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Teacher Dispositions in Special Education Training to Promote Persistence in the Field

Megan Chaney
Walden University

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Megan Chaney

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Dr. Shannon Decker, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Amy Gaskins, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2017

Abstract

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by

Megan Chaney

MA, Fresno Pacific University, 2007

BA, California State University, Fresno, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Walden University

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Abstract

A teacher's disposition is a valued factor in special education; however, preservice teacher training in California higher education institutions does not require a focus on dispositions. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine whether common dispositions were associated with retention among teachers with comparable experience and preparation in special education. The study was grounded in constructivist learning theories including experiential learning, transformational learning, reflective practice, communities of practice, and situated learning. Data collection included responses to the Teacher Dispositions Index survey from 28 teachers in the partner school district. Results of multiple regression analyses indicated that effective communication and commitment to ethical professional behavior were common dispositions among persistent special education teachers. This research study affirmed special education teacher dispositions are difficult to define and assess. Future research is recommended regarding the dispositions of effective communication, commitment to ethical professional behavior, and supplemental dispositions present in the teaching profession. The doctoral project included a professional development seminar to foster persistence among special education teachers. Results may be used to increase percentages of persistent teachers in special education programs.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

A teacher's specific disposition is a highly valued factor in the field of special education, and LePage, Nielsen, and Fearn (2008) found that a teacher's individual disposition may increase his or her longevity in the chosen career. However, preservice teacher training in California higher education institutions does not require a focus on dispositions (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015; LePage, Nielsen, & Fern, 2008; Rose, 2013; Schussler, Stooksberry, & Bercaw, 2010). The purpose of this study was to examine dispositions in preservice teacher training and identify the dispositions associated with teacher persistence in special education programs.

Currently, the state of California's special education teaching standards do not show a clear focus on the development of a teacher's disposition (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015). Program design standards for preliminary education specialists' teaching credentials and other related service credentials indirectly refer to the idea of dispositional development in Program Standard 2. Program Standard 2 requires teacher candidates to demonstrate professional, legal, and ethical practices (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015). The programs are required to "provide candidates information on laws and regulations as they pertain to promoting teacher behavior that is positive and self-regulatory as well as promoting safe educational environments" (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015, pp. 3-4). Research and professional organizations with great influence in the field of preservice teacher preparation support the need for a dispositional focus during the journey of a

teacher earning a credential despite the lack of focus on this aspect of teacher training in California's preservice teaching standards (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015; Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2015; Cummins & Asempapa, 2013; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002; Rose, 2013; Sherman, 2006).

Most special education teachers in the state of California are prepared to teach by completing programs in institutions of higher education. According to the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and to California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (AICCU Deans and Directors of Education, 2016), 97.3% of all California teachers earn their preliminary credentials through institutions of higher education. The remaining 2.7% earn their credentials through intern programs sponsored by local educational agencies (AICCU Deans and Directors of Education, 2016). Institutions of higher education play a vital role in preparing entry-level teachers through curricular choices and adherence to standards in the collegiate arena.

Although institutions of higher education are unable to influence the school-based issues such as lack of support or public perception of teachers, there are areas impacting teacher attrition that may be addressed during preservice teacher preparation programs. Institutions of higher education may address these issues by designing appropriate curricula to develop new special education teachers with sufficient disposition for success in the field (Nelsen, 2014). Research shows special education teachers experience many challenges in their first years of teaching that are unique to their profession (Beaton, 2014; Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, Hartman, & Walker, 2013; Klinger & Boardman,

2011). The rate of attrition of special education teachers far exceeds the average for other fields of teaching (Buchanan, 2012). In 2010, the national special education teacher attrition rate was 13.5% (Fish & Stephens, 2010). In the same year, 98% of U.S. school districts reported a shortage of qualified special education teachers (Fish & Stephens, 2010). On average, special education teacher attrition is prevalent with up to 9% or 22,000 educators exiting the field of special education in the first year of employment (Fish & Stephens, 2010). In 2012, teacher attrition or turnover was estimated to cost the United States \$7 billion per year (Jamil, Downer, & Pianta, 2012). The national trend of special education teacher attrition leading to a teacher shortage is alarming because it lays the foundation for a perpetually underqualified teaching population to serve children with the most intense needs for academic, social, and medical support (Mason-Williams, 2015).

National data were consistent with data in the state of California regarding special education teacher attrition (“High-Need Subject Area,” 2015). California is not unique regarding the lack of qualified special education teachers needed to teach children. California’s compulsory education system comprises 300,000 teachers and supports 6.3 million students (“High-Need Subject Area,” 2015). In the next decade California’s teacher shortage will increase to a shortage of 100,000 credentialed teachers needed to serve the educational needs of the state (“Teacher Shortage,” 2015). Up to 20% of new teachers leave the profession within 3 years (California Teachers Association, 2015). In addition, up to 50% of new teachers in urban school districts leave the profession within the initial 5 years of teaching (“Teacher Shortage,” 2015). A 13% attrition rate of new

teachers is present by the end of a teacher's second year in the profession (California Teachers Association, 2015). Nationally, teachers within their first 5 years of the profession exit at much higher rates than veteran teachers (Jamil et al., 2012). One third of new teachers exit the field within the first 7 years of employment ("Teacher Shortage," 2015). Sufficient training in the college environment, including recruitment and retention of special education teachers who will teach in high-poverty schools, has proven challenging (California Teachers Association, 2015).

The special education teacher shortage in California began in 1993 and has continued due to a variety of factors impacting the workforce, including children with greatest needs whose disposition does not support their chosen career, lack of support for new teachers, low salaries, poor public perception of the teaching field, intense course work to earn a teaching credential, and increased testing requirements to earn a teaching credential (Bettini, Cheyney, Wang, & Leko, 2015; Palladino, 2007; Rose, 2013; Schussler et al., 2010; Shippen, Crites, Houchins, Ramsey, & Simon, 2005). With the intense course work required in institutions of higher education to train special education teachers, the curriculum presumably is sufficient to prepare newly credentialed teachers (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015). Increasing special education teacher retention through a focus on teacher dispositions within preservice training may help teachers persist with the challenges they face in their chosen career (LePage et al., 2008; Rose, 2013; Schussler et al., 2010).

Research on dispositions is lacking (Welch, Pitts, Tenini, Kuenlen, & Wood, 2010). A variety of valid and reliable assessment instruments exist to examine teacher

disposition (Lang, 2008; Schulte, Edick, Edwards, & Mackiel, 2004). A study on teacher disposition may lead to a deeper understanding of the topic and a more accepted view of dispositions. A greater understanding of dispositions of successful special education teachers prepared in institutions of higher education who have been retained in the field more than 5 years may benefit teacher preparation programs to make curricular decisions to better prepare new teachers for the challenges they will face in their career.

Rationale

Discussion with superintendents, special education local plan area directors, leaders of nonprofit institutions, and school district leaders supported exploration of the problem in this study. Members of the Special Education Advisory Board in California completed an activity in which they were asked to rank their perception of the essential components of a preservice teacher preparation program to prepare qualified and persistent special education teachers. Teacher disposition was the top-ranking characteristic above pedagogical knowledge, technical skills, and legal knowledge (Fresno Pacific University, 2016). Supplemental communication from a local school principal verified the shortage of persistent special education teachers at a university-sponsored job fair. A school district in central California reported high attrition rates of newly credentialed special education teachers and began the academic year with a shortage of special education teachers.

The results of the current study provided the foundation for proposed curricular changes including addition of content-specific training in special education teacher credential programs in institutions of higher education, policy changes, and contributions

to the discussions at the state or national level regarding necessary components of special education preservice teacher preparation programs. Professional development sessions may include day-long workshops or field experiences for teacher candidates. After obtaining data from current special education teachers who have persisted in the field 5 years or longer, I conducted an analysis to determine common dispositions among the teachers to inform college curricula for preservice teacher training programs.

The study findings were used to design a professional development session that would be implemented in the core content of a special education credentialing program. Curricular units supporting dispositional development during preservice training may be embedded into current standards-driven course work or in stand-alone seminar workshops. Findings may be used to inform policy discussions at the local, state, and national level. With an increase in adequately prepared entry-level special education teachers, more qualified teachers may be available to serve children with exceptional needs.

The purpose of this study was to examine dispositions of persistent special education teachers to impact curriculum in special education postsecondary teacher preparation programs in institutions of higher education. Children with exceptional needs have experienced the teaching and learning process with underqualified or newly credentialed teachers (Robertson & Singleton, 2010; Talbert-Johnson, 2006). This lack of qualified and experienced professionals is not only an issue of concern for parents, children, and school leaders but is an issue of concern at the national level impacting educational policy as well as a shortage of qualified special educators needed to teach and

lead special education programs at institutions of higher education (Dukes, Darling, & Doan, 2014; Pazez & Cole, 2012; Smith, Robb, West, & Tyler, 2010).

Definition of Terms

Disposition: An individual's "prevailing tendency, mood, or inclination" to act in a given manner ("Disposition," 2016a, para. 2). Disposition may be linked to a person's individual character and behavior ("Disposition," 2016b).

Significance of the Study

The potential contributions of the study included informing policy, curriculum, or seminars in teacher training programs. I sought to understand the problem of attrition rates of newly credentialed special education teachers with a focus on understanding dispositions related to persistent special education teachers. The implications for positive social change included an improved understanding of the dispositions of persistent special education teachers and an increase in the number of qualified, veteran teachers to serve children with special needs. Another potential benefit was increased equitable opportunities for children with special needs compared to their general education peers (see Bettini et al., 2015). The study served as a baseline for understanding of dispositions linked to successful teaching in the field of special education to inform curricular decisions at the collegiate level.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Quantitative researchers seek to accept or reject the null and alternative hypotheses (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). A clear and concise research question is integral to the research process. Hypotheses should align with theory or previous

research, should provide realistic explanations of possible outcomes, should specify the relationship between variables, and should be testable within a reasonable amount of time (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006).

The research question in this quantitative study was the following: What dispositions of special education teachers prepared in institutions of higher education were associated with their persistence as in-service teachers for more than 5 years? The dependent variable was dispositional characteristics of special education teachers who persist in the field of teaching. The independent variable was preservice teacher training in an institution of higher education.

H₀: There are no common dispositions associated with persistence of special education teachers who completed preservice teacher training in higher education programs.

H_a: There are common dispositions associated with persistence of special education teachers who completed preservice teacher training in higher education programs.

Review of the Literature

Introduction and Procedures

The issue of preparing special education teachers to face the demands of their chosen career is vital to the success of the children and families served with special education services or supports. Individuals with exceptionalities deserve equal access to qualified teachers with dispositions that support learning (LePage et al., 2008). All children are entitled to a free, appropriate public education (Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act [IDEA], 2004; Mason-Williams, 2015; Smith et al., 2010). It was necessary to expand the body of research in special education regarding teacher disposition and its impact on retention in the field. This research may improve understanding of the dispositions that may contribute to special education teacher preparation in institutions of higher education, teacher retention, and teacher longevity in the profession. With an increase in special education teacher retention, children with exceptionalities will have access to qualified veteran teachers rather than newly credentialed teachers.

I used electronic journals as well as traditional textbooks to research concepts explored in the study. Electronic libraries in Walden University and Fresno Pacific University were accessed to conduct advanced searches of key terms. Key terms were *teacher disposition, special education teacher disposition, special education teacher preparation, teacher preparation standards, teacher attrition, teacher retention, teacher persistence, constructivist learning theory, constructivism, professional teaching standards, quantitative research, survey research, teacher training, preservice teacher training, curriculum, and general education teacher preparation*. Journal articles and traditional textbooks were obtained via the Internet and interlibrary loan. The search parameters included resources published within the last 5 years and included a search for related terms within the abstract or full text of the resource.

Theoretical Foundation

Teacher education programs that embrace a constructivist approach have been shown to make a difference in the dispositions of the teachers trained in such programs

(Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum, 2005). A variety of definitions exist regarding constructivist learning theory, but all encompass the notion that learners construct understanding through intersections between experience and new learning, access to background knowledge, and lived experiences (Juvova, Chudy, Neumeister, Plischke, & Kvintova, 2015; Lee, 2016; Martell, 2014; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Psunder & Hederih, 2010). Learning occurs via creation of new understanding through interface with previous beliefs, interactions, events, and prior knowledge (Gash, 2015; Parsons & Vaughn, 2016; Scheer, Noweski, & Meinel, 2012; Ultanir, 2012). The constructivist approach to learning and teaching refers to how an individual constructs meaning as related to experiences to understand a concept or situation (Merriam et al., 2007).

Constructivist theories include experiential learning, transformational learning, reflective practice, communities of practice, and situated learning experiences (Merriam et al., 2007). The most prevalent theorists cited in the literature related to constructivism and teacher disposition are Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky (Caruthers & Friend, 2014; Cummins & Asempapa, 2013; Gash, 2015; Judge & Oreshkina, 2004; Jung & Rhodes, 2008; Nelsen, 2014; Psunder & Hederih, 2010; Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009; Scheer et al., 2012; Schussler et al., 2010; Sherman, 2006; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Ultanir, 2012). This study was not based on the work of one specific constructive theorist but included a practical and holistic view of constructivist learning theory.

Teachers in constructivist classrooms guide learning, mentor students, and create inclusive environments. These teachers facilitate the making of meaning with the learner

rather than directing rote learning experiences (Juvova et al., 2015; Merriam et al., 2007; Parsons & Vaughn, 2016). Teachers who lean on constructivist theory in compulsory and higher education are student centered, facilitate group dialogue, create shared understanding of topics, use a variety of instructional strategies, allow for learners to challenge or adjust their current beliefs, and attempt to assist learners in fully understanding their beliefs and learning style (Juvova et al., 2015; Martell, 2014). New teachers often construct their knowledge about teaching and learning during the act of teaching by making mistakes, testing hypotheses about what may work in the classroom, and creating generalizations from their experiences in the classroom (Lee, 2016).

Teacher Disposition and National Professional Standards

The study was grounded in the standards of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards. The INTASC organization was created in 1987 with the goal of improving teacher licensing, preparation, and professional development (“Understanding INTASC Standards,” n.d.). INTASC developed 10 standards pertaining to teacher competency and dispositions (Lang, 2008). Each standard contains indicators pertaining to knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The INTASC standards were the foundation for the development of the Teacher Dispositions Index and have been deemed appropriate as a standards based measurement of the values of teaching (Lang, 2008; Schulte et al., 2004). The INTASC standards are designed to document characteristics and abilities of new teachers, which are needed to develop into successful classroom teachers (“Understanding INTASC Standards,” n.d.). Educators often use the terms *standards* and *principles* in research regarding the INTASC concepts.

The INTASC standards are closely aligned with the theory of constructivism, which values the growth of an individual teacher rather than the traditional teacher evaluation (Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009). Examples of the INTASC standards specifically linked to teacher disposition that served as the foundation for the creation of the Teacher Disposition index included the following:

The teacher realizes that subject matter knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex and ever-evolving. She/he seeks to keep abreast of new ideas and understandings in the field. The teacher is concerned about all aspects of a child's well-being (cognitive, emotional, social, and physical), and is alert to signs of difficulties. The teacher values both long and short-term planning. The teacher respects the privacy of students and confidentiality of information. The teacher takes responsibility for establishing a positive climate in the school as a whole.

The teacher is a thoughtful responsive listener. (INTASC, 1992, pp. 14-15)

A quantitative approach to examining teacher dispositions was used to allow the study to be replicable in different educational communities and institutions of higher education (see Lodico et al., 2010). Findings may then be compared to examine dispositional trends, patterns, or differences based on location, educational setting, or participants' credentials.

Teacher Preparation and Disposition

Teaching and learning experiences in special education teacher preparation programs need to make an effort to decrease attrition rates of newly credentialed special education teachers (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014). Candidates exit the field due to a variety

of factors including requirements to deliver services to students outside of the scope of their credentialed authorization, underdeveloped skills needed to supervise large caseloads of students with wide ranging needs, inconsistent administrative support, difficulty collaborating with general education colleagues, and the pressure of collaborating with families of children with exceptionalities (Conderman et al., 2013). Studies indicated special education teachers left the profession due to compassion fatigue, professional stress, low salaries, classroom management issues, lack of self-confidence, lack of thorough preparation in teacher preparation programs, individual school and contextual issues, and lack of emotional and systematic support (Buchanan, 2012; Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Palladino, 2007). Researchers who focused on the retention of special educators called attention to intrinsic and dispositional factors that led special education teachers to remain in the field for 7 years or longer (Prather-Jones, 2011).

Various definitions of dispositions pertaining to the field of teaching exist (Bauer & Thornton, 2013). In conjunction with the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) broad belief statements, the NCATE definition of teacher dispositions referred to “professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities” (Nelsen, 2014, p. 86). The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) places a high value on teacher preparation programs and a teacher’s exhibition of dispositions to earn a teaching credential (Nelsen, 2014). CAEP

recently replaced NCATE as the national accrediting agency for teacher preparation programs.

The notion that a widely accepted definition of teacher dispositions does not exist is prevalent in the literature (Rose, 2013). Without a common definition of dispositions, assessing these dispositions has been difficult. The lack of a cohesive definition of dispositions impedes understanding and implementation of successful teacher education programs in institutions of higher education (Welch et al., 2010). Several views of dispositions have been researched rather than one specific set of dispositions (Rose, 2013). In dispositional assessments administered in teacher preparation or field based settings, findings showed there were multiple meanings of the assessments and they were used for a variety of purposes (Jung & Rhodes, 2008).

The emerging field of dispositional research pertaining to special education teacher preparation is quickly evolving. Dispositional development of preservice teachers has gained attention from national accreditation organizations such as NCATE and CAEP (Jung & Rhodes, 2008; Nelsen, 2014). CAEP called attention to dispositions within one of its accreditation standard:

Educator preparation providers establish and monitor attributes and dispositions beyond academic ability that candidates must demonstrate at admissions and during the program. The provider selects criteria, describes the measures used and evidence of the reliability and validity of those measures, and reports data that show how the academic and non-academic factors predict candidate performance

in the program and effective teaching. (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2015, p. 9)

Research pertaining to teacher disposition is ongoing and complex. Regardless of the accrediting agency, the topic is of interest and is valuable to the field of teaching (Cosgrove & Carpenter, 2012; Talbert-Johnson, 2006). I sought to examine dispositions of persistent special education teachers to inform the practices of teacher education programs in higher education.

Teacher preparation programs in institutions of higher education and through other sponsoring agencies are required to abide by state or national standards determined by external accrediting bodies (Sherman, 2006). Although standards are integral in determining minimum competencies to be met by teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs, teacher education programs often desire to craft and implement programs that develop not only entry level teacher candidates who meet minimum standards based competencies but candidates who are competent teachers in a more encompassing context (Sherman, 2006). Teacher preparation programs often focus their dispositional instruction on dispositions related to the technical characteristics of teachers rather than dispositions focused on the needs of the learners (Bauer & Thornton, 2013).

To become a highly qualified entry level teacher, a candidate requires the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to effectively engage in the teaching and learning process rather than achieving minimum competency on state or federal standards that may or may not include the nuances of effective teaching (Sherman, 2006). The dispositions of teachers are validated as having an impact on student success (Rinaldo &

Vermette, 2009). Teachers' foundational dispositions are at the heart of pedagogical decisions a teacher makes while instructing students (Bauer & Thornton, 2013). A teacher's style or approach may impact the teaching and learning process to a greater extent than his or her pedagogical knowledge (Sherman, 2006). A receptive teacher's decisions regarding curriculum or pedagogy is influenced by his or her individual dispositions (Bauer & Thornton, 2013). Preservice teacher candidates reported positive dispositional change in programs that combined field based and university based instruction (Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009). Although the formal curriculum may focus on the science of teaching including lesson planning and objectives, an informal curriculum reveals itself via subtle means with the learning atmosphere and dispositional attitudes of teacher candidates regarding learning (Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009). An entry level teacher's dispositions exhibited at the completion of a teacher preparation program will be maintained without change during the first years and will impact his or her confidence in his or her ability to succeed (Bauer & Thornton, 2013; Jamil et al., 2012). Research findings indicated that teacher preparation courses impact the development of teacher candidate dispositions through course work and fieldwork experiences (Cummins & Asempapa, 2013; Mueller & Hindin, 2011).

A variety of definitions of dispositions exist in the scope of teacher preparation and teacher practice in the field. However, a commonly agreed upon definition of dispositions does not currently exist in the body of research surrounding teacher preparation or practice in the field (Bauer & Thornton, 2013; Mueller & Hindin, 2011). CAEP (2015) defined dispositions as "the values, commitments, and professional ethics

that influence behaviors towards students, families, colleagues, and communities that affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth" (para. 6). In conjunction with previous definitions, the qualities of kindness to students and families, fairness in the classroom and school setting, honesty with students and parents, patience for students, and empathy for student and family situations are dispositions to be exhibited by an effective teacher (Sherman, 2006). Supplemental dispositions for education professionals are self and peer assessment as well as critical reflection on the efficacy of teaching practices (Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009). These behaviors are repetitious and not preplanned. They are behaviors that successful teachers engage in on a regular basis (Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009).

Dispositions are how a teacher's commitment to their profession and ethics show in professional practice (Johnston, Henriott, & Shapiro, 2011; Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009). Effective teachers exhibit the dispositions of commitment to professional ethics and strong communication skills (Singh, 2011). Beginning teachers reported a strong sense of self-efficacy when there was a deep understanding of special education law and professional ethics (Gavish & Bar-on, 2016). Early career teachers benefit from an administrator's support of professional ethics (Bettini et al., 2015).

Dispositions of responsive teachers are the ability to embrace and attend to student needs, ability to practice empathy, and ability to create supportive classroom environments through exhibiting patience (Sherman, 2006). Supplemental dispositions of responsive teachers include a teacher's ability to act in an ethical or moral manner, relate to students, and exhibit outstanding character (Sherman, 2006). Dispositions may include

a teacher's, belief systems, individual values, patterns of behavior, inclinations toward a certain way of thinking, and regular habits (Bauer & Thornton, 2013) Teachers who are regularly engaged in self-reflection and evaluation promote student success (Rinaldo, Laverie, & Tapp, 2011). Dispositions of successful teacher candidates include the ability to be critical, challenging, facilitative, creative, empowered, and connected in one's thinking (Bauer & Thornton, 2013). Technical dispositions of successful teacher candidates include the ability to be assuming, directing, and controlling rather than accepting, repetitive, and disconnected (Bauer et al., 2013). A new teacher's self-efficacy is related to current or prior experiences in a classroom, understanding of both what to teach and how to teach, their individual approach, and disposition (Jamil et al., 2012).

A variety of colleges pre- and post-assess dispositions within populations of teacher credential candidates. Gainesville State College has defined specific dispositions to be pre-assessed prior to enrollment in the teacher preparation program and assessed upon program completion (Cosgrove & Carpenter, 2012). The dispositions are care for students, reflection upon professional practice, informed decision making, the ability to maximize student development, contribution as a citizen to the community environment, preparation to participate in and serve democratic society, understanding of appropriate professional conduct and content knowledge, the use of appropriate pedagogical methods, and collaboration with a variety of stakeholders in the educational process (Cosgrove & Carpenter, 2012).

Research supports that educators in varying roles within institutions of higher education including university supervisors, mentor teachers, preservice teachers, and

teachers currently in the profession define teacher disposition differently (Shoffner, Sedberry, Alsup, & Johnson, 2014). Within differing teacher preparation subject areas such as single subject English and special education definitions vary (Shoffner et al., 2014). Despite the lack of agreement on definition of disposition, professional organizations and researchers alike agree a focus on dispositions within teacher preparation programs is essential (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2015; INTASC, 1992; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002; Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009; Shoffner et al., 2014).

With this information teacher preparation programs would benefit from a dispositionally focused curriculum in an effort to support effective teacher candidates (Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009). During preservice teacher training, there is a benefit from assisting teacher candidates to learn about themselves, their belief systems, and how their personalities combine to support their development as teachers (Jamil et al., 2012).

Sherman (2006) denoted the moral dimensions of teaching that should be present in curriculum within teacher education programs in conjunction with the typical standards based instruction. The moral dimension of teaching includes the teacher's ability to decipher and understand nuances of student behavior via observations and interaction with students in a variety of settings. The teacher must possess the capacity to respond to such observations and interactions appropriately to facilitate the growth of students (Sherman, 2006). The teacher's presence and ability to be engaged in a responsive communicative process with their students is of importance in teacher preparation programs.

Teaching, assessing, and evaluating dispositional aspects of teaching is substantially more difficult than assessing standards based skills with simple rubrics or checklists (Sherman, 2006). A narrow focus of teacher candidate assessment is often utilized rather than a complex system of addressing disposition (Bauer & Thornton, 2013). Assessments including rating instruments, disposition surveys, fieldwork observations, and portfolio assessments generally present a limited view of candidate competence rather than a holistic view of a new teacher's ability (Henry et al., 2013). Examples of easily observed behaviors of teacher candidates at the most basic level include promptness and appropriate dress (Bauer & Thornton, 2013). Assessing and commenting on the less easily observed functions of a teacher may open the evaluator to increased scrutiny and questions (Sherman, 2006).

Jung and Rhodes (2008) divided dispositions into two categories: personal characteristics and character related dispositions. This narrowed approach assisted to examine character related dispositions which included moral/ethical and work ethic traits (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). The research asserted educators and scholars generally view dispositions through 3 lenses including personality, behaviors, and the ability to encourage human development (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). Other dispositions measured by former research were teacher candidate's attitudes about disability, attitudes about inclusion, and attitudes about students from diverse backgrounds with exceptionalities (McCall, McHatton, & Shealey, 2013).

Once a university or organization has defined the target dispositions to promote teacher success, an appropriate assessment tool may be located or created. Rose (2013)

studied a sample of universities which had adopted formal definitions and a list of dispositions to support development of within their program. Of the institutions surveyed, 79% adopted a list of dispositions but had not yet considered how to teach or assess the dispositions determined as priority (Rose, 2013).

A common disposition needed to be successful in the field of special education is the understanding that families of children with exceptionalities are essential contributing members of a collaborative educational team that possess valuable knowledge of their child's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth (Amatea, Mixon, & McCarthy, 2013). Collaborative communication skills are at the forefront of a special education teacher's professional responsibilities (LePage et al., 2008; Whitby, Marx, McIntire, & Wienke, 2013). Special education teachers must exhibit a commitment to consistent communication to, from, and with families to be successful professionals (Amatea et al., 2013). Another dispositional characteristic that assisted teachers to be successful and retained in the profession was a shift from a deficit lens to a strength based lens (Amatea et al., 2013).

A variety of instructional strategies may assist to develop teacher candidate dispositions. The practice of asking teacher candidates open ended questions with no correct answer was affirmed by research (Fish & Stephens, 2010). Other strategies to promote dispositional development were to engage teacher candidates in critical reflection, scenario based learning, self-discovery, discussions focused on the nature of the candidate's individual disposition, modeling, and simulated experiences to assist teacher candidates to broaden their view in turn prompting dispositional growth (Amatea

et al., 2013; Conderman & Walker, 2015; Mueller & Hindin, 2011). Supplemental components of teacher preparation programs linked to dispositional development included:

Experiential learning via simulated experiences, exploratory experiences and analytic experiences, role playing situations, technology-based situations, service learning, learning journals, videotapes with peer-assisted reflection, field-centered teacher preparation, use of active learning strategies in the classroom including such activities as opinion maps, storyboarding, and cooperative learning.

(Allinder, 2001, p. 362)

Special education teachers' perceptions of the demands of the job, student ability, and student behavior influence the classroom environment. These influences on the classroom directly inform the teacher's behavior and may be a gauge of teacher disposition (Shippen et al., 2005). To support a new teacher's ability to form a successful classroom environment, credential programs should include field based training experiences with a depth of experiences to support a new teacher's perception of a classroom, disposition to build the classroom environment, and ability to triage the challenges of daily work (Shippen et al., 2005). Professional development opportunities for new teachers should be robust and occur frequently (Kleickmann, Tröbst, Jonen, Vehmeyer, & Möller, 2016; McMahon, Forde, & Dickson, 2015; Singh, 2011).

Freedman and Appleman (2009) studied teachers in high poverty, urban schools to determine why teachers persist versus those who leave. The study pertained to teachers including both general and special educators. The study defined six reasons teachers

choose to stay in the field of education, one of which pertained directly to the individual teacher's outlook on the profession. Teachers who are retained in the field reported a disposition of a commitment to hard work and perseverance through difficult situations that was nurtured and developed within their preservice teacher education program (Freedman, & Appleman, 2009). Research affirmed the need for teacher candidates to explore their beliefs about care for children (LePage et al., 2008). Teacher candidates should consider what the notion of care means to the field of teaching in conjunction with teaching content (Le Page et al., 2008). Consideration of how teachers may empower students and the definition of empowerment are integral to the teaching and learning process (LePage et al., 2008). Teacher candidates should consider if children with exceptionalities require sympathy or empathy and if the skills need to be specifically taught to children (LePage et al., 2008). Teacher candidates benefited from learning to persist and build relationships with children perceived as difficult (LePage et al., 2008). Opportunities for teacher candidates to wrestle with profound and multifaceted issues are valued yet often lack intentional focus within teacher preparation programs (LePage et al., 2008).

Implications

This study may lead to special education teacher preparation curricula changes within higher education institutions. This research may also inform policy pertaining to credential standards revisions or be the foundation for discussion forums with institutions of higher education regarding current credential program practices. When common dispositions were found within study through data analysis including factor analysis and

multiple regressions further research was conducted on the defined dispositions of persistent special education teachers. Future research will be conducted on the defined dispositions in supplemental studies.

Summary

A focus on teaching moral and ethical dispositions within teacher preparation programs partnered with focus on knowledge and skills needed to facilitate a successful classroom has been proven to benefit children from a variety of backgrounds including students who are English Language Learners, students who are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and children with exceptionalities (Mills, 2008; Mueller & Hindin, 2011). Serving children with exceptionalities is a field which fits naturally with the theme of social change. The goal of many special education teachers is to empower children and families within their communities and promote independence. Individuals with disabilities have historically faced discrimination (Oyler, 2011). The education system may benefit from evolution to empower individuals with exceptionalities (Pazey & Cole, 2012). Special education teachers are on the front lines of social change by teaching individuals with exceptionalities through the educational process to advocate for equality in conjunction with their families and communities.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

A quantitative survey design was chosen for this study to align the research question with the methodology. Quantitative survey research yielded statistical data from participants regarding their self-perceived dispositions after completing their teacher training in an institution of higher education and persistence in the field of teaching for 5 years or longer. This study's quantitative statistical analysis was intended to be replicable with similar populations of teachers and to inform programmatic change among teacher preparation programs in institutions of higher education. The quantitative study included survey research focused on a one shot survey design (Lodico et al., 2010). A large school district was chosen to examine a local problem of practice and to allow access to a large participant pool.

Setting and Sample

A random sample of the cluster of participants allowed individuals from the targeted population to have an equal opportunity of being chosen for the sample (see Gay et al., 2006). Inclusion criteria were persistence as a special education teacher for 5 years or longer in a large, suburban school district in Central California and completion of a preservice teacher credential program in an institution of higher education. I used multistage clustering as the sampling procedure (see Creswell, 2014). The study included a random sampling from the chosen cluster of prospective participants. This information regarding teachers employed by a district was obtained through the human resources department in the local school district. Teachers in the district self-reported their teacher

training location as a verification of training with college curricula in an institution of higher education.

This procedure allowed me to obtain names of teachers who had taught in the field of special education and were a random sample from the pool of prospective participants (see Creswell, 2014). This strategy was chosen to ensure the sample of participants met the criteria of teaching in the field 5 years or longer. Special education teachers who had not taught in the field for 5 years or longer were excluded from the study. Teachers self-reported their preservice teacher credential program to participate in the study. Teachers who completed their preservice teacher credential program through means other than an institution of higher education were excluded from the study. The anticipated participant pool in the school district was 325 with an anticipated sample of approximately 80 respondents, to yield a 95% confidence level ($p < .05$). The expected response rate to the participation request was 20-25%. A statistical power calculation was completed after the exact number of potential participants was obtained from the local school district to ensure there were adequate responses to obtain a minimum power level of .80 (see Fowler, 2009).

Recruitment of participants occurred via e-mail. Potential participants meeting qualification criteria received an e-mailed description of the study, a voluntary consent form, confidentiality information, and a link to complete the survey via Survey Monkey. I expected to receive a positive response from at least 80 participants. Participants were e-mailed weekly with the invitation to participate in the study. After 3 attempts to solicit participation from a potential survey completer, I ceased to seek participation from that

individual. Research has shown response rates increase with specific e-mail communication to participants with follow up efforts if the survey is not completed rather than other Web based options for soliciting participation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Response Rate

The partner school district provided me with contact information for the entire population of special education teachers in the district. The partner district was unable to provide a list of special education teachers who taught in the field for 5 years or longer. The total number of teachers on the list was 112. In the demographics section of the survey, a question was included regarding the number of years participants taught in the field of special education. Answer choices included 1-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, and 20 or more years. The survey ended if participants self-reported less than 5 years of teaching.

The invitation to participate in the study was sent to 112 teachers using the school district e-mail addresses. I used the blind carbon copy feature of e-mail to protect the identity of teachers invited to participate. The invitations were sent at the end of the school district's academic year with limited time for potential participants to respond prior to the summer break. I sent individual reminder invitations to participate on 3 occasions to each of the 112 teachers provided by the partner school district.

It was reasonable to assume that 50% of the 112 teachers had taught in the field for 5 years or longer. This percentage aligned with current persistence data for special education teachers at the local level ("Teacher Shortage," 2015). With this logic

supported by local data, it was realistic to expect 56 potential survey participants to self-report persistence in the field for 5 years or longer.

A total of 43 special education teachers on the list provided by the partner district chose to participate in the survey. Of the 43 respondents, 31 self-reported as having completed a minimum of 5 years teaching in special education. The survey included a question that asked teachers if they completed their preservice teacher credential program in an institution of higher education. Answer choices included yes and no. Only 3 of the 31 respondents with 5 years of special education teaching experience self-reported the completion of their preservice teacher training outside of an institution of higher education.

The total number of respondents who satisfied the minimum criteria regarding years of service and location of preservice teacher preparation was 28. Therefore, the data analysis included 28 teacher survey responses. One of the 28 survey respondents who completed the demographic portion of the survey did not complete the TDI portion of the survey. The response rate to the original survey invitation was 24%. However, an adjusted response rate to account for the anticipated 50% of the original 112 teachers was 50%.

Instrumentation and Materials

I used the Teacher Dispositions Index (TDI), which was a preconstructed survey of 45 professional dispositions specific to the field of education. The survey requires participants to rate themselves on an ordinal scale of 1 to 5 for each of the 45 dispositions measured (Schulte et al., 2004). The TDI was deemed valid and reliable through review

of content validity and statistical analysis in 2004 (Schulte et al., 2004). The assessment instrument underwent an item development phase, including measurement of construct validity and reliability (Schulte et al., 2004). Items were developed through a review of teacher effectiveness or personality assessments and a doctoral student review that included 79 questions (Schulte et al., 2004). A panel of experts reviewed the 79 items on a scale of 1 to 3 regarding appropriateness of each question (Schulte et al., 2004). This review yielded a 64-question version of the TDI (Schulte et al., 2004). The 64-question version was distributed to 105 undergraduate students who were mostly juniors in college majoring in education (Schulte et al., 2004). Responses were evaluated for construct through multiple factor analyses, estimation of reliability using coefficient alpha, examination of mean scores for each of the 64 questions, and correlational analyses including independent *t* tests (Schulte et al., 2004). Factor analysis indicated 19 of the 64 items should be removed, leaving 45 items in the TDI, which included two subscales (Schulte et al., 2004).

The student-centered teacher subscale and the curriculum-centered subscale were validated. Schulte et al. (2004) calculated cronbach's alpha for each TDI subscale. Results showed the student-centered subscale as .98 reliable and the curriculum-centered subscale as .97 reliable with an average of .78 reliability for the 45 items. Findings indicated respondents' dispositional perceptions as effective teachers were not attributed to or dependent on characteristics such as age, gender, or certifications held (Schulte et al., 2004).

The TDI is used to measure the dispositions of effective teachers. The 45 individual dispositions measured in the TDI are aligned with the INTASC principles (see Appendix A). Dispositions are designed to assess a teacher's student centeredness, professionalism, and focus on curriculum. A variety of questions exist in the TDI including questions regarding a teacher's use of instructional strategies, value of learning styles, use of care and concern, professional appearance, cultural competence, patience, flexibility, communication, connectedness to the community, reflective practice, value of students' interest and strengths, ability to listen and collaborate, initiative, and collaboration. Scores are calculated with descriptive analysis occurring for each of the 45 dispositions measured in the TDI. Schulte et al. (2004) used a factor analysis to group dispositions into relevant categories. Written permission to use the TDI in the current study was obtained via e-mail (see Appendix C). Participants in the current study rated themselves on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for each of the 45 dispositions. I secured the raw data and disclosed them only to interested parties identified in the IRB process.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected via Survey Monkey and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. Quantitative analysis included basic descriptive statistics including mean, median, and mode, and standard deviation of each category of survey responses. Inferential statistical analysis included the examination of multiple regressions (see Lodico et al., 2010). I sought to determine whether dispositional trends were present in participant responses. Analysis included data on 45 predetermined

dispositional items contained in the TDI. Each variable was measured on an ordinal scale of 1 to 5. Each of the 45 measured variables is an attribute of effective teachers (INTASC, 1992; Schulte et al., 2004). Data in the original Excel file were recoded on my password protected laptop. The recoding allowed me to upload the data and conduct inferential data analysis using the SPSS program.

Each of the 45 items in the TDI addresses a unique disposition. During the validation process of the instrument, two subscales were deemed appropriate. Teachers who completed training in institutions of higher education and persisted in the field of teaching for 5 years or longer were evaluated on each of the 45 items in the TDI. I sought to determine whether common dispositions existed in the study population to inform curricular decisions at the collegiate level. The intent of analysis was to determine whether specific traits were correlated with retention in the field of special education after completion of college training to inform curricular decisions for teacher preparation programs.

Demographic data. Most survey respondents were female. Of the 28 respondents 20 (71%) reported they were female, four (14%) reported they were male, and four (14%) preferred not to state their gender. The primary special education credential authorization held by respondents was the mild/moderate specialty. Findings indicated that 19 (68%) respondents held a mild/moderate disabilities authorization, eight (29%) held a moderate/severe disabilities authorization, and one held an early childhood special education authorization. Regarding the number of years teaching, 13 (46%) respondents reported they had taught special education for 5 to 9 years. Of the remaining respondents,

seven (25%) reported 10 to 14 years of teaching experience, three (7%) reported 15 to 19 years of teaching experience, and five (18%) reported 20 or more years of teaching experience in the field of special education. The current grade range served was primarily kindergarten through Grade 6. A total of 12 (43%) respondents taught in the K-6 grade range, four (14%) taught in the 7-8 grade range, three (11%) taught in the adult transition programs (ages 18 to 22), and one taught in the birth to age 5 grade range.

Table 1

Teacher Disposition Index Descriptive Statistics

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Humor, empathy, and warmth	4.44	.698
Thoughtful and responsive listener	4.26	.712
Assume responsibility	4.26	.712
Critical reflection and professional growth	4.33	.734
All students can learn	4.41	.572
Cooperate to plan instruction	4.04	.854
Critical reflection and professional growth	3.93	.874
Uphold laws and ethical codes	4.63	.565
Stimulate student's interests	4.15	.602
Involve students in learning	4.41	.636
Long and short-term planning	4.00	.784
Current with evolution of teaching	3.96	.649

(table continues)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Select relevant material	4.11	.506
Classroom environment	4.44	.641
Facilitate learning for all students	4.07	.550
Encourage democratic interaction	3.78	.641
Read non-verbal communication	3.93	.675
Discuss new ideas	3.85	.864
Select interesting materials	3.89	.577
Feedback and assessment of teaching	4.22	.506
Teacher expectations impact students	4.44	.577
Teaching is collaborative	4.19	.681
Research-based teaching practices	4.07	.675
Meaningful connections	4.11	.424
Student needs must be met	4.52	.580
Sensitive to student differences	4.22	.751
Communicate caring, concern, and involvement	4.22	.751
Discuss new ideas	3.96	.759
Promote ethical and professional practice	4.19	.622
Punctual and reliable attendance	4.30	.609
Professional appearance	4.30	.669

(table continues)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Develop student self-confidence	4.52	.580
Respect cultures of students	4.33	.555
Communicate effectively	4.00	.679
Honor commitments	4.44	.577
Treat with dignity and respect	4.41	.572
Implement common curriculum	3.81	.921
Feedback and assessment of teaching	4.22	.698
Patient with students	4.37	.629
Adjust and revise plans	4.48	.580
Communicate respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions	4.26	.526
Learn about students and community	4.22	.506

Descriptive statistical analysis showed each of the 45 indicators on the TDI to have a mean of greater than 4.0 on a 5-point scale except for 3 indicators. Data showed special educator teacher's commitment critical reflection and professional growth, current understanding of the evolving nature of teaching, and commitment to implement a common curriculum exhibited means below 4.0.

Regression analysis. An initial regression analysis was conducted utilizing all 45 individual disposition variables located within the TDI. Initial regression data is located within Table 2.

Table 2

Teacher Disposition Index Regression Data

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Humor, empathy, and warmth	.992	.442	.597	2.244	.154
Thoughtful and responsive listener	-.917	.330	-.563	-2.778	.109
Critical reflection and professional growth	.100	.452	.063	.221	.845
All students can learn	-1.588	.736	-.784	-2.157	.164
Uphold laws and ethical codes	-9.49	.720	-.462	-1.317	.319
Stimulate students' interests	-2.474	.484	-1.283	-5.115	.036
Current with evolution of teaching	1.270	.575	.711	2.209	.158
Select relevant material	-.853	.715	-.373	-1.193	.355
Classroom environment	1.170	.566	.646	2.069	.174
Encourage democratic interaction	.909	.446	.502	2.040	.178
Read non-verbal communication	.637	.369	.371	1.728	.226
Discuss new ideas	.861	.519	.641	1.658	.239
Select interesting materials	.471	.453	.235	1.042	.407

(table continues)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Meaningful connections	-.179	1.033	-.065	-.173	.878
Student needs must be met	.378	.391	.189	.967	.436
Sensitive to student differences	-.060	.363	-.039	-.164	.885
Professional appearance	1.264	.365	.729	3.458	.074
Develop student self-confidence	1.223	.717	.612	1.706	.230
Treat with dignity and respect	.153	.450	.076	.341	.766
Feedback and assessment of teaching	.560	.426	.337	1.316	.319
Patient with students	.982	.477	.533	2.058	.176
Learn about students and community	-1.379	.937	-.602	-1.472	.279

Note. $R^2 = .986$ ($N = 27$, $p > .15$).

Analysis showed variety of the 45 variables were excluded from the initial analysis. Although the variables showed as excluded, the variables that entered the model remained in the model. This exclusion of variables showed there was a large amount of covariance among these variables. The Adjusted R Square in the model summary was quite large at .814 but the Standard Error estimate at .5 indicated it was not a safe predictor of significance. This conclusion was strengthened by the ANOVA Sig column at .159 meaning it did not achieve statistical significance. In the Coefficients table only one of these (Simulate students' interest) neared statistical significance, but as none of

them are removed this also is an inconclusive model. The excluded variables were left out the analysis because SPSS reached its limit for including inconclusive data.

Due to the lack of statistical significance of the initial regression analysis, a second analysis was completed. The analysis examined variables based upon the two distinct subscales within the TDI. Analysis included the separation of data on the Student-Centered Subscale and the Professional, Curriculum-Centered Subscale. Data from the Student-Centered Subscale analysis is located within Table 3.

Table 3

Teacher Disposition Index Student-Centered Subscale Regression

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Variety of instructional strategies	-1.421	.975	-.701	-1.457	.241
Thoughtful and responsive listener	-1.524	1.538	-.936	-.991	.395
Assume responsibility	1.323	1.117	.813	1.185	.321
All students can learn	-.580	1.390	-.286	-.417	.705
Involve students in learning	-.735	.861	-.403	-.854	.456
Classroom environment	-.506	2.294	-.279	-.221	.840
Teaching is an important profession	-1.093	.865	-.544	-1.263	.296
Teacher expectations impact students	2.221	1.641	1.106	1.354	.269

(table continues)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Teaching is collaborative	-1.883	1.332	-1.107	-1.414	.252
Student needs must be met	-5.322	2.525	-2.661	-2.108	.126
Sensitive to student differences	1.413	.851	.915	1.660	.196
Communicate caring, concern, and involvement	1.684	1.122	1.091	1.501	.230
Punctual and reliable attendance	2.824	1.637	1.482	1.725	.183
Professional appearance	.767	.627	.443	1.223	.309
Develop student self-confidence	1.160	1.410	.580	.822	.471
Respect cultures of students	4.798	2.929	2.295	1.638	.200
Honor commitments	1.231	1.951	.613	.631	.573
Treat with dignity and respect	.312	1.008	.154	.309	.777
Feedback and assessment of teaching	.608	.983	.366	.619	.580
Patient with students	2.143	1.152	1.163	1.861	.160
Adjust and revise plans	1.217	1.381	.608	.881	.443
Communicate respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions	-6.026	2.540	-2.732	-2.373	.098

(table continues)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Learn about students and community	-1.683	2.049	-.735	-.821	.472

Note. $R^2 = .920$ ($N=27$, $p>.41$).

The subscale analysis showed there were no variables on the TDI Student-Centered subscale with a *p* value of statistical significance. The variable, “Communicate respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions,” showed a *p* value of 0.98. This variable was the closest variable to significance within the subscale analysis

Data from the Professional, Curriculum-Centered Subscale regression analysis is located within Table 4.

Table 4

Teacher Disposition Index Professionalism, Curriculum-Centered Subscale Regression

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Critical reflection and professional growth	-.709	1.126	-.448	-.630	.552
Value long and short-term planning	-.792	.873	-.583	-.907	.399
Seek professional growth opportunities	.787	.803	.593	.981	.364
Uphold laws and ethical codes	-1.049	1.172	-.511	-.895	.405
Stimulate students' interests	.999	2.110	.518	.473	.653
Long and short-term planning	-.114	.973	-.077	-.117	.911 (table continues)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Current with evolution of teaching	.715	.969	.401	.738	.488
Select relevant material	1.036	2.275	.452	.455	.665
All students can learn	.608	1.275	.288	.477	.651
Encourage democratic interaction	-.553	.940	-.306	-.589	.577
Read non-verbal communication	1.982	1.023	1.154	1.937	.101
Discuss new ideas	-1.132	.894	-.843	-1.266	.252
Select interesting materials	.458	1.772	.228	.258	.805
Feedback and assessment of teaching	-2.080	2.827	-.908	-.736	.490
Research-based teaching practices	-1.567	1.109	-.912	-1.414	.207
Meaningful connections	.659	1.544	.241	.427	.684
Listen to ideas and suggestions	1.152	1.665	.754	.692	.515
Promote ethical and professional practice	2.556	1.617	1.372	1.581	.165
Communicate effectively	-1.621	1.239	-.950	-1.308	.239
Implement common curriculum	.207	.972	.165	.213	.838

Note. $R^2 = .738$ ($N = 27$, $p > .64$).

Within the Professionalism, Curriculum-Centered Subscale regression analysis the variable, “Read non-verbal communication,” yielded a *p* value of .101 and the variable, “Promote ethical and professional practice,” yielded a *p* value of .165. These

two items were closest variables to approach statistical significance within the subscale regression analysis.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

The primary assumption of this study was within the 5 years of professional work as a special education teacher the information learned within a teacher's preservice teacher credential program remains in the participant's memory. It was assumed that the curriculum within each teacher's preparation program served as the foundation for his/her career as a teacher.

The variables within this study were the teacher's disposition and the curriculum completed within an institution of higher education. The study did not account for other factors which impact retention in the field of teaching such as personal circumstances, school or district cultures which may impact a teacher's longevity.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Institutional review board procedures for protecting human subjects were carefully followed. In conjunction with the Walden University Institutional Review Board procedures the researcher obtained research approval from the local school district's leadership. The Walden University Institutional Review Board approval number was 05-02-17-0427732. Participation in the study was voluntary with all participants informed of the research project in advance in writing which included a description of the research, voluntary consent form, and confidentiality information. Results were published and reviewed internally with the school district of interest prior to publishing results within an organization outside of Walden University. Within all publications the name,

location, and other specific identifying information of participants and the school district were omitted.

Outcomes and Professional Development

The initial regression analysis showed one variable with statistical significance. The disposition, “Stimulate students’ interests,” yielded a p value of .036. This regression analysis yielded inconclusive results as a whole. A P -value of $>.05$ indicated that the evidence was inadequate to reject the null hypothesis, and the alternative hypothesis. Consequently, the study results are unlikely to have occurred by chance. However, it does not imply that the null hypothesis is true. The study may have the weakness of a small sample size to detect a clinically important difference as statistically significant. The subscale regression analysis showed no variables exhibited statistical significance.

Variables which approached significance within the subscale analysis were researched to determine if a connection was present between current research and the disposition listed in the question to support professional development of preservice teacher candidates in such areas. Variables researched included a teacher’s ability to “Communicate respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions,” “Promote ethical and professional practice,” and “Read non-verbal communication”. These variables were researched to determine if a connection between data from this study was in alignment with current research regarding the specific dispositions and a teacher’s persistence.

Current research supports a focus on a teacher’s disposition in the area of communicating respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions of others within the scope of their collaborative work (Amatea et al., 2013; Cosgrove & Carpenter, 2012; LePage et

al., 2008; Sherman, 2006; Singh, 2011; Whitby et al., 2013). Statistical subscale analysis and current research in the field of preservice teacher disposition also validated the need for development of a teacher's ability to take initiative to promote professional and ethical practice (Gavish & Bar-on, 2016; Johnston et al., 2011; Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009; Sherman, 2006; Singh, 2011).

The variable "Read non-verbal communication" was researched with a limited amount of current research located to support the development of this disposition during preservice teacher preparation (Sherman, 2006). It was not argued in literature that attention from teachers to students' non-verbal communication was necessary but it was affirmed as difficult to develop and assess within a population of preservice teacher candidates (Bauer & Thornton, 2013; Jung & Rhodes, 2008).

This study sought to address the absence of a focus on dispositions in preservice teacher training to determine what dispositions attribute to teacher persistence. Although data gathered within this study was inconclusive, the 3 dispositions within subscale analysis that approached statistical were researched to determine if a connection between data and research was present. The outcome of data analysis and a review of current research showed support for the development of a teacher's ability to "Communicate respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions" and "Promote ethical and professional practice." A professional development session was created based upon the outcomes of the study. The professional development session focuses on a preservice teacher's disposition to communicate respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions of others, and

their ability to take initiative to promote professional and ethical practice through the creation of a professional development session.

The professional development session is 3 days in length and includes measurable outcomes for teacher candidate development in the two defined content areas of communication and ethical practice supported by data and literature. Learning outcomes of the professional development session in both content areas are clear and will be measured at the end of the professional development session. The professional development session is in alignment with current research and data within this study. A teacher's preservice experience and development as an emerging professional is critical to their view of self-efficacy and success (Bauer & Thornton, 2013; Jamil et al., 2012). Teacher preparation programs are able to promote dispositional development during coursework and field experiences (Cummins & Asempapa, 2013; Mueller & Hindin, 2011). The professional development session intends to promote development of dispositions present in persistent teachers during a new teacher's preservice training program.

Section 3: The Project

The professional development project addressed the absence of a focus on dispositions in preservice teacher training. Dispositions that approached significance in this study through the TDI subscale analysis and were supported by current research were addressed through a professional development session. The professional development session promotes a preservice teacher's ability to communicate respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions of others, and promotes ethical and professional practice. The professional development session includes individual, whole group, and table group activities to facilitate constructive learning opportunities, dialogue, and growth of each participant. Also included are individual daily learning assignments to facilitate participants' critical reflection of their practice.

Rationale

In the field of education, the term *professional development* implies growth of a professional including development through professional stages from preservice to in-service teaching. Professional development is not simply a matter of acquiring new professional knowledge but rather transferring new knowledge into action (Boud & Hager, 2012). Professional development for preservice or novice teachers must allow time for participants to internalize the content in contrast to the focus on externalizing content from veteran teachers. Preservice teachers benefit from being coached through situations during and after professional development opportunities (Staempfli, Kunz, & Tov, 2012).

Researchers affirmed the lack of focus on professional ethics, dispositions, values, and moral aspects of teaching in teacher preparation programs not only in California but also countries such as India (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015; Singh, 2011). The current study findings indicated the disposition of a teacher's ability to communicate respect for the feelings, ideas, and contributions of others ($p .098$) and the disposition of promoting ethical and professional practice ($p .165$) approached statistical significance in the TDI subscale analysis. These dispositions were also supported in the literature as imperative to professional persistence in the field of teaching (Amatea, Mixon, & McCarthy, 2013; Bettini, Cheyney, Wang, & Leko, 2015; Gavish & Bar-on, 2016; Gay et al., 2006; LePage et al., 2008; Mueller & Hindin, 2011; Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009; Sherman, 2006; Singh, 2011; Whitby et al., 2013). A teacher's ability to communicate respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions of others and to promote ethical and professional practice served as the foundation for this professional development session. The professional development session focused on the dispositions found to be prevalent in teachers who served in the field for 5 years or longer and completed their initial teacher preparation in an institution of higher education. The completed project was intended to be presented to preservice teacher candidates enrolled in credential programs in institutions of higher education. The format of a professional development session was chosen to support individual teacher candidate growth through immersion in a constructive learning process. The professional development session included topics supported by data and current research.

Review of the Literature

Professional development of preservice teacher candidates in the area of dispositions is a complex task. Designing engaging learning activities and measurable dispositional outcomes is a challenge that can be met through careful consideration of content, the nature of professional development for teachers, and learning theories.

Professional Development Learning Theory

Professional development opportunities in preservice teacher preparation programs allow a teacher candidate to consider new knowledge, skills, or dispositions and construct new understanding. This consideration of new content allows teacher candidates to construct new understandings and practices in their emerging teaching career. A teacher candidate's emerging development as an educator is heavily dependent on constructivist learning theory (Austin, 2004; Boud & Hager, 2012). Candidates experience a continual transformation and revise their conceptions of current beliefs or practices (Austin, 2004; Boud & Hager, 2012).

Learning is generated in collaboration with others including a combination of expectational, contextual, interactional, and environmental factors. Teachers have documented the need to make connections between their learning in the areas of technology, pedagogy, content, and dispositions to more effectively promote student centered learning experiences (Boud & Hager, 2012; Hwee, Koh, Sing, Hong, & Tsai, 2015). Research supports five areas of teacher development influenced by learning theory, which may be developed through preservice teacher preparation during professional development opportunities. Preservice teachers may experience changes in

behavior, decision making ability, ability to cope, interpersonal relationships, or view of their individual potential (Austin, 2004).

Constructivist learning theory supports the facilitation of professional growth of preservice teachers through active learning processes. Participants benefit from the opportunity to practice new learning and discuss individual outcomes collectively to construct new understanding (Patton, Parker, & Pratt, 2013). Teachers reported a preference for the social constructivist approach rather than cognitive or radical constructive approaches to learning (Bay, Ilhan, Aydın, Kinay, & Yiğit, 2014). Preservice teachers are more likely to adopt a constructivist approach to their individual learning compared to their in-service teacher colleagues (Bay et al., 2014).

Professional Development as a Genre to Address the Problem

Professional development sessions should include a focus on content, allow teachers to participate in active learning, and be consistent with program or national standards (Kleickmann et al., 2016). Professional development sessions included in course work or fieldwork may be implemented during preservice teacher training to target specific dispositions associated with persistence in the field of teaching (Cummins & Asempapa, 2013; Mueller & Hindin, 2011). Those who design professional development opportunities must also be cognizant of program duration and the necessity for cooperative participation by participants (Kleickmann et al., 2016). A shift from a focus on delivering only content through professional development opportunities to include a focus on practicing new learning in professional development settings has been beneficial (Boud & Hager, 2012). Current special education teachers reported the need

for professional development in the areas of working with instructional aides, development in understanding a specific category of disability, collaborating with parents, and inclusion practices for students with disabilities in the general education setting. The most reliable support for in-service teachers to develop areas of need are special education colleagues including teachers and special education specific administrators (Berry, 2012).

Teacher beliefs, instructional quality with students, and student achievement are impacted to a greater degree when teachers participate in professional development with varying levels of scaffolding (Kleickmann et al., 2016). Supervised clinical experiences for preservice teacher candidates that involve pre-conferences, observed classroom interactions, individualized professional development, and reflection with a clinical supervisor have been shown to promote individual growth of the teacher candidate (Farhat, 2008). Also beneficial are the acts of developing trust, active counseling, responding to practice, imparting knowledge from an expert, and establishing identity for in-service and preservice teachers with reflection on each activity (Dwyer & Handan, 2015). Researchers noted effective professional development for teachers including reliance on facilitator-led scaffolding techniques was more effective than self-driven professional development (Patton et al., 2013).

Teacher candidates should be provided with intentional instruction and opportunities to observe or interact with children. After participation in these activities, collaborative conversations help teacher candidates build their understanding of the development of children as learners in areas ranging from academic knowledge to social

skills (Hollins, 2011). The collaborative processes of exploring beliefs and reflection on teaching and learning are influential factors for preservice and veteran teachers (McMahon et al., 2015). Professional development sessions benefit from inclusion of social learning opportunities, facilitation through monitored discussion, use of thoughtful questions to prompt reflection, and guided practice including redirection when necessary. Participants should be encouraged to informally present their learning, share outcomes with other educators, and discuss their individual learning outcomes with mentors (Patton et al., 2013).

Embedding professional development opportunities early in a teacher candidate's preparation has been shown to be effective. Early exposure helps new teachers form underlying beliefs regarding professional learning that will carry into their years as certificated professionals. Professional development sessions are more likely to extend into a teacher's professional career when they include a combination of skills, dispositions, and practice (McMahon et al., 2015). To optimize learning, professional development sessions should occur in supportive circumstances including a collegial tone (Patton et al., 2013).

Although professional development sessions have been noted as effective in developing the skills of early career professionals, research is needed to clarify which type of professional development best suits a particular audience (Harjusola-webb, Lyons, & Gatmaitan, 2017). Teachers reported the desire for professional development to be interactive and relevant to their work. Teachers requested practical examples of how to

improve their work, how to be active leaders in the professional development sessions, and how to sustain development over a period of time (Matherson & Windle, 2014).

Theory and Research to Support Professional Development as a Project

In conjunction with increasing pedagogical knowledge, preservice teacher preparation programs help new teachers shape a positive self-image as efficacious beginning teachers (Momanyi, 2012). It is imperative to gain knowledge of each participant's satisfaction with the professional development session as satisfaction levels impact participation during and implementation after the professional development session (Kleickmann et al., 2016). Participants must value the learning and commit to implementing the new knowledge to change professional outcomes (Momanyi, 2012).

Teacher candidates need to be allowed time to practice learned skills or dispositions from the professional development session. They must plan, enact, interpret, translate, plan, and reenact the learning to approximate effective practice in the field (Hollins, 2011). Teachers will benefit from a support network of colleagues, mentors, and/or university faculty when implementing strategies or content learned (Jardeleza et al., 2011). Hollins (2011) noted effective preservice teacher training allows students to participate in constructivist learning through focused inquiry, direct observation, guided practice. To change instructional practices or student learning outcomes, a change in teacher beliefs is necessary. Effective components of professional development include time built into the sessions for teachers to gain awareness of their individual beliefs, reflect on their beliefs, and consider alternatives to their current beliefs of teaching and learning (Kleickmann et al., 2016).

Literature Review Procedures

Similar procedures were followed when completing this second literature review as were followed in the literature review presented in Section 1. The literature review included electronic journals as well as traditional textbooks to research concepts explored in the study. Electronic libraries in Walden University and Fresno Pacific University were accessed to complete advanced searches of key terms. Key terms researched were *teacher preparation, professional development, preservice teacher professional development, effective professional development, ineffective professional development, special education teacher development, disposition development, and teacher disposition development*. Journal articles and traditional textbooks were obtained via the Internet and interlibrary loan. The search parameters included resources published within the last 5 years and included a search for related terms in the abstract or full text of the resource.

Project Description

The project deliverable was a 3-day professional development session. The session was created to address an audience of preservice special education teacher candidates. The professional development session was divided into two approximately equal sections. The first section focused on preservice teacher disposition to communicate respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions of others, and the ability to take initiative to promote professional and ethical practice. The project (see Appendix B) included the PowerPoint presentation with agenda, speaker notes, and learning outcomes.

The effective communication component of the professional development session included the following learning outcomes:

- Participants will explore current research.
- Participants will explore models of effective communication.
- Candidates will assess their communicative style and reflect upon their individual strengths' and opportunities for growth in writing.
- Participants will engage in scenarios/role plays and document 3 strategies they may use to promote effective communication.

The professional and ethical practices component of the professional development session embeds the following learning outcomes:

- Participants will explore current research and standards.
- Participants will document in writing their professional ethics statement including commitment to take initiative to promote ethical practices.
- Participants will engage in scenarios and document 3 new learnings from participation in writing.

Resources needed to implement this professional development session are classroom space or a space conducive to interactive learning. Also needed are access to technology including a laptop computer, projector, and projection screen. If the audience is large the facilitator may need audio/visual assistance including a microphone and speakers. The presentation requires a PowerPoint presentation. Participants will benefit from a hard copy the presentation, printed copies of articles referenced in the project located within Appendix B, and one required textbook. Ancillary materials needed are blank notes pages, chart paper, construction paper, and colored markers.

Supports that exist within most preservice teacher preparation programs are a commitment to time, space, and participation of credential program students in professional development opportunities. A potential barrier that exists is a credential program's perception that a focus on disposition is not integral in a candidate's development as it is not required by current state level credential program standards (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015). This may be overcome with discussions regarding current research and national accreditation standards that embed dispositional components (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2015; Sherman, 2006; Welch et al., 2010).

This professional development session will be implemented within a 3-day timeframe aligned to a teacher's regular duty day, 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. The sessions are most effectively facilitated on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of any given week to allow preservice teacher candidates to fulfill their regular coursework and employment responsibilities. The professional development session may be conducted in any academic term or repeated during the academic year to ensure all preservice teacher candidates participate consistently with the content and their individual growth. The event will be facilitated by a full time or adjunct faculty member within an institution of higher education. Preservice teacher candidates are expected to attend, engage in discussion, complete extended learning assignments, and complete the professional development session summative assessment survey. Daily learning will be formatively assessed by the facilitator through engagement activities, learning outcomes reviews, and assessment of extended learning assignments.

Project Evaluation Plan

The professional development session will include a summative outcome based evaluation to be completed by participants. Participants will complete an electronic survey evaluation. A copy of the evaluation survey is included within this study in Appendix B. The survey reflects a combination of Likert scale ratings to questions and open-ended response questions. This combination of response types allows participants to provide an overview of their experience with the rating scale questions and in-depth reflection through the open-ended questions.

Participants will evaluate each learning outcome on a scale of 1-5. A score of 1 indicates a participant has little knowledge of the learning outcome listed and a score of 5 indicates a participant has mastered the content. Open-ended questions allow participants to provide detailed insight into the areas of strength and improvement of the professional development session.

Data from the survey will be collected and analyzed by the facilitator after the professional development session to provide immediate feedback. Data is easily collected and analyzed with an electronic survey. Key stakeholders including credential program directors, full time faculty, and adjunct faculty may review the evaluation results to determine efficacy and revisions needed. The primary goal evaluation is to inform future practice and continually improve the professional development session.

Project Implications

Social Change Implications

Children with special needs are often taught by the least qualified teachers due to the lack of persistence in the field (DeAngelis & Presley, 2011; Prather-Jones, 2011; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Warshauer et al., 2009). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported 3.6 million children with exceptionalities received services through special education in 1976-1977. In 2008-2009 the number of children with exceptionalities served through special education increased to approximately 6.6 million in the United States (Pazey & Cole, 2012). Although the number of children with exceptionalities served through special education has fluctuated slightly from 2008-2009 through the most current data reported by NCES in 2014-2015 the number remains relatively stable at 6.6 million children which equates to approximately 13% of public school students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

This project is not intended to change professional standards for preservice teacher training within institutions of higher education. It is intended to inform preservice teacher training at the curricular level within institutions of higher education. Embedded within this curricular professional development project are dispositional supports and themes of social justice with a message that all children can learn regardless of factors including but not limited to language, culture, gender, learning differences, or disability (Pazey & Cole, 2012). Social justice has been proven an effective component of teacher preparation programs within institutions of higher education (Pazey & Cole, 2012). Early career teachers who experienced preservice training with embedded themes of social

justice reported the activities to be influential in their development as a teacher (Whipp, 2013).

Importance to Local Stakeholders and the Larger Context

This research study sought to address the absence of a focus on dispositions in preservice teacher training and what dispositions attribute to teacher persistence. Though this was not a large-scale research study, the study is of great importance to areas of the nation and local community that are experience a shortage of qualified veteran teachers (California Teachers Association, 2015; “Teacher shortage,” 2015; United States Department of Education Office of Post-Secondary Education, 2015). As previously discussed, 97.3% of all California teachers earn their preliminary credentials through institutions of higher education (AICCU Deans and Directors of Education, 2016). Effective professional development for preservice teacher candidates in areas of targeted dispositions may increase persistence in the field which would reduce the shortage of teachers in local and national communities (Cummins & Asempapa, 2013; Muller & Hindin, 2011).

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

The primary strength of this project was the relevance of content to address a current gap in professional practice. Curricular materials including professional development sessions focused on dispositions of persistent special education teachers were not readily available. The lack of curricular materials was due to factors including the absence of state level teacher preparation standards centered on disposition, and no accepted definition of dispositions in teacher preparation programs or practices (Bauer & Thornton, 2013; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015; LePage et al., 2008; Mueller & Hindin, 2011; Rose, 2013; Schussler et al., 2010). This project was intended to fill the gap in research on special education teacher dispositions, and to address the absence of a focus on dispositions in preservice teacher training. The project is clear, concise, and replicable by facilitators who are familiar with the content.

Project Limitations

The project was created after collection and analysis of participants' self-rated perceptions on the TDI (see Schulte et al., 2004). The primary limitation in this study and project was the smaller than expected sample size. The local school district did not provide the anticipated number of participants during the proposal phase of the study. The total number of prospective participants who were sent an invitation to participate was 112. The numbers of responses of teachers meeting selection criteria was 28 (25%). The small participant pool and low response rate did not yield the projected 95%

confidence level ($p < .05$). The minimum expected power level of 0.80 was not obtained, which meant the results were not generalizable (see Fowler, 2009).

Other project limitations were the data for each of the 45 questions on the TDI. Mean scores for each item except for 3 items were above 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. This indicates that respondents may have disingenuously reported responses or did not participate in critical reflection during each survey item. Although the TDI survey instrument is valid and reliable, supplemental survey questions could be considered for future pilot testing to promote greater critical reflection by survey participants (see Schulte et al., 2004).

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

A variety of alternate approaches could be used to examine the absence of a focus on dispositions in preservice teacher training and the dispositions associated with teacher persistence. Researchers could use qualitative approaches including case study or phenomenology (Gay et al., 2006). Mixed methods studies may also be an effective approach to address the problem in this study. A mixed methods approach could include an explanatory design in which quantitative data from the TDI are gathered with qualitative follow up data collected to compare with the initial quantitative results (Gay et al., 2006; Schulte et al., 2004).

These alternate approaches to address the research problem could lead to supplemental projects including policy briefs, conference presentations, advocacy discussions at the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, conversations with professional organizations representing preservice teacher preparation programs, creation

of new courses in credential programs in institutions of higher education, increased partnerships between local school districts and institutions of higher education, and disposition support during the induction process of new teachers. The problem of this study is complex and may be addressed from many angles at varying levels of the professional continuum from preservice teacher preparation through in-service teacher professional development.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

Key learning opportunities in this study included a refined understanding of research methodology, hypothesis creation, IRB procedures, and collaboration with research partners. I grew in understanding the complexity of the research process from developing research questions to creating a deliverable project. I also developed a greater appreciation for the value of published, recent research.

Regarding the specific research problem and presence of dispositions in persisting special education teachers, I learned the topic is more complex than imagined. Scholars and accrediting agencies fail to collaborate on common definitions making research challenging yet invigorating (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2015; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015; Hwee et al., 2015; Shoffner et al., 2014; Welch et al., 2010). Ongoing collaborative research may produce greater results than an individual effort.

As an individual scholar, I learned to critically examine the research question and data collection tools prior to committing to a research methodology. I learned to be

patient during the research process and adapt to unforeseen delays or circumstances. I learned to practice patience, grit, and determination to complete the final study.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The topic in this study is important to me. Teacher disposition is at the heart of the success of a teacher in the field and has great impact on children (Mueller & Hindin, 2011; Nelsen, 2015; Renzaglia & Hutchins, 1997; Shanks, Robson, & Gray, 2012). An absence of focus on teacher disposition in teacher preparation programs is disheartening, and teacher disposition should be a required component of teacher preparation (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2015). National accreditation through organizations such as CAEP is not required in all states, and local standards do not focus on teacher dispositions in teacher preparation (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015). I gained a clearer understanding of how difficult it is to define, assess, and promote growth of teacher dispositions. Although this study was small in size and data analysis did not show statistical significance in regard to dispositions of persistent special education teachers, I hope that this work will be the foundation of my scholarly research in higher education.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This study may serve as a springboard for future research regarding supporting, developing, and assessing teacher dispositions. The project will be applied in a current special education teacher preparation program to determine effectiveness of the professional development session. Continued research on a shared definition of dispositions, the development of dispositions during preservice teacher training, and

accurate assessment of dispositions is recommended. Specific research regarding a teacher's disposition toward understanding nonverbal communication is also recommended (Bauer & Thornton, 2013; Jung & Rhodes, 2008; Sherman, 2006). Expansion of items on the TDI to promote a deeper level of critical reflection from survey participants may also be a direction for further research.

Conclusion

The consideration of a teacher's disposition as it relates to persistence in the field of special education was a fascinating topic for this doctoral study. The research process affirmed the complexity of defining, assessing, and fostering dispositions in the field of special education. This study marks the beginning of my career in higher education and will likely be the springboard for future studies. I hope to inform college curricula by promoting more persistent teachers to address the teacher shortage in the field of special education.

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Appendix A: Teacher Disposition Index

Please mark your level of agreement with each of the statements listed below using the following response scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree
 2 = Disagree
 3 = Neutral
 4 = Agree
 5 = Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I believe a teacher must use a variety of instructional strategies to optimize student learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I understand that students learn in many different ways. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I demonstrate qualities of humor, empathy, and warmth with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I am a thoughtful and responsive listener. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I assume responsibility when working with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I am committed to critical reflection for my professional growth. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I believe that all students can learn. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I cooperate with colleagues in planning instruction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I actively seek out professional growth opportunities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I uphold the laws and ethical codes governing the teaching profession. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I stimulate students' interests. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I believe it is important to involve all students in learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I value both long term and short term planning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I stay current with the evolving nature of the teaching profession. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I select material that is relevant for students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I believe the classroom environment a teacher creates greatly affects students' learning and development. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. I am successful in facilitating learning for all students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I demonstrate and encourage democratic interaction in the classroom and school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I accurately read the non-verbal communication of students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I engage in discussions about new ideas in the teaching profession. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I view teaching as an important profession. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I select material that is interesting for students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. I provide appropriate feedback to encourage students in their development. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I understand that teachers' expectations impact student learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. I view teaching as a collaborative effort among educators. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I engage in research-based teaching practices. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I create connections to subject matter that are meaningful to students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. I understand students have certain needs that must be met before learning can take place. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. I am sensitive to student differences. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. I communicate caring, concern, and a willingness to become involved with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. I listen to colleagues' ideas and suggestions to improve instruction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. I take initiative to promote ethical and responsible professional practice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33. I am punctual and reliable in my attendance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. I maintain a professional appearance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. I believe it is my job to create a learning environment that is conducive to the development of students' self-confidence and competence. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. I respect the cultures of all students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. I communicate effectively with students, parents, and colleagues. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. I honor my commitments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. I treat students with dignity and respect at all times. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. I work well with others in implementing a common curriculum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. I am willing to receive feedback and assessment of my teaching. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. I am patient when working with students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. I am open to adjusting and revising my plans to meet student needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. I communicate in ways that demonstrate respect for the feelings, ideas, and contributions of others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. I believe it is important to learn about students and their community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix B: The Project

ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Professional Development Designed for Special Education Credential Program Candidates

Presenter: Megan Chaney, M.A.

1

DAY ONE - AGENDA

Day 1

- 8:00 – 8:10: Welcome and Overview
- 8:10 – 8:40: Introductions and Icebreaker
- 8:40 – 8:50 : Purpose, Goals and Learning Outcomes
- 8:50 – 9:30: Current Understandings and Table Talk
 - 9:30 – 10:00: Break and Networking
- 10:00 – 11:45: Introduction to Current Research, Conflict Within Roles, and Professional Ethical Standards
 - 11:45 – 12:45: Lunch
- 12:45 – 2:15: Case Study/Scenario Planning
- 2:15 – 3:00: Extended Learning Assignment Overview and Closure

2

DAY THREE - AGENDA

Day 2

- 8:00 – 8:10: Welcome and Review
- 8:10 – 8:30: Extended Learning Assignment Discussion
- 8:30 – 9:00: Video Vignette and Discussion
- 9:00 – 11:00: Effective Communication Strategies Gallery Walk
 - 11:00 – 11:30: Break and Networking
 - 11:00 – 12:00: Effective Communication Skills Goals and Introduction
 - 12:00 – 1:00 – Lunch
- 1:00 – 2:30: Active Listening Role Play Activity
- 2:30 – 3:00: Closure and Survey Administration

4

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER

- Share with the group your:
 - Name
 - Credential Program
 - One fun or interesting fact that the group does NOT yet know about you

5

PURPOSE, GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

6

PURPOSE/GOALS

- The purpose of this professional development seminar is to deepen pre-service special education teacher candidate's understanding and application of two areas of professional practice shown as effective to promote persistence in the field.

Professional and
Ethical Practice

Effective
Communication
Skills

7

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Professional and Ethical Practices

- Participants will explore current research and standards
- Participants will document in writing their professional ethics statement including commitment to take initiative to promote ethical practices
- Participants will engage in scenarios and document 3 new learnings from participation in writing

8

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Effective Communication Skills

- Participants will explore current research
- Participants will explore models of effective communication
- Candidates will assess their communicative style and reflect upon their individual strengths' and opportunities for growth in writing
- Participants will engage in scenarios/role-plays and document 3 strategies they may use to promote effective communication

9

HOW DO SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL PRACTICES?

Day One

10

YOUR CURRENT UNDERSTANDING



Think About It

How do you anticipate promoting professional and ethical practices in the field of teaching?

OR

If you are already teaching while completing your pre-service teacher preparation program, how do you currently take initiative to promote professional and ethical practices?

11

TABLE TALK



12

BREAK AND NETWORKING

9:30 – 10:00 a.m.

13

WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?

- Beginning teachers reported a strong sense of self-efficacy when there was a deep understanding of special education law and professional ethics (Gavish & Bar-on, 2016).
- Early-career teachers benefit from an administrator's support of and focus on professional ethics ((Bettini, Cheyney, Wang, & Leko, 2015).

14

RESEARCH CONTINUED....

- Dispositions are how a teacher's commitment to their profession and ethics show in professional practice (Johnston, Henriott, & Shapiro, 2011; Rinaldo & Vermette, 2009).
- Effective teachers exhibit commitment to the dispositions of professional ethics and strong communication skills (Singh, 2011).

15

RESEARCH CONTINUED....

- Responsive teachers act in an ethical or moral manner, relate to students, and exhibit outstanding character (Sherman, 2006)
- A focus on the teaching of moral and ethical dispositions within teacher preparation programs along with other factors has been proven to benefit children from a variety of backgrounds including students who are English Language Learners, from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, and children with exceptionalities (Mills, 2008; Mueller & Hindin, 2011)



16

CONSIDER.....

"Teaching itself is fraught with conflict, adding to the job's complexity. 'Role complexity' is when an individual is required to fulfill several expectations at once, where fulfilling any expectation make it harder to fulfill the others. (Lavian, 2015, p. 108)



17

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS - ETHICS

- Education Specialist Common Program Standard 2 requires teacher candidates to demonstrate professional, legal and ethical practices (CTC, 2015)
- CAEP defines dispositions as, "Dispositions are the values, commitments, and professional **ethics** that influence behaviors towards students, families, colleagues, and communities that affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth" (CAEP, 2015, para. 6).



18

CEC CODE OF ETHICS

- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Code of Ethics outlines 12 professional and ethical principles for special educators (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015).

19

CEC CODE OF ETHICS CONTINUED

- Professional special educators are guided by the CEC professional ethical principles, practice standards, and professional policies in ways that respect the diverse characteristics and needs of individuals with exceptionalities and their families. They are committed to upholding and advancing the following principles:
- Maintaining challenging expectations for individuals with exceptionalities to develop the highest possible learning outcomes and quality of life potential in ways that respect their dignity, culture, language, and background.
- Maintaining a high level of professional competence and integrity and exercising professional judgment to benefit individuals with exceptionalities and their families.
- Promoting meaningful and inclusive participation of individuals with exceptionalities in their schools and communities.
- Practicing collegially with others who are providing services to individuals with exceptionalities.
- Developing relationships with families based on mutual respect and actively involving families and individuals with exceptionalities in educational decision making.

20

CEC CODE OF ETHICS CONTINUED

- Using evidence, instructional data, research, and professional knowledge to inform practice.
- Protecting and supporting the physical and psychological safety of individuals with exceptionalities.
- Neither engaging in nor tolerating any practice that harms individuals with exceptionalities.
- Practicing within the professional ethics, standards, and policies of CEC; upholding laws, regulations, and policies that influence professional practice; and advocating improvements in the laws, regulations, and policies.
- Advocating for professional conditions and resources that will improve learning outcomes of individuals with exceptionalities.
- Engaging in the improvement of the profession through active participation in professional organizations.
- Participating in the growth and dissemination of professional knowledge and skills.

(Council for Exceptional Children, 2015)

21

LUNCH

22

CASE STUDY JIGSAW EXERCISE

Individually:

- Read pages 92-95 of *Revisiting Principles of Ethical Practice Using a Case Study Framework* (Combes et al., 2016).

23

JIGSAW EXERCISE CONTINUED

Group Exercise:

- Groups will read one case study/scenario, present the scenarios to the whole-group and facilitate dialogue with the whole-group regarding the “questions for reflection and discussion” located at the end of each scenario.

24

JIGSAW EXERCISE CONTINUED

Case study/scenarios:

1. Learning Denied
2. New Teacher Woes
3. Sunnyside Is Not So Sunny
4. Social Media Meltdown
5. Evidence Based or Not, That Is the Question

25

DAY ONE EXTENDED LEARNING ASSIGNMENT AND CLOSURE

Extended Learning Assignment – Due at the Beginning of Day Two:

- Participants will utilize and cite current research, professional ethical standards, and relevant experiences to craft an individualized professional ethics statement.
- The ethics statement must reflect each participant's understanding of ethical principles of practice, how to initiate ethical practices in the workplace, and what actions the participant will take when faced with a professional ethical dilemma.

26

DAY ONE EXTENDED LEARNING ASSIGNMENT AND CLOSURE

Extended Learning Assignment – Due at the Beginning of Day Two:

- Time will be provided from now through the end of Day One to collaborate with peers and begin to construct individual ideas regarding each participant's direction for this assignment.

27

SEE YOU TOMORROW AT 8:00 A.M.!

28

ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
AND
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Day Two

Presenter: Megan Chaney, M.A.

29

DAY TWO - AGENDA

Day 2

- 8:00 – 8:10: Welcome and Review
- 8:10 – 8:30: Extended Learning Assignment Discussion
- 8:30 – 11:00: Ethics Case Study/Scenario Group Presentations
- 11:00 – 11:15: Ethics Learning Outcome Assessment
 - 11:15 – 11:30: Break and Networking
- 11:30 – 12:00: Effective Communication Skills Goals and Introduction
 - 12:00 – 1:00 – Lunch
- 1:00 – 1:40: Current Understandings and Table Talk
- 1:40 – 2:10: Introduction to Current Research and Professional Standards
- 2:10 – 2:45: Collaborating with Families IRIS Module
- 2:45 – 3:00: Extended Learning Assignment Overview and Closure

30

PURPOSE/GOALS

- Let's refocus for the day!
- The purpose of this professional development seminar is to deepen pre-service special education teacher candidate's understanding and application of two areas of professional practice shown as effective to promote persistence in the field.



31

GROUP PRESENTATIONS

- Groups will present one scenario to the whole-group and facilitate dialogue with the whole-group regarding the “questions for reflection and discussion” located at the end of each scenario.
- Presentation and reflection/discussion conversation – 30 minutes per group
 1. Learning Denied
 2. New Teacher Woes
 3. Sunnyside Is Not So Sunny
 4. Social Media Meltdown
 5. Evidence Based or Not, That Is the Question
- During the presentations: Participants will document 3 new learnings from participation in writing

32

LEARNING OUTCOMES - ASSESSMENT

Professional and Ethical Practices

- Participants will explore current research and standards
- Participants will document in writing their professional ethics statement including commitment to take initiative to promote ethical practices
- Participants will engage in scenarios and document 3 new learnings from participation in writing

33

BREAK AND NETWORKING

11:15 – 11:30 a.m.

34

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
SKILLS**

35

LEARNING OUTCOMES – COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Effective Communication Skills

- Participants will explore current research
- Participants will explore models of effective communication
- Candidates will assess their communicative style and reflect upon their individual strengths' and opportunities for growth in writing
- Participants will engage in scenarios/role-plays and document 3 strategies they may use to promote effective communication

36

LUNCH

37

WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?

- Dispositions for responsive listening and engaged communication with students are also included within the INTASC standards (2002).
- Effective teachers exhibit commitment to the dispositions of professional ethics and strong communication skills (Singh, 2011).

38

RESEARCH CONTINUED....

- Teachers must possess the capacity to respond to student observations and interactions appropriately to facilitate the growth of students (Sherman, 2006).
- The teacher's presence and ability to be engaged in a responsive communicative process with their student is of importance in teacher preparation programs (Sherman, 2006).

39

HOW DO SPECIAL EDUCATION
TEACHERS COMMUNICATE IN WAYS
THAT DEMONSTRATE RESPECT FOR
FEELINGS, IDEAS, AND
CONTRIBUTIONS OF OTHERS?

40

RESEARCH CONTINUED.....

- Collaborative communication skills are at the forefront of a special education teacher's professional responsibilities (LePage, Nielson, & Fearn, 2008; Whitby, Marx, McIntire, & Wienke, 2013).
- Special education teachers must exhibit a commitment to consistent communication to, from, and with families in order to be successful professionals (Amatea et al., 2013).

41

RESEARCH CONTINUED....

- Current research supports a focus on a teacher's disposition in the area of communicating respect for feelings, ideas, and contributions of others within the scope of their collaborative work to promote persistence in the field (Amatea, Mixon, & McCarthy, 2013; Cosgrove & Carpenter, 2012; LePage et al., 2008; Sherman, 2006; Singh, 2011; Whitby et al., 2013).
- Teachers "project their emotional state onto their pupils, their teaching, and their means of interaction (Lavian, 2015, p. 107).

42

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS - COMMUNICATION

- Education Specialist Credential Program Standard 10:
 - Candidates possess skills to collaborate with specialists and paraprofessionals.
 - Candidates understand the importance of students' family and cultural backgrounds, and experiences in planning instruction and supporting student learning. Candidates communicate effectively with parents and families. (CTC, 2015)



43

COLLABORATING WITH FAMILIES

- Participants will complete the IRIS Center Module on Collaborating with families located at <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/fam/> .
- After completion of the module participants will discuss their learnings with their table group
- Table groups will prepare a large chart paper with their three “ah ha” moments from the module with the whole-group

44

DAY TWO EXTENDED LEARNING ASSIGNMENT AND CLOSURE

Extended Learning Assignment – Due at the Beginning of Day Three:

- Participants will consider current research, professional standards, and the IRIS Module regarding effective communication.

45

SEE YOU TOMORROW AT 8:00 A.M.!

46

ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
AND
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Day Three

Presenter: Megan Chaney, M.A.

47

DAY THREE - AGENDA

Day 2

- 8:00 – 8:10: Welcome and Review
- 8:10 – 8:30: Extended Learning Assignment Discussion
- 8:30 – 9:00: Video Vignette and Discussion
- 9:00 – 11:00: Effective Communication Strategies Gallery Walk
 - 11:00 – 11:30: Break and Networking
 - 11:00 – 12:00: Effective Communication Skills Goals and Introduction
 - 12:00 – 1:00 – Lunch
- 1:00 – 2:30: Active Listening Role Play Activity
- 2:30 – 3:00: Closure and Survey Administration

48

PURPOSE/GOALS

- Let's refocus for the day!
- The purpose of this professional development seminar is to deepen pre-service special education teacher candidate's understanding and application of two areas of professional practice shown as effective to promote persistence in the field.



49

EXTENDED LEARNING ASSIGNMENT ACTIVITY

- Participants will share out examples of the communication dilemma and how it was resolved in popcorn style through the room as a whole-group

50

HOW DO WE DEMONSTRATE A RESPECT FOR FEELINGS, IDEAS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF OTHERS?

A perspective on engaging families and parents of children with exceptionalities:

[How Can Teachers Engage Families? \(Video\)](#)

- A mental health consultant gives advice on how to establish a relationship with parents and get them involved. (Time: 5:18)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INqdzY0IOU&list=UUQ2-KgUHhixii64uOQFEZUQ>

51

PAIR SHARE

- Have you utilized the techniques to connect with families/parents in your experience?
- How could you implement these ideas in your professional practice?

52

EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Empathy, derived from the Greek work *empathia* meaning “in feeling” is defined as “the ability to understand and share the feelings of others” (Knapp, 2015, p. 93)

Empathy is trying to understand someone’s feelings, seeing, and respecting the communication through their lens (Knapp, 2015)

53

EMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION CONTINUED

- You DO NOT have to agree with the person to communicate respect for the feelings, ideas, and communication of others. This is a learned skill for many professionals.

54

HOW TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Listening
- Attending
- Nonverbal Attending
- Brief Verbals
- Pausing
- Reflection/Paraphrasing
- Reverse Reflection
- Summarizing

55

HOW TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Clarification
- Empathy
- Validation
- Normalizing
- Monitoring Your Feelings
- Furthering
- Prompting
- Open-Ended Questions

(Knapp, 2015)

56

TABLE GROUP & GALLERY WALK ACTIVITY

- Each table group will be assigned 1-2 strategies that may be used to promote effective communication
- Groups will create a chart paper/poster to reflect key concepts of each strategy with examples and/or illustrations
- Groups will hang the chart paper/poster on the wall and deem one group member the "expert"

57

TABLE GROUP & GALLERY WALK ACTIVITY

- The “expert” group member will remain with the poster
- The whole-group will be divided into smaller groups to rotate through each “experts” poster to listen to the description, ask questions, write one key learning from the “expert’s” information on a post it note to leave with the “expert”, and proceed to the next group when facilitator signals it is time to rotate

58

BREAK AND NETWORKING

11:00 – 11:30 a.m.

59

ACTIVE LISTENING – LAFF MODEL

- L – Listen, empathize, and communicate respect
- A – Ask questions and permission to take notes

- F – Focus on the issues
- F - Find a first step

(Vostal, Benedek-wood, McNaughton, & Hoffman , 2015)

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L

How to listen, empathize, and communicate respect:

1. Attend to the concern of the communication partner
2. Make an initial statement of empathy or understanding
3. Communicate interest (not agreement or disagreement)
4. Thank the communication partner for meeting
5. Focus on the challenge, build rapport and begin to establish a collaborative relationship

(Vostal, Et al, 2015)

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A

How to ask questions and permission to take notes:

1. Investigate and document your partner's concern
2. Gather a wide range of information
3. Document words and opinions

(Vostal, Et al, 2015)

62

F

How to focus on the problem:

1. Summarize the problem
2. Shift from asking questions to confirming your understanding
3. Refer to your notes
4. Ask for additions or clarifications
5. Agree on a shared understanding of the issue

(Vostal, Et al, 2015)

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F

How to find a first step:

1. Determine a follow up activity...even a small step
 1. Observe in the classroom
 2. Reach out to other colleagues for support

(Vostal, Et al, 2015)

Carefully consider the need to gather more information **BEFORE** considering solutions to the problem!

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LUNCH

65

TIME TO ROLE PLAY – LAFF MODEL

- Participants will be divided into groups of three and be given three communication scenarios with roles to play (teacher, parent, administrator, etc.)
- Two participants will work through the scenario while the third participant will observe, takes notes on the strategies used and facilitate discussion of the perceived effectiveness of the communication between parties
- The triad will debrief after the role play

66

TIME TO ROLE PLAY – LAFF MODEL

- Repeat until all participants in the group have had the opportunity to be the observer
- The whole-group will debrief regarding the communicative model and role plays at the conclusion of the rotations

67

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION- JOURNAL

- Participants will document 3 strategies they learned as effective to communicate from Knapp's work or the LAFF model

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LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT- COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Effective Communication Skills

- Participants will explore current research
- Participants will explore models of effective communication
- Candidates will assess their communicative style and reflect upon their individual strengths' and opportunities for growth in writing
- Participants will engage in scenarios/role-plays and document 3 strategies they may use to promote effective communication

69

CLOSURE

- Thank you for your active participation!!
- Please contact the presenter with questions or requests for support as you complete your pre-service teacher preparation program
- Please complete the seminar evaluation (survey) prior to leaving

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Speaker's Notes

- Slides 2-4:
 - Review each day's agenda to preview the content and activities embedded within this professional development seminar.
 - 10 Minutes

- Slide 5:
 - Depending on audience size this could take up to 30 minutes. Facilitator/speaker may choose to share first or last.
 - 30 Minutes

- Slide 6:
 - Facilitate this moving from participant to participant around the room. Speaker/facilitator may choose to share their information first or last.

- Slide 7:
 - 5 Minutes

- Slides 8 and 9:
 - Facilitator/speaker may read the outcomes or ask participants to read the outcomes aloud by soliciting volunteers. Facilitator may pause and ask participants to reflect upon learning outcomes and choose 1 or 2 for each day that seem most applicable or relevant.
 - 5 Minutes

- Slide 11:
 - Ask participants to think about one of the questions presented, take a few individual notes/quick write and be prepared to discuss with their table group.
 - 15 Minutes

- Slide 12:
 - Ask participants to share with one another their individual response to the prompts. After sharing within tables appears to conclude begin the whole-group debrief. Ask each table to volunteer to share one relevant point from their table's discussion. The facilitator will take notes on chart paper to hang on the wall for the remainder of the professional development seminar. These charts will be used within the professional development seminar closure activity prior to the administration of the survey evaluation.
 - Table talk should take approximately 15 minutes, whole-group debrief with notes should take approximately 20 minutes
 - 35 Minutes Total

- Slides 14 and 15:
 - Summarize current research point by point for session participants. Facilitator/speaker may ask participants to discuss what they would anticipate research to define as important in the area of ethics.
 - 10 Minutes

- Slide 16:
 - Continued - Summarize current research point by point for session participants. Facilitator/speaker may ask participants to discuss what they would anticipate research to define as important around ethics. Why does research matter to us (future teachers)?
 - 10 Minutes

- Slide 17:
 - The intensity of these conflicts and stress can impact a teacher's on-the-job professionalism in terms of relationships with students, colleagues, the organization parents, and groups that exert pressure on teachers.
 - All notes related to (Lavian, 2015). (15 Minutes)
 - Read and think about Lavian's (2015) article Masters of Weaving: The Complex Role of Special Education Teachers excerpt pp. 107-113 (20 Minutes)
 - Share at tables examples and/or situations when you have experienced these types of professional conflict and the ethical dilemmas that resulted from the conflict(s). (25 Minutes)
 - Transition to professional standards and CEC code of ethics. When special educators are faced with these conflicts and ethical dilemmas we look to not only research to support our choices but also professional ethical standards.
 - 60 Minutes Total

- Slides 18 and 19:
 - Review relevant current standards regarding professional ethics listed on the slide.
 - 10 Minutes

- Slides 20 and 21:
 - **Due to the text heavy slide**, provide participants a copy of the CEC code of ethics document. Ask for volunteers in the room to read one statement from the document aloud until all 12 have been read aloud.
 - 15 Minutes

- Slides 23, 24, and 25:

- Allow participants time to read the article excerpt. Discuss the content through summary conversation and voluntary share out. (30 minutes)
 - After discussion subsides divide participants in a minimum of 5 groups (or more based upon group size). Assign one of the 5 case study scenarios within the article to each group. Groups will read the case study/scenario, present the scenarios to the whole-group and facilitate dialogue with the whole-group regarding the “questions for reflection and discussion” located at the end of each scenario.
 - Case study/scenario List:
 - Learning Denied
 - New Teacher Woes
 - Sunnyside Is Not So Sunny
 - Social Media Meltdown
 - Evidence Based or Not, That Is the Question
 - Individual group presentation preparation time (60 minutes)
 - Reading and group presentation preparation time total 90 minutes (1.5 hour)
 - Transition to the end of the day – presentations will occur at the beginning of Day 2
 - Individual group presentation of the case study/scenario (15 minutes x 5 groups = 75 minutes)
 - Questions for reflection/discussion time (15 minutes x 5 groups = 75 minutes)
 - Approximately 150 Minutes – 2.5 Hours Total
- Slides 26 and 27:
 - 30 minutes
 - Slide 31:
 - 5 Minutes
 - Slide 32:
 - Individual group presentation of the case study/scenario (15 minutes x 5 groups = 75 minutes)
 - Questions for reflection/discussion time (15 minutes x 5 groups = 75 minutes)
 - Approximately 150 Minutes – 2.5 hours Total
 - Slide 33:
 - Facilitator/speaker will verbally read the learning outcomes listed. Participants will individually assess their level of attainment by showing the presenter 0 to 5 as a hand gesture. Zero meaning the participant did not meet the learning goal at all and 5 meaning the participant fully met the learning outcome for this section of the professional development seminar.

- 5 Minutes
- Slide 36:
 - Facilitator/speaker may read the outcomes or ask participants to read the outcomes aloud by soliciting volunteers. Facilitator may pause and ask participants to reflect upon learning outcomes and choose 1 or 2 for each day that seem most applicable or relevant.
 - Ask participants to journal their response as to the relevance of the learning objectives to their preservice preparation or anticipated teaching career.
 - 5 Minutes
- Slides 38 and 39:
 - 10 Minutes
- Slides 41 and 42:
 - 10 Minutes
- Slide 43:
 - Review relevant current standards regarding professional ethics listed on the slide.
 - 10 Minutes
- Slide 44:
 - 1 Hour
- Slide 45:
 - 30 Minutes
- Slides 49 and 50:
 - 5 Minutes
- Slides 51, 52, 53, and 54:
 - From the IRIS Center Resource Video:
 - Engage families
 - Reflect the feelings
 - Know what is important about the parent's child
 - What is your motivation as a teacher
 - Drop off and pick up time are essential times to connect with parents
 - Notice the parent's effort for the day when affirming the child
 - Discussion of "drop and run" parent

- Slides 55 and 56:
 - Participants will be provided with Knapp's (2015) book *Therapeutic Communication: Developing Professional Skills*.

- Slides 57 and 58:
 - 45 minutes prep time for the posters including reading the text
 - 60-minute gallery walk
 - 15-minute facilitator debrief or share out from each "expert" regarding one key learning documented as essential from a gallery walk participant
 - 2 Hours Total

- Slides 66, 67, and 68:
 - 1.5 Hours

- Slide 69:
 - Facilitator/speaker will verbally read the learning outcomes listed. Participants will individually assess their level of attainment by showing the presenter 0 to 5 as a hand gesture. 0 meaning the participant did not meet the learning goal at all and 5 meaning the participant fully met the learning outcome for this section of the professional development seminar.
 - 5 Minutes

Professional Development Session Evaluation

Professional and Ethical Practices:

1. I was able to explore current research and standards.

1	2	3	4	5
	UA			
Little Knowledge				Mastered Content

Comments:

2. I document in writing my professional ethics statement including commitment to take initiative to promote ethical practices

1	2	3	4	5
	UA			
Little Knowledge				Mastered Content

Comments:

3. I engaged in scenarios and documented 3 new learnings from my participation in writing

1	2	3	4	5
	UA			
Little Knowledge				Mastered Content

Comments:

Effective Communication:

4. I was able to explore current research.

1	2	3	4	5
	UA			
Little Knowledge				Mastered Content

Comments:

5. I explored models of effective communication

1	2	3	4	5
	UA			
Little Knowledge				Mastered Content

Comments:

6. I assessed my communicative style and reflected upon my individual strengths' and opportunities for growth in writing

1	2	3	4	5
	UA			
Little Knowledge				Mastered Content

Comments:

7. I engaged in scenarios/role-plays and documented 3 strategies I may use to promote effective communication

1	2	3	4	5
	UA			
Little Knowledge				Mastered Content

Comments:

Most important professional development session strengths:

Suggestions to improve the professional development session:

Appendix C: Teacher Disposition Index Permission to Distribute

Yes – you may use this material and please include the appropriate citation.
Nancy

From:
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2016 3:13 PM
To: Nancy Edick
Subject: Teacher Disposition Index
Importance: High

Hello Dr. Edick,

I am currently a Doctoral student through Walden University and am writing to seek permission to use your Teacher Disposition Index and/or the Diversity Dispositions Index as an assessment tool within my dissertation. Is this a possibility and/or what clarifying information would you like from me to consider this request?

I utilized the e-mail listed on the academic papers found with the disposition assessments to reach out to Dr. Schulte at the University of Omaha e-mail address also but did not locate Dr. Schulte on the University directory. I look forward to hearing from you.

Blessings,