have taken graduate courses in the program will be held to the same application standards as first-time students.

Post-baccalaureate courses can be selected from the MAT course rotation schedules and must be approved by the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies.

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

Acceptance into this program is truly an honor. Every applicant enrolled in the Master of Arts Teaching Programs has the opportunity to be considered for an academic scholarship funded through the Gordon and Mary Cain Foundation, the amount of which will be determined by the current rate of funding. Interested students can find more information at https://www.uhd.edu/academics/public-service/urban-education/Pages/gordon_mary_cain_graduate_scholarship_application.aspx.

Gordon & Mary Cain Graduate Academic Merit Scholarship

This competitive scholarship is open to all graduate students in any track of the Master of Arts in Teaching degree program (MAT C&I, MAT with Certification). The scholarship is awarded for one semester and may be renewed for each semester of enrollment.

Scholarship recipients will be selected based upon academic standing and information included on the Cain Graduate Scholarship Application (below). Students must meet the following criteria:

- Students must have been officially admitted into one of the MAT program tracks;
- Students must register for at least six semester credit hours in the semester for which the scholarship is requested;
- Students must have a minimum 3.5 GPA at UHD. Incoming graduate students must have a minimum 3.5 GPA on their undergraduate transcript showing completion of a baccalaureate degree;
- Students must submit a 250-word essay addressing how the completion of the MAT will impact your teaching, enhance your abilities as a teacher leader, and enrich the learning of your students.

Please note that students must pay tuition and fees by the applicable due dates. If the scholarship is awarded, students will be reimbursed for a portion of tuition and basic fees. Fees such as parking are not included.

The Cain scholarship only covers tuition and fees for courses on a student's MAT degree plan, including related courses in the departments of History, Math, and Spanish. This scholarship will not cover tuition and fees for courses unrelated to the MAT program.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Students are strongly advised to follow the suggested course order as it appears on the degree plans. The offerings are on a planned rotation and organized so that the majority of students can complete their graduate degree within two years. The Assistant Director, Graduate Studies, College of Public Service will assist MAT students in selecting courses and advise them on their progress and requirements. All MAT students must attend the MAT Orientation to receive a degree plan. After completing the first semester, MAT students should meet with the Graduate Advisor at least once per academic year to review degree progress. The Graduate Program Director will review graduate transfer hours and address prerequisites for the MAT degree, as needed.

COURSE SCHEDULE ROTATIONS FOR MAT DEGREES

See the Department of Urban Education website for current degree plans with course schedule rotations. Be sure to adhere to the specified sequences on your specific degree plan to avoid extending your graduation date.

TIME LIMIT

The time limit for this degree is six years from the beginning of the first semester in which credit was earned toward the degree. The degree plan for all programs is organized to support completion with or without certification within two years from the starting semester, under the condition that students enroll in the suggested courses for each semester.

TRANSFER CREDITS

No more than six hours of equivalent graduate coursework may be transferred from other accredited universities. **A minimum grade of B is required** in any completed courses that students wish to transfer. Petition for transfer credit is required to be submitted for review by the graduate student and approval comes from the Graduate Program Director and the Graduate Committee's review of the course equivalency. Transfer credit is by permission only and is not a right of the student. The following courses cannot be substituted with transfer credits and must be taken at UHD:

For MAT

MAT 6315 Introduction to Educational Research

MAT 6317 Classroom-Based Research

MAT 6380 Practicum for Urban Teachers

MAT 6390 Directed Study in Urban Education

For MAT with Certification:

MAT 6380 Practicum for Urban Teachers

MAT 6390 Directed Study in Urban Education

MAT 6601 Student Teaching

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Minimum Grades

A graduate student who receives a grade of “C” in six semester hours (two courses) attempted at this university for graduate credit or for application toward the Master of Arts in Teaching degree, whether or not in repeated courses, will be placed on academic probation.

A graduate student who receives a grade of “C” in nine semester hours (three courses) attempted at this university for graduate credit or for application toward the Master of Arts in Teaching degree, whether or not in repeated courses, is ineligible for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree and will not be permitted to re-enroll for graduate study.

Students who receive a grade of one “D” or “F” in a graduate class will also become ineligible for a Master of Arts in Teaching degree and will not be permitted to re-enroll.

Students will be notified of their removal from the program once final grades are posted at the end of the semester. If a student intends to contest a grade or complete additional work with the approval of the course instructor, he or she must provide written notice to the Graduate Program Director, as well as the Assistant Director, Graduate Studies and the course professor within two weeks of the semester’s closing and posted grades.

3.0 GPA Rule

A minimum of a 3.0 cumulative grade point average is required to graduate. In order to remain in good academic standing during your graduate course work, you must maintain a 3.0 grade point average. All credit hours attempted, whether in repeated courses, will be calculated in the GPA and used in determining academic standing. Grades earned at other institutions and transferred into your graduate degree program at UHD are not included in the calculation when determining whether you are in good academic standing.

- “A”—the grade earned for demonstrating *exceptional* scholarship.
- “B”—the grade earned for demonstrating *competent* scholarship.
- “C”—the grade earned for demonstrating *acceptable* scholarship.

Incomplete Grade

An incomplete grade (“I”) is given only when an unforeseen emergency prevents a student from completing the course work and only with the instructor’s approval. An incomplete grade will be changed to a passing grade if the missing work is completed satisfactorily within the long (F/SP) semester immediately following the semester in which the grade of “I” was received. An incomplete grade that is

not removed by this deadline becomes an “F.” A grade of “F” resulting from failure to complete the work required to remove a grade of “I” has the same effect as an “F.”

Stop Out and Re-Admittance into the Program

To stop out (sit out) for a semester of taking courses, you must fill out an MAT Drop/Stop-Out Form found at <https://www.uhd.edu/academics/public-service/Pages/MAT-Drop-Stop-Out-Form.aspx> and also notify the Program Director and Assistant Director, Graduate Studies. Additionally, you must formally withdraw from your course work at the University of Houston–Downtown. Submission of the form or notifying your advisor will not drop you from your courses.

As you consider your return to complete the program, please remember this statement from the “Time Limit” section in this handbook: “The time limit for this degree is six years from the beginning of the first semester in which credit was earned toward the degree.”

When students wish to re-enter the program, they need to visit the UHD website and complete the Application for Re-Admission. This should be done well in advance of the beginning of the semester in which you would like to return. The application for Re-Admission should be sent to the University of Houston—Downtown Office of Admissions. The Graduate Program Director, along with the Graduate Committee, if necessary, will review your application and complete a Decision Sheet for Graduate Re-admission. Upon acceptance of your application for re-admittance, you would then register and pay for your semester courses.

Please make note that courses are on a set rotation of offerings, so be aware of how stopping out a semester may impact your ability to take classes that have prerequisites that were offered when you were not enrolled.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The academic honesty code is the university’s standard of honesty. The code states, “Students must be honest in all academic activities and must not tolerate dishonesty.” It is each student’s responsibility to read and understand the University of Houston-Downtown Academic Honesty Policy found in the Student Handbook, pp. 18 and 19.

2.1.1 Academic Honesty Code

The Academic Honesty Code is the University’s standard of honesty. The code states, “Students must be honest in all academic activities and must not tolerate dishonesty.”

2.1.3 Student Responsibility

Students are responsible for maintaining the academic integrity of the University by following the Academic Honesty Policy. Students are responsible for doing their own work and avoiding all forms of academic dishonesty. *Students are expected to do original work, including class assignments, etc. Students are expected to cite references for work used during any assignment.*

Should a student be suspected, or found to have violated the academic honesty code, he or she will be required to meet with the professor to complete a required form detailing the accusations. Students can contest these accusations in writing. All forms should be copied after signatures are received and placed in the student folder in the advising office, as well as submitted to the chair of the department and Graduate Program Director.

Penalties for violations of the policy include failure of the entire assignment, failure of the course, and/or referral to the department chair for consideration of additional action. The professor will make

suggestions regarding the violations in their written form submission to the chair and Graduate Program Director. Students will be notified in writing as to their consequences because of their academic policy violation. Students should become familiar with example violations of this policy.

ACADEMIC MODIFICATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Houston-Downtown complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, UHD strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a documented disability requiring academic adjustments/auxiliary aids, please contact the Office of Disability Services, One Main St., Suite 409-South, Houston, TX 77002. (Office) 713-226-5227 (Website) www.uhd.edu/disability/ (Email) disabilityservices@uhd.edu . Students should complete this process as soon as possible to avoid any delays in receiving reasonable accommodations.

GRADUATION

One semester prior to anticipated graduation, students must visit the Registrar's Office website to complete the application for graduation. The student's file will be assessed by the Assistant Director, Graduate Studies and forwarded to the Program Director for approval. If students are not eligible to graduate, the application and corresponding fee must be re-submitted the following semester. Students may not graduate or walk for graduation with any Incompletes on their transcript.

CAPSTONE THESIS GUIDELINES

All students enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) are required to enroll in MAT 6390 (Capstone Thesis course), which includes completion of an empirical research-based project at the conclusion of their course of studies.

At the conclusion of their MAT program students will:

- Submit for review and approval a Capstone Thesis demonstrating competence in research and the field of education, and
- Present the findings of their research projects in a public forum the semester of their intended graduation

The Capstone Thesis requires the student to specify a “Capstone” of his/her choosing. The UE Department does not prescribe a list of appropriate topics. Instead, each student is invited to formulate his or her own Capstone Thesis topic. The research should fall within faculty specialization to receive adequate and appropriate advising.

Students may choose to continue with research projects they developed in MAT 6315 and MAT 6317. Additional examples of Capstone Thesis products include:

- School profile development
- Curriculum development
- Curriculum revision
- Advanced technology project
- Evaluation of curriculum and instruction

See the detailed explanations of these products on the Currently Approved Capstone Thesis Products page.

WORKING ON YOUR CAPSTONE THESIS

Planning and working on the Capstone Thesis should occur in the following stages:

Develop a Proposal for Capstone Thesis and Secure Approval

Before beginning the Capstone Thesis course, students should submit their proposed activity on the Directed Studies form available on the Urban Education website to the Director of MAT. **This proposal must be submitted by the second week of the semester *preceding* your enrollment in MAT 6390.**

Once approved, students will be assigned an advisor who will help develop the project and support the student through the completion of the project. **If necessary, an application to the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects should be completed and submitted within the semester *preceding* your enrollment in MAT 6390.**

The student will use the UHD MAT Capstone Thesis Application to write a brief proposal of his/her Capstone Thesis topic. The proposal should include the following items:

- Type of project and general topic (e.g., literature, math, technology)
- Research or focus of the general topic
 - Is this a continuation of your project in MAT 6317?
 - Problem or planning issue addressed within the defined Capstone Thesis
 - Why it is important
 - Key research question(s)
- Is your study quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods?
- How will you collect data?
- A 250-word proposal for your final product

The research question(s) should be clearly stated at the beginning of the proposal. For example:

- “What are the experiences of teachers with less than five years of teaching experience in an HISD school?”
- “What kind of childcare support system would best serve the families of 5th Ward schools?”
- “What impact does the digital assessment program ‘Plickers’ have on middle school mathematics achievement?”
- “Does participation in Science Olympiad increase female interest in STEM?”
- “Is the Teacher Emotional Scale (TES) an effective evaluation method of measuring elementary teachers’ emotions?”
- “Can the films of Akira Kurosawa be an effective way to teach high school Shakespearean literature?”

CAPSTONE THESIS STYLE CRITERIA

All Capstone Thesis submissions must meet the following style criteria:

- Approximately 25 – 50 pages in length (not including title page, signature page, table of contents, acknowledgments/dedications, and references) based on the APA 6th edition style guide.
- The Capstone Thesis will contain the following five chapters:
 - Introduction – Identify the problem(s) you are addressing, place the problem within a sub-field of education (e.g., literacy or math education), summarize the approach(es) and method(s) used in this project, clearly define the research questions, explain how the paper is organized.
 - Review of literature, theory, and practice – Present a synthesis of educational theory that is being brought to bear on the problem (what are the themes in the research that informs your project and the methodology?), summarize points of view, state how the main points in the review guide the following sections.
 - Methodology – Describe the philosophical underpinning to your research methods including whether you are using qualitative or quantitative methods, or a mixture of both, and why. You should be clear about the academic basis for all the choice of research methods that you have made. Saying “I was interested in...” or, “I thought...” is not enough; there must be good academic reasons for your choice(s). This section can also include how you will avoid bias and ensure validity and reliability in your project.
 - Results and Analysis – Report the findings of your study based on the methodology (or methodologies) you applied to gather information. The results section should state the findings of the research arranged in a logical sequence without bias or interpretation. Your results should be concise and use non-textual elements (i.e., figures and tables) appropriately to present results effectively. The exact types and amounts of data you provide depend on the nature of the research project. A general rule of thumb is that you should avoid providing data that is not critical to answering the research question(s).
 - Discussion – Present conclusions, implications, and recommendations and describe the significance of your findings, particularly in light of what was already known about the research problem being investigated, and to explain any new understandings or insights stemming from your findings. You will also help the reader understand why your research should matter to them after they have finished reading your thesis. You should not merely summarize the main topics covered in the findings, nor is it a re-statement of your research question(s). It is a synthesis of critical points and, if applicable, recommendations of areas of future research.
- All in-text citations, references, figures, and tables will follow the APA 6th Edition Style Guide

See the UHD Dept. of Urban Education Style Guide for details on how to correctly format your Capstone Thesis.

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR CAPSTONE THESIS

All thesis submissions should meet the following three quality criteria:

Originality

The research has not been done before in the same way. It is rare to find a topic that has not been researched previously to some extent and by some procedure. Therefore, originality does not mean that the paper/project's hypotheses are entirely new. Instead, the "originality" criterion is met if the student continues to study or examine a problem in a way that is substantially different and updated or that continues prior approaches and that has a reasonable prospect of adding to an understanding of the problem.

Individuality

The study is conceived, conducted, and reported primarily by the student. Faculty advisors and others may suggest topics and help students in thinking through the concepts and procedures to be used. However, the chief decisions about whether to study the topic, how to study it, and how to report it must be made, rationalized, and defended by the student.

Rigor

The study should be characterized by strict accuracy and scrupulous honesty and precise distinctions among facts, implications, and suppositions. Rigor is achieved by adhering to demonstrable facts when reporting procedures and results, by building on a foundation of facts when concluding, by specifying links to facts when inferring implications, by always bringing forward *all* relevant data, and by being both self-critical and logical in reporting and when projecting needed research.

CURRENTLY APPROVED CAPSTONE THESIS PRODUCTS

The principal focus of research is to expand the teacher's role as inquirer about teaching and learning. Teachers' research questions emerge from areas they consider problematic or from discrepancies between what is intended and what occurs in the classroom. Such research is a deliberate, solution-oriented investigation that is conducted by the classroom teacher.

Students will first formulate the research question(s) and then concentrate on methods of classroom inquiry research and the application of those methods in an original research project. Students will synthesize previous research on the topic, collect data from their research setting and participants, analyze the data, and develop and report the research findings for implications and practice.

Below are the specific topics or products that are currently approved for development (other projects may be considered at the *beginning* of the semester *before* enrolling in the MAT 6390 course):

Development of School Profile

This qualitative project gives students the opportunity to go beyond numbers and statistics and understand the underlying philosophies that guide classroom and administrative practice in a specific school. Students will develop a semi-structured interview protocol and use it to conduct interviews with at least five (5) faculty members at a single elementary, middle, or high school. Interviewees must include at least one administrator. Students will code interviews to glean themes that lead to a pedagogical and ontological profile of the school.

Curriculum Development/Revision

Students may choose to develop or revise a curriculum for their classes/subjects. Some examples are: revising lesson plans to incorporate active learning strategies to teach a series of units, designing lesson plans (and objectives) with TEKS, and so forth. Students may also choose to develop lesson plans/curriculum for an upcoming year. As part of the research component, students would be expected to field test the plans and evaluate the results or develop a rationale based on theoretical foundations.

Advanced Technology Project

These projects may involve providing instructional support using the web or software evaluation, identifying technology resources for students, creating electronic portfolios to assess K-12 learners, and so forth. As part of the research component, students would be expected to field test the project and evaluate the results or develop a rationale based on theoretical foundations.

Evaluation of Curriculum and Instruction

Examining the structure of the curriculum that teachers implement encourages understanding of the goals and aims of curricula. Examining the goals and aims of existing curricula permits the teacher to see links between the needs of society and its citizens and how schools mediate between the two. It also allows the teacher to trace trends and subsequent reform movements in subject-matter, leadership, teacher training, teaching and learning strategies, school cultures, what policies were in place, who were the policymakers, how decisions were made, who made the decisions, and so forth.

This project contextualizes the curriculum that the investigator examines. It answers questions such as: What educational purposes should the school seek to attain? What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes? How can these educational experiences be effectively organized? How can we determine whether and to what extent these purposes are being attained?