Supporting Middle Grades Pre-Service Teachers in Building Professional Dispositions

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Abstract

Promoting pre-service teachers' development of professional dispositions through purposefully designed learning experiences may be middle level teacher education's most important contribution to a novice's development from student to teacher. The 2022 Revised Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards explicitly address this expectation in Standard 5, with Component 5.d noting that middle grades pre-service teachers should become "continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective, critical perspectives on their teaching." This article offers detailed illustrations of the approaches one middle grades teacher education program used to intentionally select professional dispositions to target in early coursework and teach those dispositions to candidates. Approaches included: anticipating administrator expectations for inservice teacher behaviors; developing course norms based on those expectations; viewing interviews with local administrators about the importance of professional dispositions; analyzing job application reference forms for teaching positions in local districts; self-assessing on numerous behaviors that operationalized targeted dispositions; and setting goals for future dispositional growth. Recommendations for middle level teacher educators seeking to strengthen their program's work to support candidates in building professional dispositions are discussed.

Keywords: *professional dispositions, middle level teacher preparation, pre-service teachers, teacher candidates*

Supporting a teacher candidate's transformation into a middle level education professional is one of the most important outcomes of a middle grades teacher preparation program. Promoting candidate development of professional dispositions through purposefully designed learning opportunities may be teacher preparation's most important contribution in a novice's development from student to teacher (Wilkerson, 2006). During teacher preparation, a candidate's orientation shifts from a focus on personal achievement and individual responsibility to student achievement and responsibility for the success of others, marking a critical transition in teachers' professional lives and identities (Sutherland et al., 2010). Once a candidate acquires dispositional awareness, they assume professional responsibility for understanding how particular attitudes and behaviors impact instructional effectiveness and student development (Hollins, 2011). It is incumbent upon teacher educators to support and facilitate this transition.

Professional dispositions are malleable. They can be taught and learned. If candidates are not explicitly taught about professional dispositions during teacher preparation, they will likely be guided by their own personal experiences and preconceptions about professionalism, which may not align with the field's expectations (Palmer, 1998). Preparation programs are therefore tasked with introducing new dispositions, fostering existing dispositions, or changing existing dispositions in candidates. They must clearly define expected dispositions, guide candidates in

how to demonstrate expected dispositions in different contexts, prompt self-assessment of dispositional attitudes and behaviors, and support candidates in considering whether they have chosen an appropriate career (Garza et al., 2016).

In this paper, I explain one middle grades teacher preparation program's efforts to promote foundational dispositional awareness in candidates during early coursework. I describe specific learning activities and self-assessments from one course used to introduce candidates to expected attitudes and behaviors. These examples offer illustrations of how middle level teacher educators can effectively instruct candidates in professional dispositions and strategically consider which dispositions to target at different points in candidates' developmental trajectories.

Review of Literature

Much of the existing literature on guiding pre-service teachers in building professional dispositions focuses on defining professional dispositions, identifying which ones programs should target, and considering effective approaches for teaching them to candidates.

Defining Dispositions

The term "professional educator dispositions" initially emerged during the 1980's and 1990's. Its use gained further traction in 2002 when the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education included the term in Standard 1 of its conceptual framework. More recently, professional dispositions for educators have been defined by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation as "professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities" (CAEP Commission on Standards and Performance Reporting to the CAEP Board of Directors, 2013, pp. 89-90).

In the area of middle grades teacher preparation, Standard 5 of the 2022 Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards explicitly addressed dispositions. Component 5.d Dispositions and Professional Behaviors stated, "Middle level teacher candidates demonstrate positive dispositions toward teaching young adolescents and model high standards of ethical behavior, including the use of technology, and professional competence. They are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective, critical perspectives on their teaching" (AMLE, 2022, p. 8). In some locations, teacher educators' work to instruct candidates on professional dispositions may also be informed by standards or codes of ethics issued by their state department of education. For example, Standard 5 of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards sets the expectation that teachers regularly reflect on their teaching, including thinking systematically and critically about what can be done to improve student achievement in their classroom (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2013).

Notably, accrediting agencies and other organizations have offered little specific guidance in how to operationalize these definitions of dispositions, leaving the task of determining how to identify and measure dispositions up to individual programs. Many teacher preparation programs have faced varied challenges in developing their own concrete ways to identify, document, and assess dispositions (Bondy et al., 2017; Borko et al., 2007, Zygmunt, 2020).

Identifying Targeted Dispositions

Teacher educators should select and operationalize professional dispositions to target because they are precursors to the professional actions an inservice teacher will one day be expected to demonstrate (Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005). Such selections may be informed by the institution's mission and specific goals of the middle grades preparation program. They should also be informed by candidate needs, which may shift over time or vary from cohort to cohort.

A key challenge to operationalizing targeted professional dispositions resides in the fact that they encompass concrete behaviors and abstract attitudes; both areas must be considered when seeking to identify program goals. Examples from extant literature of dispositions targeted in teacher education cut across both categories. For instance, Kindall et al. (2017) identified professional dispositions that reflect concrete, action-oriented indicators: communicating appropriately and effectively; acting upon constructive criticism; displaying the ability to work with diverse individuals; demonstrating flexibility; using ethical thinking and sound judgment; and interacting with courtesy, respect, and civility. In contrast, Alexander (2019) identified professional dispositions that included abstract habits of thought: "awareness of the importance of punctuality, preparation, reputation among those inside and outside the school community, contributing to the culture of the school, and continuous improvement through self-reflection" (p. 16). The behaviors and attitudes teacher educators select to teach or reinforce at one stage of a preparation program may be different than those targeted at a different stage, depending on the learning setting (e.g., coursework or fieldwork) and on candidates' developmental readiness.

Much of the recent scholarship on teacher preparation's role in fostering candidates' professional dispositions has focused on developing culturally responsive educators prepared to design socially just learning experiences (Bondy et al., 2017; Zygmunt et al., 2020). For example, in the field of middle grades teacher preparation, Andrews et al. (2018) described the re-envisioning of their justice-oriented program to target teacher dispositions that included using social justice as a filter to analyze social practices and making decisions democratically. The research of scholars such as Shockley and Ellis (2022), who documented specific attitudes and behaviors of middle grades social justice educators, may inform the efforts of teacher educators seeking to foster candidate dispositions in this area.

Because dispositions targeted by teacher preparation programs typically encompass both concrete behaviors and abstract attitudes, and because significant variation exists in how dispositions are operationalized by different programs across the field of middle grades teacher education, identifying dispositions to target in a particular program can prove challenging.

Teaching Dispositions through Coursework

Most gains pre-service teachers make toward professional dispositions are incremental and achieved over a longer period of time (Bondy et al., 2017; Lamote & Engels, 2010; Zygmunt et al., 2020). This means that instructing candidates on developing a professional orientation must occur at every stage of teacher preparation, from their initial learning experiences through student teaching (Harrison et al., 2006). According to Kindall et al. (2017), "Pre-service teachers must receive ongoing mentoring early in their preparation to gain a greater understanding of how to embed professional dispositions as critical components for...professional growth" (p. 200).

Although fieldwork can be integral in supporting the development of professional attitudes and behaviors, other teacher preparation settings such as coursework can also offer

these opportunities. According to Alexander (2019), some course components have "a natural connection to professional behaviors in the workplace" (p. 18). The author explained, "For example, pre-service teachers can learn the importance of punctuality through course attendance and submitting assignments, or they can learn the shared responsibility of contributing to a positive culture through participation in class discussions and class meetings" (Alexander, 2019, p. 17). Alexander (2019) suggested that pre-service teachers can demonstrate and build a professional orientation during coursework through: regular attendance, punctual arrival, on-time completion of work, demonstration of academic integrity, preparation for class through homework, active listening, keeping an open mind to others' perspectives, and making insightful or reflective comments during discussions.

To grow in their professional orientation, candidates need explicit opportunities to explore the meanings of professional dispositions, examine how dispositions translate into a school setting, and engage in structured self-reflection (Shin, 2012). According to Meidl and Baumann (2015), "Self-reflective practice...allows programs to have documented proof that dispositions of pre-service teachers change over time, using self-reflections as evidence" (p. 91). Early coursework, or education courses taken toward the beginning of a preparation program, can offer opportunities for candidates to gain a foundational understanding of key dispositions, reflect on current strengths and growth areas, and evaluate change in dispositions over time.

Supporting Dispositional Awareness in Early Coursework

Most candidates in our undergraduate B.A. in middle grades education program complete five semesters of required professional education courses. Semesters 1 and 2 include courses on the early adolescent learner, inclusive classrooms, instructional design, and the philosophy and curriculum of middle grades education. Semester 3 courses focus on differentiating instruction for multilingual learners, learners with exceptionalities, and all learners in general education classrooms. Semester 4 includes classroom management and content-specific methods courses, along with an internship that involves spending one day per week in the classroom where candidates will student teach. Semester 5 is student-teaching.

Historically, our program emphasized professional dispositions in Semesters 4 and 5 in conjunction with candidates' increased time in clinical placements engaged in the authentic work of teaching. However, in 2021-2022, program faculty observed that candidates in Semesters 1 and 2 demonstrated professional behaviors related to attendance, punctual arrival, collaboration, and meeting deadlines with less regularity than pre-pandemic cohorts. During summer 2022, we analyzed these perceived trends through records of student performance across courses and found them to be supported by data. Noting the importance of providing mentoring around professional dispositions early in a program to promote ongoing growth (Kindall et al., 2017), we chose to embed a series of new disposition-focused experiences in courses taken during Semester 1 or 2. Because many teacher education programs do not structure early coursework to offer explicit opportunities to learn about, deliberately practice, receive feedback on, and deeply reflect on their developing professional dispositions (Alexander et al., 2019; Kindall et al., 2017), the utility of this article lies in its detailed illustrations of such opportunities in one program and the benefits candidates reported from experiencing them.

The following sections identify the steps taken to foster professional dispositions in these early courses. I first explain how we identified which dispositions to target in redesigned courses. I then describe the dispositions-related learning experiences I facilitated in one

redesigned course. These experiences served to: lay a strong foundation for understanding professionalism, extend that understanding during the course, and prompt self-reflection.

Identifying Dispositions to Target

The initial step of identifying which dispositions to target in early coursework was undertaken collaboratively by middle grades program faculty in summer 2022. This work was informed by our college's definition of professional dispositions, which encompassed both attitudes (tendencies in responding to people or situations) and behaviors (specific actions or practices). We began by reviewing our college's internally-developed list of 32 professional dispositions that all teacher preparation programs are responsible for instilling (Cato College of Education, 2023). The list was developed based on the InTASC Model Core Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011), Danielson Framework for Teaching (Danielson Group, 2022), and Marzano Focused Teacher Evaluation Model (Learning Sciences International, 2017).

Some dispositions on the list were not a logical fit for early coursework. For example, the advocacy disposition "include families and other stakeholders in planning for individual success" was not a disposition that could be practiced in early in the program, since candidates did not take on a leadership role in their field placement that would enable this. However, we identified other dispositions, such as "share information and ideas with others [to collaborate]" and "show punctuality in meeting...obligations," that could be directly addressed in early coursework.

We then created a list of expectations that operationalized those targeted dispositions. For example, we operationalized the disposition "demonstrate respect for others" this way:

- I displayed attentive and respectful eye contact, facial expressions, and body language. I sat facing the instructor in class.

- I used professional and respectful words and tone of voice, including when disagreeing with others. I refrained from cursing.

- I repeatedly expressed thanks to my clinical educator (i.e., cooperating teacher) and other school staff - verbally and in writing - for the chance to do observations with them.

We categorized these expectations by the setting in which the professional orientation would be demonstrated - in-class participation, out-of-class academic work, and clinical experiences - since these groupings were easily understood by candidates attempting to learn and demonstrate the expectations.

After constructing this list, we then determined in which Semester 1 or 2 course each delineated expectation would be taught. Due to the content addressed in courses about the early adolescent learner and the philosophy and curriculum of middle grades education, dispositions unique to middle level educators, such as the expectation to "demonstrate positive dispositions toward teaching young adolescents" (AMLE, 2022, p. 8), were assigned to those courses. Because the structure of the instructional design course featured more flexibility than other courses, we chose it to include the most explicit instruction on professional dispositions, adding a course objective focused directly on them. We selected dispositions to target in this course that would be transferable to varied professional settings, including other coursework and fieldwork, and that served as precursors to more complex dispositions that would be addressed later in the program. All members of the program faculty were in agreement at each stage of the process of identifying dispositions to target in early coursework. Decisions about how to teach the expectations assigned to each course were left up to individual instructors.

Because the instructional design course had a significantly stronger emphasis on professional dispositions than other early courses, subsequent sections of this paper focus on learning experiences in that course used from fall 2022 through spring 2024, during which I taught the course four times. This semester-long, face-to-face instructional design course included a 15-hour field experience requirement in which candidates observed an experienced teacher in their content area. Candidate placements were at different schools in different districts; I did not join them on their observations.

Developing the Learning Sequence

To support candidates in learning the targeted professional expectations, I developed three sets of learning experiences, which I characterized as 1) laying the foundation, 2) extending understanding, and 3) reflecting on self-assessment.

Laying the Foundation

At the beginning of the semester, we spent an entire class meeting exploring the "why" behind teaching pre-service teachers about professional dispositions, with most of the conversation being candidate-led.

Administrator Expectations. I began this lesson by asking candidates to picture themselves as a first-year teacher at an in-person faculty meeting held by their administration on a Wednesday at 3:15 in the library. I then divided students up into small groups and asked them to record a list of administrator expectations on white boards around the room in response to the question: What specific behaviors, actions, or attitudes would an administrator expect to see - and *not* to see - from faculty at these meetings? I asked students to be as specific as possible, saying things like "don't use electronic devices for unrelated reasons" or "don't have side conversations while an administrator is speaking" rather than "be respectful of the meeting."

I circulated while the groups worked to encourage candidates to be more specific when needed. For example, when one group wrote, "arrive on time," I asked them to clarify when they should aim to arrive. They replaced their original response with, "arrive by 3:10 to give yourself five minutes to get prepared for the start time." As I circulated, I ensured that at least one group had listed each of the in-class participation expectations I had identified to teach in this course. Candidates identified almost all of these expectations independent of me, with only occasional prompting needed to raise those that had not yet been noted.

After all groups developed a list of at least ten items, the class did a gallery walk around the room. As they reviewed other groups' work, they put check marks next to any ideas their group had not considered and stars next to ideas they considered especially important for new teachers to remember. At the conclusion of the gallery walk, through small group and whole-class discussion, candidates considered the questions: Out of all the expectations raised by all the groups, which do you think administrators would characterize as most important? Why would administrators believe they are so important? On average, which of these expectations do you think new teachers feel are the most challenging to meet? Why do they often feel so challenging? Which expectations would also apply to team or PLC meetings, to classroom instruction, or to virtual faculty meetings? (Most did.) Last, students completed an individual reflection that asked them to identify the top three expectations which they already had success in meeting and the top three expectations they would currently find challenging to meet.

Course Norms. Once we had completed this activity, we then transitioned to setting corresponding norms for our course. I explained that our course norms would align with the professional dispositions candidates were expected to build in our program and mirror the expectations administrators carried of teachers' attitudes and behaviors. I also explained that every class meeting would offer opportunities to explicitly practice these expectations, and that candidates would be routinely prompted to reflect on individual performance and receive feedback. Candidates then analyzed the list generated during the first activity to determine if any of these ideas could not be effectively applied to our course. The class reached the conclusion that all of these identified behaviors, except expectations surrounding professional attire, should apply to our course. At the end of our discussion, the class adopted this list as the course norms they committed to following, with the understanding that the class could add more norms later if needed. I concluded the discussion by highlighting the alignment between the list of expectations the class developed and the course's syllabus policies, noting parallels related to attendance, punctuality, preparation for class, meeting deadlines, and the respectful use of technology.

Extending Understanding

For the remainder of the semester, I started almost every class meeting with a 15- to 20-minute mini-lesson on professional dispositions. In each of these mini-lessons, candidates analyzed one "primary source" about administrator expectations for professional attitudes and behaviors in first-year teachers. These sources included videoed interviews with administrators about their expectations and job application reference forms from local school districts.

Interviews. In fall 2022, I conducted virtual interviews with local administrators, which I recorded. These casual conversations were not part of a research study; instead, I created them as an instructional tool for building candidate professional dispositions in this course. During these interviews, I asked administrators to explain which professional dispositions they considered most important for novice teachers to build and what the impacts on administrators, faculty, and students are when a teacher does not demonstrate those dispositions. I specifically asked questions about the foundational expectations targeted in my course. Interviewees explained in detail how it affects others when teachers are chronically absent, are late to work, do not collaborate well with their team, do not show a positive attitude toward adolescents, do not submit grades on time or meet other deadlines, do not pay attention in meetings, do not use technology appropriately, or do not use effective written or verbal communication skills.

In mini-lessons, I showed a 5-minute clip from these extended interviews and prompted candidates to discuss administrator perspectives with a partner or in small groups. In these discussions, candidates 1) examined parallels between interviewee statements and the expectations the class identified at the start of the course, 2) identified new information raised in the interview the class had not considered before, and 3) analyzed cause-and-effect connections between teachers' dispositional choices and outcomes for different stakeholders.

Reference Forms. I also assembled a collection of blank job application reference forms from local school districts (see Appendix A). I had received these forms in recent years when program graduates asked me to serve as a reference for a teaching position.

During mini-lessons, I shared one form with candidates and invited them to analyze its contents in depth with a small group. In these discussions, candidates 1) examined parallels between questions on the form and the expectations the class identified at the start of the course, 2) identified new information raised on the form the class had not considered before, 3)

identified connections between questions on the form and administrator perspectives in interviews, and 4) noted with interest that more questions addressed professional dispositions, such as the ones targeted by our course norms, than specific instructional skills. These mini-lessons allowed candidates to develop a more robust understanding of the reasons why teachers are held to certain expectations, and why those attitudes and behaviors should be deliberately practiced starting in early coursework. This approach led to deeper candidate buy-in, both to course norms and to syllabus policies that reflected the targeted professional dispositions.

Reflecting on Self-Assessment

At the end of the semester, candidates completed an extensive self-assessment on the operationalized professional expectations and reflected on growth goals for the next semester.

As part of their final course project, candidates answered a series of questions in which they evaluated their level of proficiency with indicators related to in-class participation, out-of-class academic work, and clinical observations (see Appendix B). This evaluation prompted them to rate their proficiency upon entering the course and at the end of the course to track growth. They rated themselves on a five-point scale (excellent, good, average, below average, or unacceptable), similar to scales used on many job application reference forms.

The self-assessment instructions noted:

You'll be asked to rate your level of professionalism on a variety of factors, just as the people you list as references on your teaching job applications will do. You should compare your performance to practicing teachers who demonstrate effective professionalism. What would a principal consider excellent, average, or unacceptable professionalism in practicing teachers? That's how you should evaluate yourself. The goal of this project isn't to say that your professionalism has become perfect in every way by the end of the course. Instead, it's an opportunity to honestly reflect on your growth (or non-growth) to date and the areas in which you'll continue to improve next semester.

These instructions were intended to support accurate assessments that would spur future growth.

After completing the self-assessment, candidates then answered reflection questions (see Appendix C). As noted in the project instructions, the self-assessment and reflection questions were not graded based on scores students assigned themselves. Instead, criteria for evaluation included: 1) the degree to which responses presented accurate and honest reflections based on evidence; 2) the relevance and strength of evidence used to support conclusions; and 3) the specificity and power of connections drawn between course content about professionalism (i.e., ideas presented in mini-lessons) and the candidate's personal experience.

The ultimate goals of the project were to document candidate growth in professional dispositions during the course through self-assessment (Garza et al., 2016; Meidl & Baumann, 2015) and to prompt candidates to identify dispositions that needed improvement in subsequent semesters, along with concrete actions that would lead to such improvements. In all four semesters in which candidates completed the project, no candidates scored themselves as only earning "excellent" and "good" scores upon entering the course, and no candidates scored themselves as only earning "excellent" scores at the course's conclusion. Candidates also described with specificity why certain expectations presented challenges and how they planned to use strategies presented in the course to overcome those challenges. Reflections did appear to be accurate and honest, aligning with instructor observations.

From fall 2022 through spring 2024, all candidates completed an anonymous "course exit ticket" on the last day of class, which asked them to explain whether they felt the course experiences achieved the goals of informing candidates about professional expectations in our field and offering meaningful opportunities to practice and reflect on their performance of those expectations. Candidate reactions to the experiences were overwhelmingly positive. Many shared that they had previously not recognized the importance of these dispositions and had not been held accountable for meeting them in past experiences. Candidates believed that being accountable for repeatedly demonstrating the dispositions across different settings in early coursework promoted growth in the targeted attitudes and behaviors, and productively prepared them for the significant responsibilities they would hold during their clinical internship in Semester 4. Even when a few expressed dislike of having to meet certain expectations, they nevertheless acknowledged those dispositions' importance, as they now deeply understood the "why" underlying the expectations. As a result, I continue to implement the learning sequence described above in the instructional design course. The main change I have made to that sequence over the years has been to integrate new videos of middle grades administrators. Each semester, I have sought to recruit additional administrators for interviews about professionalism, intentionally including leaders with different identities and experiences. Recent videos offer representations of administrators with diverse backgrounds while also underscoring the commonalities across professional expectations in different middle schools and districts.

Recommendations for Building Dispositions in Early Coursework

The purpose of this paper was to share rich illustrations of the approaches one middle grades teacher education program used to intentionally select professional dispositions to target in early coursework and teach them to candidates. Of course, many other approaches could be used to achieve these purposes. The examples provided here are intended to spur teacher educators' thinking as they consider their candidates' needs and program's mission. I offer two key recommendations for middle level teacher educators who seek to engage in this work.

The first is to begin this work at the programmatic level, rather than leaving all decisions to individual instructors. Because candidates typically experience growth in professional orientations incrementally over a long period of time (Lamote & Engels, 2010) and should receive instruction on professional dispositions at every stage of teacher preparation (Harrison et al., 2006), a holistic, long-term, shared view of *which* dispositions to target *when* is needed. The following questions may offer guidance for collaborative conversations among program faculty considering how to support middle grades candidates in building professional dispositions:

- How does your program define "professional dispositions"?

- To identify dispositions your program or a given course/field placement will emphasize, what key documents (e.g. institutional lists of dispositions) should be consulted?

- Once the targeted professional dispositions have been identified, into what key categories or domains will they be grouped? How will they be organized for candidates and faculty?

- How will each targeted disposition be operationalized? What are the specific attitudes or behaviors that comprise or demonstrate the disposition?

The second recommendation is to carefully consider how to teach professional dispositions through coursework in ways that encourage candidate buy-in and honest reflection on growth areas. Candidates may find practicing the enactment of certain professional expectations, such as

keeping cell phones stowed away for the duration of a meeting, tiresome. Learning experiences must therefore be crafted in ways that acknowledge challenges and center the reason for the expectation. Instructors may find these guiding questions useful when considering these issues:

- How will candidates be explicitly taught those attitudes or behaviors? Which instructional approaches will be used?

- Why/how will those instructional approaches increase, rather than decrease, candidate buy-in regarding the importance of meeting these professional expectations?

- How will candidates assess their dispositions through structures that support openness? How will their growth be documented? How will they receive feedback?

Although our program faculty decided to leave these choices up to individual instructors, others may find benefits in discussing the answers to these questions as a whole group.

To conclude, it is worth reiterating that different professional dispositions are often the foci of different courses and field experiences throughout a program. Dispositions targeted in the course described in this paper addressed topics such as personal responsibility, engagement in work, and supportive interactions during collaboration (Alexander, 2019), which were natural fits for early coursework. However, later coursework and fieldwork in the program targeted a broader spectrum of dispositions and supported disposition development through other approaches. For example, another set of important dispositions relates to diversity and multiculturalism (Mills & Ballantyne, 2010). Subsequent learning contexts in the program emphasized gaining an understanding of and respect for cultural norms of diverse populations, as well as developing effective communication skills to use with guardians and community members of diverse backgrounds. In later coursework, candidates practiced developing these professional orientations through simulated communication activities, such as a "Letter to Families" assignment (see Wall, 2019, for a description). During student-teaching, candidates were given the responsibility of composing an authentic letter that would be sent to families to support the development of these dispositions. These examples illustrate the learning of dispositions as a multi-stage trajectory, with teacher educators making intentional decisions about which key attitudes and behaviors to teach or reinforce at each stage. Through purposefully designed learning experiences that build professional dispositions, teacher educators can effectively support candidates in their critical transition from student to teacher.

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Appendix A

Sample Reference Form

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unacceptable
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **professional judgment.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **professional attitude.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **cooperation**.					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **emotional composure.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **time management.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **knowledge in field of work.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **strong planning and preparation.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **problem-solving skills.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **initiative and personal motivation.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **the ability to work with others.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **strong written communication skills.**					
Job candidate routinely demonstrates **strong oral communication skills**.					

Note: This sample form includes questions adapted by the author from several job application reference forms from different school districts that were shared with candidates during the course. It is an amalgamation for purposes of illustrating common questions candidates analyzed during mini-lessons.

Appendix B

Self-Assessment Part 1: Professionalism in In-Class Participation

In this class, you were tasked with demonstrating the same professional dispositions teachers should demonstrate **during faculty meetings.** The factors below are based on 1) norms your class created at the start of the semester, 2) job reference forms from local schools, and 3) administrator interviews. For each factor, mark one X next to your level when you entered the course and a second X next to your level at the course's end.

In-Class Participation Professionalism Factor	Entering Course					End of Course				
	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unacceptable	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unacceptable
I showed up and stayed the whole time. If I did not attend, it was for excused reasons only.										
I was on time. I arrived just before our start time so I'd be ready to go when we started.										
I paid attention, listened actively, and stayed awake.										
I displayed attentive and respectful eye contact, facial expressions, and body language. I sat facing the instructor.										
I used professional and respectful words and tone of voice, incl. when disagreeing with others. I refrained from cursing.										

I refrained from talking over others. I ended partner/small group conversations as soon as I was asked to.											
I conversed with colleagues about on-task topics only. I refrained from raising distracting discussion topics.											
I acted when I needed help. When applicable, I checked resources and asked my peers before the instructor.											
I remembered to bring all necessary materials with me.											
I stowed my phone and laptop away before being prompted to. I did not use them sneakily or openly (unless asked to).											
When asked to use an electronic device, I only used it for the specific activity I was tasked with - not for any other purpose.											
To support my learning, I made choices based on learning science (working memory's low capacity, can't multitask).											

Note: All self-assessments in Appendix B were created by the author. The introductory descriptions for each self-assessment rubric identify the sources from which the factors in that rubric were amalgamated.

Self-Assessment Part 2: Professionalism in Out-of-Class Academic Work

In this class, you were tasked with demonstrating the same professional dispositions teachers should demonstrate **when submitting work and attending virtual meetings**. The factors below are based on 1) job reference forms from local schools and 2) administrator interviews. For each factor, mark one X next to your level when you entered the course and a second X next to your level at the course's end.

Out-of-Class Academic Work Professionalism Factor	Entering Course					End of Course				
	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unaccept-able	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unaccept-able
My out-of-class work was thorough. I allotted enough time and paid close attention. I was well-prepared for meetings.										
I met deadlines on minor assignments, such as homework.										
I met deadlines on major assessments, such as projects.										
I acted when I needed help. When applicable, I checked resources and asked my peers before the instructor.										
I followed all instructions on assignments and assessments.										
I fully completed all assignments and assessments.										

After I submitted work, I double checked it to make sure I uploaded the right doc and that no parts of it were left blank.										
Emails I sent to the instructor out of class were respectful in tone and professional in language conventions and style.										
To support my out-of-class learning, I selected an appropriate physical environment, free from distractions.										
To support my out-of-class learning, I did not allow electronic devices to distract me (phone, other tabs open in browser).										
When class met on Zoom, I was disciplined about paying attention, staying engaged, and participating when asked to.										
When class met on Zoom, I followed the course Zoom norms. I unmuted to participate when asked to.										
To support my learning, I made choices based on learning science (working memory's low capacity, can't multitask).										

Self-Assessment Part 3: Professionalism in Clinical Experiences

In this class, you were tasked with demonstrating the same professional dispositions teachers should demonstrate **while in classrooms with students**. The factors below are based on 1) job reference forms from local schools, 2) teacher norms in local schools, and 3) administrator interviews. For each factor, mark one X next to your level when you entered the course and a second X next to your level at the course's end.

Clinical Experience Professionalism Factor *(CE stands for clinical educator.)*	Entering Course					End of Course				
	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unacceptable	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Unacceptable
I showed up and stayed the whole time. If I did not attend, it was for excused reasons only, and I notified my CE promptly.										
I was on time. I arrived a bit before the start time so I'd be ready to go when things started.										
I listened actively, appeared engaged, and stayed awake.										
I paid close attention and actively thought about connections between my CE's classroom and this course's content.										
I displayed attentive and respectful eye contact, facial expressions, and body language.										

I used professional and respectful words and tone of voice with students and my CE. I refrained from cursing.										
Emails I sent to my CE were respectful in tone and professional in language conventions and style.										
I followed the college's clinical placement dress code.										
I kept my phone stowed away and out of sight all the time.										
I routinely offered to help my CE in any way I could.										
I remembered to take high-quality notes or complete other required tasks during observations.										
I repeatedly expressed thanks to my CE and other school staff - verbally and in writing - for the chance to be there.										
To support my learning, I made choices based on learning science (working memory's low capacity, can't multitask).										

Appendix C

Sample Reflection Prompts

This Semester
1. In which of the factors from the self-assessment did you grow the most this semester?
2. What evidence supports your conclusion that you grew in this area?
3. What specific actions did you take to cause this growth? (change in routine, new inner monologue) Why did they work?

Next Semester
4. In which of the factors from the self-assessment do you need to continuing growing the most in the future?
5. What evidence supports your conclusion that you should continue to grow in this area?
6. What specific new actions will you take next semester to cause this growth? Why do you think they will work?

Note: All reflection questions in Appendix C were created by the author.