

Teacher Education Dispositions

Role of Dispositions

Teaching involves more than effective planning, instructional knowledge, and teaching skills. It also extends to professional dispositions. Dispositions are similar to professional beliefs or values systems, but they are more than that. Dispositions extend to professional modes of conduct and the ways in which beliefs and attitudes are displayed by teachers' actions in and out of the classroom. Teachers with positive professional dispositions tend to act in ways that elevate the profession of teaching in the eyes of others. (Ros-Voseles & Moss, 2007)

Teacher education programs bear a responsibility to convey, model, and promote positive standards of professional conduct. They also should maintain screening and assessment procedures to assure that teacher candidates with negative dispositions at odds with professional standards are not permitted to persist in teacher education programs.

Mansfield University teacher education programs have earned accreditation from The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). That national accrediting group requires that member teacher education colleges and universities assess their candidates' knowledge, skills, and *dispositions*. Teaching dispositions also extend to maintaining the ethical standards of teachers' professional societies (for example, Council for Exceptional Children, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, etc.). (NCATE, 2006)

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) requires pre-service and in-service teachers in Pennsylvania to act in accordance with *Pennsylvania's Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators* (PDE, 1991). The PDE program evaluation guidelines include "Professionalism" as a required attribute of *all* teacher education candidates and note that programs must provide evidence that their students possess demonstrate professionalism in keeping with the Pennsylvania Code. (PDE, 2001)

Mansfield University teacher education has identified 11 dispositions that should be possessed by program graduates. Through the actions of the Teacher Education Council (TEC), a set of procedures have been established to promote and assess teacher education candidate dispositions and to respond to candidates displaying negative dispositions and unprofessional conduct. Authority for enforcing the dispositions procedures resides in the Office of the Associate Provost as the unit head for teacher education.

Mansfield University Teacher Education Dispositions

If sincerely held, dispositions should lead to actions and patterns of professional conduct. Teachers should be role models and model positive behaviors for their students. The eleven dispositions briefly described below have been aligned to the domains and components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (2007) that forms the core of the knowledge base within the teacher education unit conceptual framework.

- **Reflection** – Teachers should recognize that professional reflection combined with experience leads to professional growth. Teachers should be thoughtful about their

- teaching, critically examine their teaching practices, and strive for ongoing professional improvement. (Danielson 4A, 4E)
- **Professional conduct** – Teachers should exercise sound judgment and ethical professional behavior. Teachers should represent positive role models for their students and be supportive colleagues with other professionals and paraprofessionals. (Danielson 2C, 4D, 4F)
 - **Respect for diversity** – Teachers should be sensitive to individual differences among students and promote understanding of students' varied cultural traditions and learning strengths and needs. (Danielson 1B)
 - **High expectations** – Teachers should believe that their students can learn and should set high, yet realistic goals for student success. Teachers should communicate those high expectations to their students in positive ways. (Danielson 1C, 2B, 3A)
 - **Respect for others** – Teachers should develop and maintain classroom communities marked by student respect for other students and free from bullying and belittling behaviors. Teachers should interact with their students, fellow teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members with courtesy and civility. Respect is also demonstrated by pre-service teachers in the professionally appropriate ways in which they address fellow students, staff, faculty members, and administrators. (Danielson 2A, 2D, 4C, 4D)
 - **Compassion** – Teachers should demonstrate professional friendliness, warmth, and genuine caring in their relationships with students. Teachers should attempt to establish student-teacher relationships characterized by respect and rapport. (Danielson 2A)
 - **Advocacy** – Teachers should work to promote positive changes in schools and communities that benefit the welfare of their students. Teachers should work to assure that their students are afforded the services they need. (Danielson 4D, 4F)
 - **Curiosity** – Teachers should promote and support curiosity in their students and encourage active inquiry. Teachers should be professionally active lifelong learners and seek opportunities for professional development. (Danielson 3C, 4D, 4E)
 - **Dedication** – Teachers should be committed to the profession of teaching and to the betterment of their schools, communities, and students. Dedication is also demonstrated by pre-service teachers by class attendance, participation, completion of outside readings and assignments, and overall performance in teacher education courses. (Danielson 4D, 4E)
 - **Honesty** – Teachers should model personal and academic integrity by their actions. Teachers should be forthright in their interactions with others and uphold high standards of trust, character, and academic integrity. (Danielson 4F)
 - **Fairness** – Teachers should promote social justice, treat students equitably, maintain appropriate standards of confidentiality, and exercise fairness in academic assessment. Teachers should promote fairness in students' interactions with others. (Danielson 1F, 2A, 3D, 4B, 4F)

Assessing Dispositions

Because teaching dispositions encompass both beliefs and actions, Mansfield University has developed a pair of essays written in required teacher education courses and observational assessments in required field experiences in schools. In keeping with established assessment principles and practices, the assessments are varied, multiple, and spread throughout the teacher education program.

Dispositions of all initial teacher education candidates are assessed using essay and observational instruments at four key points in the teacher education program. However, dispositions and standards of professional conduct should be *continually* maintained throughout the pre-service and in-service educator's career. So, the Mansfield University dispositions procedures also include provisions for letters of concern that may be written by teacher education faculty members at any point in the teacher education program when there are concerns about a student's professional dispositions or conduct. Low grades in required teacher education courses or removal from a teacher education field experience also provide cause for concern. When concerns are raised by a faculty member, the student is notified and given an opportunity to discuss the concern. When indicated, a plan of action with opportunity to address the area(s) of concern will be developed. If after a plan of action is attempted, and the area(s) of concern continue, further actions, including dismissal, will be considered.

Since dispositions include an element of both beliefs and actions, the assessments are designed to cause students to demonstrate their teacher dispositions through a combination of essays and direct observations of their field-based work in school classrooms. The four assessments will be evaluated with rubric scoring and "Unsatisfactory" evaluations will result in consequences. The dispositions policies include procedures for conferences and, in some cases, removing students from the teacher education program who display dispositions or conduct that are not consistent with the professional dispositions and conduct of teachers.

Because the dispositions assessments are embedded within Mansfield University courses and include multiple assessment opportunities, when a teacher education course is transferred into Mansfield University and is substituted for a course in which one of the dispositions is assessed, that particular dispositions assessment is waived. The following procedures have been established for assessing the professional dispositions and conduct of Mansfield University teacher education students:

Promoting and Assessing Positive Dispositions / Professional Conduct

- Lower Division Essay: Introduction to Education (Self-Assessment)
- Upper Division Essay: Inclusion of Diverse Learners (Respect for Diversity)
- First Field-Based Assessment: Elementary, Secondary, and Special Education O&P / Art and Music Methods (College Supervisor Evaluation with Input from K-12 Teacher – Observational Instrument)
- Second Field-Based Assessment: Student Teaching (College Supervisor Evaluation with Input from K-12 Teachers – Summative PDE 430)

Responding to Negative Dispositions / Professional Conduct

- "Unsatisfactory" evaluation on the lower division or upper division dispositions essay: Conference with course instructor and rewrite of the essay for which an "unsatisfactory" was recorded; If concerns remain after the conference and rewrite, referred to the Department Chairperson for a conference; If concerns remain after the Department Chairperson conference, referred to the Associate Provost for development of a plan of action for changing behaviors that have been questioned or for possible removal from teacher education
- "Unsatisfactory" evaluation on the First Field-Based Assessment – Conference with the faculty member supervising the field experience; If concerns remain after the conference, referred to the Department Chairperson for a conference; If

concerns remain after the Department Chairperson conference, referred to the Associate Provost for development of a plan of action for changing behaviors that have been questioned or for possible removal from teacher education

- “Unsatisfactory” evaluation on the Second Field-Based Assessment - Conference with the college supervisor in which the “unsatisfactory” is recorded; Notice of the “Unsatisfactory” evaluation is forwarded to the Department Chairperson, Director of Student Teaching, and the Associate Provost
Note: Students receiving an “Unsatisfactory” PDE 430 evaluation in any domain or overall on the summative evaluation cannot be recommended to PDE for certification; To gain a “Basic” level or above evaluation following an “Unsatisfactory” evaluation, student teaching would need to be successfully repeated (See field experience re-take application procedures below)
- Removal from a required field experience: May be at the request of the host school or by the college supervisor; Policies and procedures are outlined in the Student Teaching Handbook (available on-line). The policies and procedures describing terminations in student teaching also apply to other required field experiences.
- Final grades lower than C- in required professional education courses will be recorded and monitored. If patterns of low performance are noted, a conference with the Department Chairperson will be required; If concerns remain after the Department Chairperson conference, referred to the Associate Provost for development of a plan of action for changing behaviors that have been questioned or for possible removal from teacher education
- Letters of concern by program faculty: Conference with the faculty member writing the letter and the Department Chair of the student’s program; If concerns remain after the conference, referred to the Associate Provost for development of a plan of action for changing behaviors that have been questioned or for possible removal from teacher education

Appeals

- Removals from teacher education by the Associate Provost may be appealed in writing to the Provost

This dispositions assessment policy pertains to Mansfield University initial teacher education programs and candidates. Advanced programs will assess dispositions using separate procedures that are consistent with the professional standards of their individual subject area disciplines.

References:

Danielson, C. 2007. *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education). 2006. *Standards, procedures and policies for accreditation of professional education units*. Washington DC: author.

PDE (Pennsylvania Department of Education). 2001. General standards and specific program guidelines for state approval of professional educator programs. PDE Bureau of Teacher Certification and Preparation.

PDE (Pennsylvania Department of Education). 1991. *Pennsylvania's code of professional practice and conduct for educators*. PA Code 22 235.1-235.11 Online: http://www.pde.state.pa.us/pspc/lib/pspc/code_of_conduct.pdf

Ros-Voseles, D., & Moss, L. 2007. The role of dispositions in the education of future teachers. *Young Children* 62 (5): 90-98.