

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS OF LEARNERS

Dispositions are the values, commitments and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues and communities and that affect student learning and achievement, motivation and development, as well as the educator's own professional growth. If sincerely held, dispositions should lead to actions and patterns of professional conduct.

For GCU College of Education students, these dispositions flow from the university's mission statement. A values-based education emphasizing community, character and citizenship in the context of a Christian worldview seeks to teach, reinforce, support and cause teacher candidates to contemplate certain foundational values which Christianity contends lead to a good life. These normative Christian values are integral to the development, maturity and education of ethical and morally respectable citizens who continue on the path of lifelong learning and service. For College of Education students, this is manifested in the professional dispositions each carries into the educational community.

High Expectations

Educators should believe that all students could learn and should set and support realistic expectations for student success.

These expectations should be communicated in positive ways. Educators within the College of Education believe that all students have the capacity to be successful in their academic endeavors. To that end, they support rigorous, but realistic expectations for student success. Goals for teacher candidates' achievement are based on the tenets of critical thinking and a global perspective of the educational community as a whole. Further, goals are stipulated to include the skillsets and best practices regarding educational theory, methodology and assessment in order to assure teacher candidates complete their programs with a highly developed and effective pedagogy. Goals and expectations are communicated in a positive and proactive manner with the recognition that teacher candidates are capable of constructively reaching their goals. Collaboration and teamwork are emphasized in this process, in that the entire educational process is a collaborative effort directed at a successful and prudent result.

High Expectations is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Identifying both strengths and weaknesses in students through assessments
- Using the knowledge to individualize instruction for each student
- Monitoring and assessing in real-time and changing practice almost as quickly
- Knowing students and their interests and abilities
- Communicating expectations positively through a variety of methods
- Including students in the planning of the classroom goals

Respect for the Diversity of Others

Educators should be sensitive to individual learning and the social needs of students and embrace the cultural diversity of the community. They should develop and maintain educational communities marked by respect for others. They should interact with their students, fellow educators, administrators, parents and other community members with courtesy and civility and establish relationships characterized by respect and rapport.

Educators in the College of Education strive to create a culture of mutual respect, tolerance and fellowship among themselves, teacher candidates and PK-12 colleagues. Faculty demonstrate pluralistic cultural behaviors, and teacher candidates are provided the requisite skills necessary to become professional models within a diverse culture. College of Education students implement the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to meet the needs of students from different cultures, genders and exceptionalities. Within this nurturing environment, College of Education students express and demonstrate awareness of the important individual and cultural differences that form the rich cultural tapestry of a global society.

Respect for the Diversity of Others is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Embracing diversity in all things
- Using diversity to cast light on perspective
- Inviting diversity of thought and practice from others
- Celebrating the potential of diversity
- Knowing the backgrounds and cultures of students
- Not tolerating or minimizing inappropriate behavior when observed
- Challenging students to report inappropriate behavior, providing a positive and supportive environment that allows students to feel safe when reporting it

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS OF LEARNERS

Fairness

Educators should promote social justice and equity, maintain appropriate standards of confidentiality and exercise fairness in all areas including assessment.

Fairness can be difficult to describe and is often a matter of perception. It is said “we know it when we see it,” but for educators, fairness is a much more calculated entity. Educators help students to behave in ways that promote equality among them, ensuring that all students are treated in a manner consistent with the Golden Rule, a cross-cultural ethical precept found in nearly all religions of the world. Additionally, educators maintain standards of confidentiality based in the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. § 1232g), known in education circles as FERPA or the Buckley Amendment, named after its principle senatorial sponsor. Educators exercise fairness in the equality with which they treat all students and in their formative and summative assessment practices.

Fairness is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Building positive relationships with the students
- Engaging students in conversations beyond the classroom
- Taking time to understand student issues and concerns
- Assessing student learning consistently and without bias
- Guiding students through the problem solving process
- Seeking to understand the issues and challenges facing students

Professional Conduct

Educators should exercise sound judgment and ethical behavior. They should be a positive role model within their community.

All College of Education programs prepare students to work in demographically, socioeconomically and academically diverse settings and to anticipate future professional challenges. Teachers' professional conduct is not confined to the classroom, but also extends outside it into areas of community service as well. Teachers must model ethical behavior and exhibit integrity. They are committed to positively influencing all students within their classrooms and surrounding community environs on academic and personal levels. Teachers maintain confidentiality for student privacy in cooperation with federal mandates and personal ethics and demonstrate responsibility in the areas of leadership, assessment and organization. Teachers interact appropriately with students and their families, as well as with peers, faculty, administrators and external constituents. Teachers exhibit professional traits and skills ranging from punctuality and consistent attendance to proactive attitudes in all settings.

Professional conduct is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Exhibiting professionalism (timeliness, attendance, attire, attitudes) in university and school settings
- Exhibiting initiative and dedication
- Demonstrating respect for self, colleagues, students and property
- Committing to teach all students with the belief all students can learn
- Interacting appropriately and effectively with students and their families, peers, faculty, administrators and external audiences
- Communicating appropriately, frequently and effectively
- Demonstrating responsibility, accountability, integrity and resourcefulness
- Actively participating in school and professional learning communities
- Acting in congruence with local, state and national policies and laws that govern education

Reflection

Educators should recognize that reflection combined with experience leads to growth as a professional. Educators should be thoughtful about their professional practice, critically examine it and seek continual improvement.

Reflective practice is at the heart of teaching. Teacher candidates discover that highly effective teachers continuously reflect on their professional and instructional actions and decisions in support of student learning and achievement. The teacher is an instructional decision maker who monitors and adjusts instruction by using observation, contextual and assessment data relating to students' performance and responses. These multi-layered sources of information about student learning guide instructional decisions. By reflecting on contextual, performance, formative and summative assessment data, teachers can gauge student learning and direct and revise instructional focus. Instructional decision making is based on the proactive concept of early assistance and matches instructional resources through evidence to the core of the students' needs.

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS OF LEARNERS

Reflection is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Seeking feedback to measure the effectiveness of processes
- Using feedback to change ineffective processes
- Monitoring and adjusting actions based on reflective practices
- Avoiding sacred behaviors – it may not be broken, but it can always be improved
- Observing others in practice and learning from the experience
- Asking questions of colleagues and supervisors
- Making time for the reflective process daily

Curiosity

Educators should promote and support curiosity and encourage active inquiry. They should be able to think innovatively and creatively, using critical thinking as a problem-solving approach.

Curiosity impels motivated students to explore and seek answers. Teachers promote curiosity through effective engagement strategies and actions that support students in their discovery of new ideas and build meaning through their own cognitive processes, as well as steer them towards becoming lifelong learners. Teachers support curiosity by creating opportunities for discovery authentic problem solving, and inquiry-based learning and activities and they facilitate discussion and activities to guide students to explore, discover and construct meaning (Marzano, 2003). Student exploration and integration of information is a means to problem solve and create rather than engage in transference of knowledge. Purposefully connecting curiosity to student cognitive growth resulting in student academic success creates effective, powerful teacher practitioners. Creating learning environments focused on intellectual curiosity will sustain high academic performance and achievement for all learners.

Curiosity is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Asking higher-order questions
- Posing real-world challenges and case studies for resolution
- Stimulating students to think creatively and “outside the box”
- Challenging and motivating students to think critically and problem solve
- Asking students to challenge the status quo
- Encouraging collaboration and teamwork to solve authentic problems

Honesty

Educators should model integrity by their words and actions. They should be forthright with others and uphold high standards of trust, character and integrity.

Professional behavior for educators is often defined as the process in which an individual engages while making ethical or moral decisions regarding dilemmas that occur as part of the act of teaching (Stoddard, 2006). In addition to academic qualifications, a professional teacher must act in an ethical manner based on an explicit or implicit code of conduct through the development of characteristics of a professional and they must model professionalism every day. As servant leaders, it is essential that teachers exhibit honesty in the classroom to meet the academic program goals as well as individual learning goals of the students within their responsibility. This allows teachers to develop meaningful professional relationships, integrate various perspectives and remain transparent during the decision making process for developing and implementing holistic solutions. Teachers are also encouraged to maintain high expectations regarding student interaction and decision making by modeling increased scholarship, integrity and character.

Honesty is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Saying what you mean and meaning what you say
- Always speaking truthfully to your students
- Being transparent in your decision-making processes
- Engaging in ensuring that input from all stakeholders is included
- Using student input to make decisions
- Always keeping the students in the center of your decision-making process

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS OF LEARNERS

Compassion

Educators should demonstrate professional friendliness, warmth and genuine caring in their relationships with others while providing intellectual, emotional and spiritual support.

Teacher candidates address the relationship of Christian heritage and servant leadership as it applies to compassion and empathy throughout their academic experience. Volunteering for on- and off-campus events personifies compassionate, active engagement and promotes the emotional, spiritual and intellectual growth of teachers and their students. Faculty demonstration of these objectives is presented through field experiences, hands-on activities, volunteer opportunities and community outreach programs. Through these, teacher candidates exhibit an in-depth understanding of the compassion and emotional support required of professionals in their field. Teacher candidates use their professional, academic and peer relationships to foster skills directly related to the support of others.

Compassion is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Meeting and greeting students on a daily basis with sincerity
- Being genuinely interested in students
- Taking time to converse with students beyond the scope of the classroom
- Inquiring about their outside activities such as sports and civic involvement
- Knowing your students beyond the academic picture

Advocacy

Educators should promote positive change in schools and communities that benefit the welfare of others.

Teachers understand the effect of community involvement and servant leadership as it applies to the welfare of others in the educational setting. This is personified through awareness of social issues and has its foundation in positive student relationships. Academic programs, practicum/field experiences, student teaching and administrative internship experiences exemplify a commitment to the promotion of positive change reflective of student and community issues and concerns. Teachers use their problem-solving skills and compassion for the welfare of others to help where they can to the best of their ability.

Advocacy is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Actively building positive relationships with the students
- Engaging students in conversations beyond the scope of the classroom
- Taking time to understand student issues and concerns
- Assisting students in finding resolutions to their problems
- Guiding students through the problem-solving process
- Seeking to understand the issues and challenges facing students
- Sincerely getting to know the students' interests and needs in their context

Dedication

Educators should be committed to the profession of teaching and learning. They should be professionally active, lifelong learners and seek opportunities for professional development.

Teaching is a calling of the heart. God puts it into the hearts of His own to minister to His children through teaching, as well as His Word. To do this effectively, teachers have to be committed to the profession. They should be active in professional organizations such as Phi Delta Kappa, Kappa Delta Pi, Future Teachers of America or other educational organizations. The credentialing degree should be only the start of lifelong learning and professional development opportunities that reflect the latest research in pedagogy and instructional strategy. There is always more to know; a dedicated educator is constantly seeking that which will ultimately benefit the teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom.

Dedication is demonstrated by the following behaviors:

- Punctuality
- Consistent attendance
- Active classroom participation
- Prompt completion of work

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS OF LEARNERS

- Exhibiting a positive attitude
- Engagement in personal professional development
- Participation in educational social networks

References

- Cornwell, G. H., Stoddard, E. W. (2006). Freedom, diversity, and global citizenship. *Liberal Education*. (92), 2. 26-33.
- Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD