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Qualifying the Definition of Dispositions

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Qualifying the Definition of Dispositions

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Presented to the .

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and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

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QUALIFYING THE DEFINITION OF DISPOSITIONS

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University of Nebraska, 2006

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The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Standards are in place to ensure teacher preparation programs produce candidates who meet the high standards of the field and who work to help all students learn. NCATE dictates that teacher preparation programs must provide assessment data which demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions of candidates in the program. While teacher preparation programs have historically assessed the areas of knowledge and skills in candidates, the same programs are struggling to understand the concept of dispositions and how to assess the professional dispositions of candidates.

The purpose of this research study was to describe how one teacher preparation program attempts to document candidate concerns in the areas of knowledge, skills and professional dispositions. The research looks at the students who are considered to be at-risk of successfully completing the teacher preparation program and reveals some of the themes which emerged from analyzing one college's conference record forms.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Every year, thousands of new teacher candidates enter college with the goals and aspirations to become teachers. Each individual believes he or she has what it takes to be a successful teacher. Individuals hope to eventually gain employment in the field of education where they will be able to establish relationships and teach students through a field of learning such as math, science or reading. Unfortunately, every year teacher candidates leave education programs after realizing they don't have "what it takes" to be a teacher. But "what it takes" is something that is often not clearly understood.

Teacher preparation programs are struggling to find a working definition of "what it takes" and many are turning to the idea of dispositions. Several groups have tried to define dispositions. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE) includes dispositions in the organization's standards used to validate teaching colleges (NCATE, 2001). Other organizations, such as The National Network for the Study of Educator Dispositions (NNSED) are also working to define dispositions. A similar definition describes dispositions as the attitudes, beliefs, interests, appreciations, values, and modes of adjustment a person possesses (Taylor, 2000). Yet colleges still seem to be unclear as to the meaning of the standards and "dispositions".

Colleges must work to better understand dispositions in order to help students in the quest for teacher certification. Colleges need to know the specific teacher candidate dispositions which lead to effective teaching and teachers and colleges need to know how to determine which teacher candidates possess the qualities desired in a teacher. When

working with teacher candidates who lack these traits, colleges need to know how to help students determine whether or not teaching is the most appropriate profession to pursue.

The deficiencies in research far outweigh the evidence in research which is currently available. Only a few research articles have been published regarding the topic of dispositions (Edick, Danielson, & Edwards, 2005; Edick & Edwards, 2006; Schulte, Edick, Edwards, & Mackiel, 2004; Schulte & Kowal, 2005). The fact that not much research has been published on the topic of dispositions in teacher education is seen as both the driving factor behind this research and the difficulty in producing the research. Research found on the topic works to cover the ways in which to evaluate dispositions give a broad overview of issues/topics here, but the researchers seem to disagree on many points. This article will add to the small body of work that is currently available and strengthen the field.

Individuals working with national accrediting agencies will benefit from this research. More and more institutions are moving toward national standards and the use of a clear definition of dispositions will help in the validation of teacher education programs. Those individuals working with pre-service teachers stand to gain valuable information on how to assess a student's disposition and deal with an individual's lack or abundance of the desired qualities. Instructors will be able to help define the college's expectations for the teacher candidates and model dispositions which align with the college's disposition standards.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The beliefs people hold have strong influence over thoughts and actions in daily life. It is these beliefs which guide people in every aspect of his or her life. In the classroom, the beliefs of a teacher influence the thoughts and actions of the classroom itself. Teacher beliefs have a great impact on a teacher's role and effectiveness in a classroom and play a substantial role in teacher preparation programs. Yet there is a lack of direct evidence concerning the processes that effect change in teacher belief (Kagan, 1992). Teacher preparation programs must work to better understand how teachers' beliefs and practices evolve and change over time (Kagan, 1992).

It is suggested that as early as second grade, students are beginning to make judgments on 'good' teaching. Murphy (2004) researched the opinions of individuals on the subject of 'good' teaching. It was found that the surveyed teacher candidates and 2nd grade students held similar views of 'good' teaching. Yet, teacher candidates and inservice teachers also held similar views of what makes a teacher 'good' (Murphy, 2004). This suggests the possibility of continued changes in the belief system of a teacher candidate. The fostering of creativity in preservice teachers training by faculty members may also add to the development of effective teaching strategies (Daugherty, 2003). Cook (2004) looked at the power students in a classroom had for changing the beliefs of teachers regarding the students and how to teach the students. The ability to change a teacher's beliefs about teaching shows a greater need to understand the dispositions desired in individuals entering the field of teaching.

Amobi (2003) asked teacher candidates to use reflective writing in order to examine their beliefs on teacher education. By fostering reflection of beliefs in preservice programs, the impetus to reexamine beliefs in the future is gained (Amobi, 2003). Teacher candidates pointed out that through the reflection they could see what beliefs they held and why they held them. Some directly addressed the idea that what they wrote was a reflection of the individual's knowledge and beliefs at that point in time. They acknowledged the fact that they would continue to develop *their* thinking and beliefs throughout *their* program and career (Amobi, 2003). Fostering the beliefs of teacher candidates is important in educating effective teachers for our schools. Amobi (2003) states that "teacher preparation programs focus their teacher development and induction efforts on the 'what' and 'how' of teaching while the subject of the selfhood of the neophyte, the knowledge of the self who teaches, is usually neglected." The push for teacher preparation programs to foster teacher candidates' belief system is a current trend in education.

In 1992, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) began developing standards for teacher training institutions. These standards were to be compatible with the standards set forth by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The INTASC standards addressed "the knowledge, dispositions and performances deemed essential for all teachers regardless of their specialty area" (INTASC, 1992). This phrasing set in motion the research to begin to define what must be done in teacher preparation programs to ensure teacher candidates

were studying the knowledge, dispositions and performances which were considered essential.

By 2001, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the organization which is "the professional accrediting organization for schools, colleges, and departments of education in the United States", published its "Standards for Professional Development Schools" (NCATE, 2001). Within this document, NCATE published the organization's adopted definition of 'dispositions'. The definition reads,

> "the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence practices and behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by knowledge bases and beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging standards, or a commitment to a sage and supportive learning environment." (page 53, NCATE, 2001).

Not only did the push to include dispositions with the monitoring of content knowledge and pedagogical skills begin to appear in teacher preparation programs across the country, but the need to understand and assess dispositions of teacher candidates became increasingly important.

Teacher preparation programs across the country began to scramble to more clearly define dispositions in order to align the college's framework with NCATE's expectations for teacher preparation programs. The definition for dispositions used for

this research is the one established by NCATE. This is the definition that was also adopted after many months of research and deliberation by the college of education in which the study was conducted. This study uses the conference record forms and the documents which accompanied the conference record forms from one college of education. The conference record forms document the concerns a member of the faculty and/or staff of the college of education may have regarding the status of a student in the teacher preparation program.

For a variety of reasons, including certification purposes, teacher preparation programs saw the need to assess the dispositions of the individuals within and entering their programs. A need for guiding teacher candidates through teacher preparation programs by teacher educators who understand the importance of knowledge, skills, and dispositions arose (Richardson, 2003). The monitored guidance would help to foster the positive dispositions that are necessary to learning and teaching and the desired qualities in effective teachers. (Richardson, 2003).

The need for clear standards to teach and assess dispositions is necessary for all teacher preparation programs. The teacher preparation programs must work to establish a clear understanding of dispositions and the policies regarding dispositions. This definition of dispositions and the policies associated with them must be clearly articulated to students, faculty and staff along with how student dispositions will be considered (Ginsberg, 2003). Ginsberg (2003) asserts that without these policies in place, teacher preparation programs are at a risk of legal trouble. Consistent norms and specific policies to document and address dispositional concerns by faculty and staff members are needed

by every teacher preparation program. In addition, it is necessary to have in place

carefully examined admission and retention policies to ensure consistency in how faculty

input is gathered and how student dispositions are considered (Ginsberg, 2003).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Design of Study

This study looks at the experiences of teacher candidates in a teacher preparation program from an urban, Midwestern college of education. By looking at archival data, this study hopes to help clarify what factors, including dispositional factors, are desired in individuals in a teacher preparation program. By replicating a previous study, this research hopes to document a greater understanding of students' experiences and dispositions and how they are viewed in one college of education. The study uses a constant comparative method of data analysis to analyze the data.

The research question guiding this study is:

1. What is the description of the experiences of students identified as being at risk for completing the teacher preparation program?

Research Site

This study was conducted using data gathered from a teacher preparation program at an urban, Midwestern university. Located in a metropolitan setting totaling 800,000 people, the university has a total enrollment of almost 13,000 full and part-time undergraduate and graduate students. The university strategic plan looks at three areas: student focus, academic excellence, and community engagement. The land grant university is a member of a state system and includes colleges of Arts & Sciences, Science, Business, Engineering, Communication, Fine Arts and Music, and Education. The campus makeup reflects a population which is 88.5% White, 5.5% African-

American, 3.0% Hispanic/Latino, and 3.5% other (Asian/Pacific Islander-American, Native-American). The university includes an international student population of four percent.

Within the College of Education, the total number of undergraduate teacher candidates is 1,296 students with an additional 864 graduate students in the program. The most recent data shows the make-up of the college to be approximately 88% white and 12% minority or no response given. The teacher preparation program itself works with two categories of undergraduate teacher candidates: teacher candidates obtaining traditional credentialing program and an alternative credentialing program. In order to complete a credentialing program in the college of education, all teacher candidates are required to complete an application process for admittance into the teacher preparation program.

The application process for the undergraduate teacher preparation program includes a general application; a copy of the student's passing Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST) scores, a signed professional dispositions statement (appendix), an unofficial transcript, two recommendation forms, and a personal essay. For the traditional certification students, the student must also be in good standing with the university and hold a minimum 2.50 GPA. This application is then reviewed by a committee who then grants or defers admission into the College of Education. Applicants to the alternative credentialing program must have already obtained a bachelor of science or a bachelor of art in a major endorsement area which may be in high demand in the metropolitan area.

These individuals complete of 15 month program which certifies them to teach at the secondary level in the area in which they received their bachelor's degree.

Currently, the acceptance rate for the traditional teacher preparation program is 92% for students applying for admission to the college. This process for admission to the college of education has been in place for three years. Before this time, official acceptance into the college of education was granted when teacher candidates completed the PPST and the necessary prerequisite classes including a human relations course and an educational foundations course. The reason for the change in admission to the teacher preparation program was due to the number of students who were not successfully completing the program. The college administration implemented the admission process to aid students in determining whether or not they were best suited for a career in education. With the implementation of the admission process, the college administration was able to establish from the beginning of the program the high expectations and standards for students who entered the program.

In order to complete the teacher preparation program, teacher candidates are required to complete a series of courses covering such areas as special education, effective teaching strategies, human relations, the history of education, human growth and learning, reading and writing in schools, and area-specific methods courses. The structure of the program provides students with numerous learning opportunities both on the college campus and out in school classrooms. In addition to the valuable skills and understanding the students gain, they also are presented with real life situations where they are able to demonstrate what they have learned. It is through many of these

experiences where both the strengths and weaknesses of a student are noted by faculty, staff, and other professionals. Before embarking on a new field experience, the students are provided with goals and expectations of the experience.

As noted, a part of the application process for all teacher candidates is to sign the professional dispositions statement. Before each of the field experiences, the professional dispositions statement document is again presented to and signed by teacher candidates in the college of education. Not only does the professional dispositions statement appear numerous times throughout the teacher candidate's career at the college of education, but the teaching and assessing of dispositions is also systematically integrated throughout the program. At various points in the candidate's career, a survey on teacher dispositions, as determined by the college, is given to the candidates.

Source of Data

In order to ensure the quality of teacher candidates, the college has implemented a process to address concerns regarding teacher candidates who may display issues dealing with basic skills, professional competencies, professional relationships, or professional responsibilities. These areas of concern may be viewed by faculty, staff, cooperating teachers, or university supervisors who then document the concerns through a formal process. These documented experiences may occur in the classroom, at a field experience, in a meeting with faculty or staff, or communication exchanges in college of education offices or emails. The formal addressing of these concerns is handled through a process known as a conference of concern – a meeting with the candidate, the coordinator of field experiences and any other individual involved with the situation at

hand. When situations arise evoking question or doubt regarding a teacher candidate's abilities or dispositions, the concern is addressed by completing the conference record form (appendix). This form aligns with the principals set forth by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) principles and echoed in the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards. The standards address the areas of knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teacher candidates. This form is an online form which may be filled out by faculty members, staff, or the coordinator of field experiences.

Specific protocols have been developed by the college of education for communicating with teacher candidates who do not seem to be sufficiently developing in the areas of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. One protocol, the conference record form helps to assist those in need of direction in the program and also counsel individuals out of the program who lack the knowledge, skills, or dispositions needed to be successful teachers. The conference record form is an online document which the recommending official can access through the college's network system. The protocols are followed by the recommending officials when filing a conference record form. There are three steps to the intervention guidelines for faculty and it is important to note that not every conference record form filed completes the entire three-step process. Each situation is reviewed case by case to ensure that appropriate action is being taken. The steps of intervention process follow:

Step 1   Concern(s) identified by the professor/adjunct

- The professor discusses the concern with the student. A conference record form may be submitted at this time if a written record is warranted. Student must be notified that a form will be filed.

- If the concern continues, the professor completes a conference record form and meets with the student. If a follow-up plan is identified, it is documented on the form. The student's input is also documented. The professor and student sign the conference record form.

- A hard copy of the signed conference record form is sent to the director of field experiences. The electronic form is submitted to the data base.

Step 2   Concern(s) unresolved

- The professor visits with the department chair/school director regarding the concern.

- An appointment for a conference of concern is arranged. The chair/director and others, as appropriate, meet with the student.

- The meeting is documented on the conference record form with the signatures of the appropriate parties.

- A copy of the conference record form is filed with the director of field experiences.

Step 3   Field Placement Advisory Committee

- At the discretion of the department chairs/school director or the office of student services, serious concern or patterns of concern will be reviewed by the field placement advisory committee.

In addition to the conference record form, additional documents may be added to the student file. The documents aid in clarification and documentation of the experience or situation. The additional documents include email exchanges, letters, evaluation forms, observation reports, meeting summaries, intervention plans and conversation/phone message transcripts between the student, faculty, staff, and/or other professionals. The documents are provided to the coordinator of field experiences from the college of education by faculty, staff, and other professionals who interact and work with the teacher candidates. By using the conference record form process with the teacher preparation program, the college of education hopes to monitor the progress of candidates in the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Participants and Permission

The conference record files are a part of regular operating procedures within the college and therefore, fall under the archival category. Permission from the individuals holding conference of concern records was therefore not obtained. Given the sensitivity and confidentiality of the records, the researcher did not want to evoke any new or old feelings of negativity or hurt from the teacher candidates who had records on file. Permission to review and evaluate these files as a part of this research project has been obtained through the dean of the college of education. The dean was provided with the

research questions, evidence for the need for this research, and the proposed design of the research project. Given that the data is a part of regular operating procedure and all identifying information will be removed from the records, approval by the Dean to continue with the project and permission to access the archival data was granted. In addition to the Dean's approval to pursue the research, the Institutional Review Board granted approval for the research to be conducted. A total of 119 files were reviewed for the research and had a total of 30 codes. A total of 374 entries were made within the 30 coded categories.

Method

The source of data came from four years of conference of concern records and the supporting documents from a single college of education. The data included the archival conference record forms and supporting documents from July 2001 through June 2005. The sorting and coding was based on the model described by MayKut (1994). After obtaining the files, the individual folders were read and a determination was made as to what documents described the experience of students identified as being at risk for completing the teacher preparation program.

The researcher began with 182 files. After the initial sort, a total of 119 files remained. The 63 files which were removed from the data did not meet the criteria for the research. The files removed were not records of concern, but rather a compilation of documents which the coordinator of field experiences suspected would possibly lead to conferences of concern. Some of the files removed from the research project included emails from students with questions on how to submit appeals (appeals addressing taking

a course concurrently with a prerequisite course or retaking a class), documentation of conversations between a faculty member and the coordinator of field experiences in which a student was mentioned or questions were asked relating to the student's record in the college of education, and documentation by staff of incidents with students where unusual interactions occurred (frustrated students, procedural questions, repeated calls from a single individual asking for the same information).

In addition, files were removed which contained letters from concerned parents regarding their student's experiences during the students' college career and after the student had graduated from the college of education. It is interesting to note that the letters received concerned students who had never presented themselves in a situation which warranted the submission of a conference record form by faculty or staff. The letters were the only documents in the folder for the students; therefore, the files were removed from the data set.

Once it was determined what files were to be used for the research, the files were then read again to determine the specific documents within the files that described the students' experiences. The documents from each file which described the students' experience were then set aside for photocopying. The photocopied documents were then coded and all identifying information was removed in order to protect the identity of the teacher candidates. A total of four photocopies of the sorted, coded files were made.

After coding, the researcher began reading through the documents and unitizing (MayKut, 1994). Every piece of information was unitized and sorted into baskets according to the initial categories. The initial categories used for this step mirrored the

conference record form and included: basic skills, professional knowledge, professional relationships, and professional requirements. While the four categories assisted in understanding the different areas of concern, further coding needed to be completed to determine the emerging themes. The emerging themes were basic skills, application of teaching skills, communication, etiquette, and role of candidate. Journaling during this process allowed the researcher to see emerging themes of the data. Within each basket, the documents were divided into 7 to 8 categories. This further coding once again mirrored the conference record form, but guided the grouping of data and aided in uncovering the emerging themes from the data.

Chapter 4

Results

Findings

This chapter contains the findings from the study. The findings were gathered from analyzing the data through the constant comparative method (MayKut, 1994). The data came from archival files which contain documents about experiences of candidates who are at risk of completing the teacher preparation program at a Midwest, metropolitan university. The compilation of these files reveals a variety of experiences for candidates hoping to complete the teacher preparation program. The experiences are varied by things such as seriousness of the situations, number of recurring events, and how the documentation of the situation was handled by both the college and candidate. Through careful analysis, a set of themes emerged from the data. These themes help to better understand candidate experiences for the time period of July 2001 – June 2005. The themes which emerged include basic skills, application of teaching skills, communication, etiquette, and the role of the candidate. Due to the sensitivity of the material and the desire to not revisit the situations which were, in many cases, very emotional for all parties involved, triangulation has not been achieved. The data was pulled from a single source – the conference of concern records. The purpose of analyzing the files, which described a range of experiences, was to better understand the types of experiences the candidates encounter.

The documents are of various formats and include email exchanges, letters, evaluation forms, observation reports, meeting summaries, intervention plans and

conversation/phone message transcripts. These documents are from interactions among the candidate, faculty, staff, and/or other professionals with whom the candidates interact. These various documents help to tell the story of the individual candidates. Through careful analysis, the stories of the candidates emerge and creates a picture from which the files were then coded.

The range of experiences described in the files was great - from minor, one-time incidents to experiences in which the candidate did not complete the teacher preparation program. Some examples of the minor incidents presented in the files included the documentation of candidates showing up late to class, turning in late assignments, and/or miscommunication between candidates and others. Another example of what may be considered a minor incident is recorded in an email from a faculty member in which it is written, "my concern is high absenteeism". This is the extent of the documented incident. There is no further action taken nor is there any additional documentation of "high absenteeism" by the candidate in subsequent classes. On the other end of the spectrum, another candidate's file may have numerous documentations of areas of concern which fall under a variety of categories. In one such file, the concerns addressed range from "excessive reliance on others" to lack of content knowledge to "a low threshold of patience and high frustration level with the students". This file documents the candidate's experience beginning early in the program and continues through the candidate's student teaching semester.

All documentation on a candidate situation is kept in the individual candidate's file. The filed documentation is kept in the student services office of the college. These

files are kept separate from academic records and access to the files is limited to the coordinator of field experiences. The task of managing the files falls to the coordinator due to the fact that historically the issues arose during field experiences. With the development of the file system, documentation of situations in other areas of the candidate's career, including in-class situations, began to be filed with the coordinator of field experiences. The file system evolved in to the conference of concern system and the coordinator of field experiences has continued to maintain the files.

Data Analysis

As each folder and document was read, notes were made as to the types of experiences found within each folder. The notes included such phrases as "attitude", "communication" and "knowledge". These documents were then coded using the existing conference record form and its established categories. The four categories from the conference record form were basic skills, background knowledge, interpersonal relationships, and professional expectations. Four baskets were labeled and the coded files were placed in to the basket which held that category. The files had 1 to 8 codes per file. It was possible for one candidate file to be coded and placed in each of the four categories.

Initial Categories

Basic Skills
Professional Competency
Professional Relationships
Professional Responsibilities

The first of the categories contained examples of situations where the candidate had displayed lack of abilities or difficulty using basic skills. These were basic skills which have been deemed necessary by the college for the teaching profession. The professional competencies basket contained examples of candidates struggling in the areas of professional knowledge. The areas of professional knowledge included examples of the lack of a candidate's background in the content they were teaching or in difficulty handling disruptive situations in a classroom. The third category provided examples of professional relationship issues. Several types of professional relationships were included in this category. The professional relationship issues could have been between the candidate and the faculty member or even the candidate and the students in the classroom. These professional relationship issues ranged from a disrespectful comment toward another person to the failure to connect with the students in a classroom. The final category included on the conference record form was that of professional responsibilities. The files provided examples where the candidate had not completed or followed through with responsibilities as outlined by the profession itself. This final category was the basket which held the most examples. The examples talked about candidates' attendance and punctuality, the ability to meet obligations, unprofessional attitudes, and lack of motivation.

The sorting and coding of the documents and then the evaluation of the documents within the four major categories led to the final categories which emerged from the data. Previous studies which looked at earlier files helped to establish the current conference record form categories (Edick & Edwards, 2006). In that first study,

the files dated from July 1996-June 2001. This study looked at the next four years of data. During that data analysis, the categories which emerged were very similar to the previously determined conference record form categories. After looking at the new set of data ranging from July 2001 to June 2005, it appeared as though the experiences of the candidate at the college were similar to the previous data set. Candidates still needed help in the areas of basic skills, professional competencies, professional relationships, and professional responsibilities.

Themes

Basic Skills **Application of Teaching Skills** **Communication** **Etiquette** **Role of Candidate**

The themes which emerged from the data aligned with the NCATE ideas of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Furthermore, the themes followed the categories noted on the existing conference record form. The themes of basic skills and application of teaching skills connected with the ideas of basic skills and professional competency on the conference record form categories. While the themes of communication, etiquette and role of candidate aligned with the categories of professional relationships and professional responsibilities.

The new themes to emerge from the data were basic skills, application of teaching skills, communication, etiquette and the role of candidate. Each file was included in at least one of the themes and helped to further explain the experiences of the candidates in

the teacher preparation program. The categories which emerged from the current evaluation of the data are discussed in the following section.

Basic Skills

As stated before, the themes which emerged from these files were the themes of basic skills, application of teaching skills, communication, etiquette and the role of candidate. The first two themes, basic skills and application of teaching skills, tended to align with the NCATE idea of skills and knowledge (NCATE, 2001). The files which documented the experiences of the candidates from the two themes of basic skills and application of teaching skills are issues which teacher preparation programs have evaluated and addressed for years. The recorded experiences in these files may be very similar to other teacher preparation programs. However, through the conference of concern files, the college had a clear documentation of the issues which needed to be addressed.

The first theme listed is that of basic skills. While it is listed as the first category, it is important to understand this category was not the most frequently seen category. Basic skills was listed first as without some of the skills necessary in the category, a person has much difficulty moving forward and progressing in the profession of teaching. As noted before, the experiences of the candidates and the ones recorded in these files are located across the spectrum. Within the theme of basic skills, there was a higher incidence of conference record forms being submitted in the areas of oral and written expression than any other area. The other areas included in this theme were reading skills, reflective skills, technology skills and nonverbal skills.

After looking at the data from this theme, it is interesting to note that this theme did not seem to have recurring entries for the same students – neither within the theme nor across the themes. The basic skills theme was one in which candidates could seek out and obtain assistance in the necessary areas. The skills listed were those which, if practiced, the candidate could improve upon. In fact, several of the candidate files even provided the student with resources of where to obtain assistance on campus.

One candidate who did not receive a satisfactory grade in a prerequisite course, appealed to retake the course. In order to appeal to retake a prerequisite course, candidates are required to submit an appeal letter as to why they feel they should be granted the permission to retake. One file addressed the student's written letter. The letter which approved the candidate's request to retake the course included a condition which needed to be met. The condition was as follows.

> You will rewrite your letter of appeal, correcting the spelling and grammatical errors and seek assistance in the Learning Center, to work on your written communication skills prior to student teaching. Verification of your work in the Learning Center should be provided to [the coordinator of field placement] prior to the semester when you apply for student teaching.

As there is no further documentation of additional concerns for this particular candidate, it is assumed the student completed the course a second time and received the necessary assistance needed to complete the teacher preparation program.

Another candidate received specific feedback on writing assignments and was given suggestions on ways to improve the candidate's writing skills. The conference record form reads,

> I provided detailed feedback regarding basic writing skills via feedback on various written assignments. After seeing several assignments, I asked [the candidate] to meet with me. He did and acknowledge[d] the poor quality of his written work thus far in the class. He was receptive to feedback and identified that he was part of Project Achieve and would seek writing assistance through this program. I made [a] follow-up call to Project Achieve on [date].

Again, this was the only entry in the candidate's file. The file indicated no further issues which were documented for this student during the candidate's college career. This file also revealed that the individual who filed this conference record form did so after attempting to help the student with written skills. The instructor who filed the form provided feedback to the student on several writing assignments and then asked to meet with the student. Additionally, the instructor followed-up with the program in which the student was involved to further aid in helping the candidate to improve upon writing skills.

One example of the documentation in the file which led to further concerns, however, is in the file of a candidate who, according to the documentation within the file, did not appear to complete the program. The record explains a situation in which the candidate failed a speech language-hearing screen. This specific screening test is administered to all candidates in the speech language pathology program. The candidate

delayed taking the test for at least two semesters. The documents in the file noted that the faculty from the program notified the candidate of the need to complete the exam several times. When the candidate finally completed the exam during the third semester, the results were failing. The documents in the file stated that the candidate would not be allowed to continue in the program until the candidate met with faculty and retook the test with a passing score. A deadline for meeting with faculty to discuss the next course of action was established, but the student failed to keep the deadline. The last entry in the file documented this fact.

Another example of a candidate not completing the program due to lack of basic skills is that of a candidate who struggled with the English language. The file related the experience of a candidate who struggled with oral expression, specifically the use of the English language during a student teaching experience. In that particular instance, English was not the candidate's first language and the candidate had difficulty expressing in English the necessary concepts to students in a classroom situation. This was of great concern since the candidate was seeking certification in the area of special education and correct English usage was very important to the understanding and learning in that particular classroom.

The number of files in the basic skills category account for a very small portion of the entire data set. While it is not an area to be ignored, the number of concerns the college dealt with during the four year period was quite minimal. As you will see, this was not the case for some of the other categories. There was an increase in the number of concerns found in the following themes.

Application of Teaching Skills

The theme of application of teaching skills had several different topics represented. Candidates who had files in this area had shown a lack of understanding or needed assistance with a topic of which they should already have had knowledge or experience. Some of the coded files in the theme included planning, presentation, classroom management, subject knowledge and teaching skills. As related to the NCATE categories of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, the application of teaching skills theme fell under the area of knowledge (NCATE, 2001). This theme held many files. The experiences related in the files tended to have occurred during the candidate's semester of student teaching.

With this category holding over 1/3 of the total concerns for the data set, it is important to better understand what is contained in the files. As mentioned previously, a great number of the files had concerns which surfaced during the student teaching semester. These concerns included the application of skills which are necessary to lead a classroom such as classroom management, planning and presentation. Again, this category had a range of issues documented. One candidate's conference record form read "Cooperating teacher called with numerous concerns regarding professional competencies". This record did not give much information as to the specifics of the concerns, but did state that "additional observations and video taping [were] scheduled" to assist the candidate. This lack of detail did not aid in better understanding the experience of the candidate, but did reveal that there was, in fact, an issue and the individuals involved were actively working to resolve the concerns.

Another file provided more complete documentation of the experiences of the candidate. The file related the experience of the candidate through documentation filed by various individuals who helped the candidate. During the candidate's semester of student teaching, some concerns were brought to the attention of the college by the candidate's cooperating teacher at the school, the principal of the school in which the candidate had been placed, and the university supervisor who was assigned to observe and mentor the candidate during the semester. Documentation of the concerns was relayed to the coordinator of field experience by each of these individuals and through meetings held with the coordinator, the cooperating teacher, the building principal and the candidate.

The concerns were initially documented by the university supervisor who reported the cooperating teacher had called to discuss some concerns associated with the candidate. The cooperating teacher reported to the university supervisor that the candidate's "classroom management was worse", that "[the candidate] was not planning" and that "[the candidate] spent most of [the] time reading novels". In reviewing the files, these concerns were identified as concerns relating to classroom management and planning. Additional observations were scheduled and documentation of those observations followed the initial concerns.

In a phone conversation with the coordinator of field experiences, the university supervisor reported that initially "everything was going fine", but there was a "disconnect between what [the] cooperating teacher and student teacher were seeing". At this time, the university supervisor reported the areas of concern as classroom management and

"enthusiasm (art of teaching)". The "enthusiasm" issue, which was similar to the previously reported "time spent reading novels", was coded as "other" in the category of professional competencies according to the conference record form. The theme of application of teaching skills also includes the idea of modeling for students the behavior which is desired in a classroom. The behavior the candidate was modeling, that of lack of "enthusiasm" and reading novels at inappropriate times, indicated the candidate was not implementing the teaching skills which had been taught through the college courses. After the report from the university supervisor, the file showed a conference was then called to meet with the student regarding the concerns.

Later, the documentation is from the cooperating teacher and the building principal. The letters submitted provide the final documentation of the events of the semester. The candidate was informed his placement at the school would be terminated and the cooperating teacher and building principal documented how that final interaction with the candidate played out. The cooperating teacher stated that during the semester "I was concerned about [the] lack of preparedness and enthusiasm for teaching" which the candidate displayed. The candidate informed the cooperating teacher that a middle school setting would have led to a successful semester of student teaching. This statement, in addition to the behaviors exhibited by the candidate led to the building principal and cooperating teacher's request to terminate the placement. The candidate was given the opportunity to respond to the situation and ask any questions regarding the decision to terminate the placement, but the candidate did not have anything to say at that time.

The bulk of the information from the file showed the candidate's experience to be in the area of application of teaching skills. The candidate did not demonstrate the necessary skills of a successful teacher. Due to the fact the candidate did not apply the necessary teaching skills needed for teaching; the candidate was not allowed to continue the student teaching experience. Therefore, the candidate did not successfully complete the program.

Of all the files in this theme, the most frequently reported area of concern was planning. Comments from the files regarding issues with planning include "incomplete plans", "lack of follow through", "time management during instructional time", and "not always planned adequately". Individuals who had filed conference record forms used the category of planning to relate experiences about planning for a presentation in class or in the student teaching classroom, content of lesson plans, and planning for assignments. In one file, the documents related the university supervisor's expectations of what planning for the classroom should have looked like for the candidate. At the first meeting between the university supervisor and the teacher candidates, the candidates were given an outline of what would be expected of them. The university supervisor

> explained [the] observations procedures and expectations, explained the
>
> importance of curriculum planning as a key to success in student teaching,
>
> outlined forma for reporting weekly plans to [the university supervisor] and how
>
> observation times would be determined.

At the first observation of the candidate by the university supervisor, the university supervisor noted

very limited lesson plan provided not in compliance with lesson plan requirements outlined the [previous] meeting. Lesson was poorly presented, student teacher displayed a limited understanding of the content, appeared ill at ease, had problem keeping students on task...lesson continued into home room period with no awareness that this time was to be devoted to announcements and other school concerns.

The university supervisor met with the cooperating teacher at the school and discussed the candidate's performance up to that date. The cooperating teacher "agreed that [the candidate] must spend more time in planning and preparation, work on classroom management and using class time wisely".

When the university supervisor observed the candidate a second time, it was noted, "Again [the candidate] was ill at ease and appeared uncomfortable with the content. Lesson lacked a clear focus with little set and closure. Classroom management was less than desirable". The cooperating teacher added the candidate was having trouble with "limited curriculum planning skills, delay in grading assignments and returning papers to students" which all related to the candidate's lack of planning and follow through. Again, these issues are a significant factor in determining a candidate's success in the student teaching experience. After consultation with the coordinator of field experience, the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor and reviewing other situations related to the candidate's student teaching experience, it was agreed the candidate should be withdrawn from the student teaching experience. Lack of planning

and applying other basic teaching skills contributed to the candidate's unsuccessful student teaching semester.

Communication

The last three themes to emerge from the data all fell under the area of dispositions as outlined by the NCATE definition. The final three themes of communication, etiquette and the role of candidate were from candidates who had questionable experiences related to dispositions. The examples, in many cases, were interconnected with the other themes as dispositions can be viewed in many areas of a candidate's experiences. Possessing the correct dispositions for teaching is important, not only for the students who will be in the classroom, but also for the candidates who will stand in front of the classroom. The need to have a "teacher's heart" when entering the profession of teaching is one need that cannot be overlooked (Harrison, 2006)

The theme of communication referred to situations in which there was a breakdown in communication or a situation where the way a message was communicated to another individual caused a rift in the relationship. The examples varied as to specific situations in which the candidate experienced a communication failure. What ideally should have resulted in the involved parties learning about and from each other, often resulted in frustration and a loss of connectedness among the involved parties. Communication is a gift in which each individual learns and receives valuable experience (Sprague, 1993). The experiences related below show where the communication between the parties was not always achieved.

In one experience, the candidate attended the student teacher symposium held at the start of the candidate's student teaching experience. During the symposium, all candidates were provided with information concerning the requirements and expectations of those completing the student teaching experience. Candidates received information from various sources including faculty, staff, and community partners at the symposium. During the event, the candidate was provided information on the process of ordering transcripts for certification and completing the paperwork for certification. During the presentation, the candidate "asked a series of challenging and argumentative questions". In addition, the candidate was overhead "mak[ing] disparaging comments to his table of peers about [the university] being antiquated and unable to serve students".

Another representative from the university reported separately that the candidate had later "challenged the need to list all the institutions he had previously attended and was critical and negative with comments about the need to list institutions as required by the [State] Department of Education." After receiving an explanation as to the need to complete the request in the format outlined, the candidate "displayed through his comments and negative non-verbal behavior his frustration and disdain at the request for the information required." In the documents, this type of interaction was coded as an issue with non-verbal skills and attitude.

In order to address the concern, the field experience coordinator asked the candidate to meet with her a couple days later to discuss the events which took place during the symposium. During the meeting with the coordinator of field experiences, the candidate was asked about his desire to enter the career of teaching and provided an

overview of the role of the field experience coordinator position. The candidate stated he "expect[ed] to do the best job possible for [the] students…and to be whatever kind of teacher is best for the students." The coordinator stated it was the role of the coordinator to be "proactive in addressing concerns before they surface at the school level" and then proceeded to address the concerns reported to her by two separate individuals from the university.

It was at that time that the candidate once again, began to display negative non-verbal skills and eventually began shouting at the coordinator of field experience. At that moment, another staff member entered the office "because the candidate's voice was so loud it could be heard with [the] office door closed." When the two staff members expressed concerns regarding the candidate's disposition, he replied, "Would it have been better if I had yelled at you or cursed at you (instead of shrugging my shoulders)?" He then stated he was "used to dealing with minutia" and was angry.

This documentation provided the reader with a very interesting example of how a preemptive strike revealed an explosive disposition. During the semester of student teaching, the college enacted steps to ensure the candidate was provided with examples of proper dispositions and completed additional observations of the candidate at the school.

Another example of a communication issue was explained during two separate times in the candidate's career at the college. The first example was during a class in which the faculty member explained, the candidate "burst out with the statement, "You should teach this to the other…professors because they're not very effective." Later during that same semester, the faculty member reported the candidate again displayed a

questionable message. In the professor's office, the candidate was looking at the results of a paper. The professor reported that the candidate "was instantly angry and sarcastic with statements such as, "I didn't know this was an English class" and "How was I supposed to do it, then!" The faculty member spoke with the student about professionalism and the use of appropriate communication. At that time, the candidate expressed the desire to work on this disposition.

During that same candidate's student teaching experience, the file included documentation from the university supervisor to the coordinator of field experiences about concerns regarding the candidate's disposition. The university supervisor expressed the need to see "appropriate responses" from the candidate in order to have a successful student teaching experience. A copy of an email sent approximately two weeks later from the candidate to the university supervisor clearly showed the communication concern previously discussed by the university supervisor and coordinator of field experiences. The candidate's email stated, "I don't want to proofread this for fear that I may edit out my true feelings." The candidate then proceeded to explain the course of the day using expletives, bold type and all caps (showing yelling) at times.

The candidate related a situation which occurred in the classroom that day where the cooperating teacher tried to direct the candidate with some additional instructions for an activity and what resulted was a communication breakdown between the two individuals. The candidate stated the cooperating teacher "kept interrupting me with questions" and that led the candidate to state, "I was getting annoyed!" After the students

in the classroom left, the cooperating teacher tried to talk to the candidate about what happened. The candidate wrote, "Her comment was said in a friendly tone, so I said back, also in a friendly tone, 'I'm handling it.' (Or something close to that.)" Later that afternoon, the cooperating teacher again approached the candidate regarding accepting feedback and the modeling the cooperating teacher was trying to demonstrate to the candidate earlier in the day. The email ended with the candidate stating,

> Call me dumb, call me slow, I don't care, but I guess I require plain English. I had no clue that her first comment had anything to do with just letting the kids act out and not trying to manage them. I HAD NO CLUE!!!

Further documentation from the cooperating teacher related how the candidate "ignores me when I try to give her advice." Finally, the cooperating teacher wrote in a semester end letter,

> [The candidate] will need added assistance in handling and applying constructive criticism to her performance, her ideas and to her person. It is imperative that [the candidate] also learns how to communicate her thoughts and needs in a positive and professional way to all audiences (students, teachers, parents, administrators). [The candidate] needs to refrain from covering up, making excuses or ignoring situation that need...attention.

The two previous examples were extreme examples of communication issues. It is clear that the lack of communication between the individuals involved led to a deteriorated relationship and hard feelings between the individuals.

Another example from the theme of communication is that of no communication. The candidate's file contained three documents: a timeline of events, a copy of an email from the faculty member to the candidate, and a letter from the college of education. The timeline outlined roughly a two week period during one semester. A faculty member contacted the coordinator of field experiences regarding a candidate missing scheduled field experiences at a local school. The faculty member provided the coordinator with a copy of the email. In the email, the faculty member stated that the candidate never completed an arranged field observation at a local secondary school and had since not returned to the class on campus. The faculty member wrote,

> I hope that you are well and that there are no extenuating personal emergencies that account for your absences. If you would like to talk with me, I am always available during office hours or anytime we can arrange an appointment.

The outline provided by the faculty member, documented the coordinator called the candidate at two separate numbers and left a message for the candidate to call. A few days later, it is documented that the faculty member spoke with the candidate "in the hall" and the candidate mentioned "some personal problems". The candidate still did not attend the faculty member's class. The coordinator called and left messages for the candidate on 5 separate occasions with no return call received. The coordinator contacted the school where the candidate was completing an internship and left three separate messages for the candidate to call. Two other faculty members reported that the candidate was not coming to class.

The third document in the file is a letter from the college of education notifying the candidate of removal from the teacher preparation program. The letter states,

Numerous attempts (telephone calls and messages left at your home, at your

school and on your cell phone; email messages) have been made to contact you.

To date there has been no response from you to these efforts for communication.

This candidate's file related an experience which revealed an issue with communication, but the issue was in the form of no communication and not miscommunication.

Etiquette

The fourth theme to emerge was that of etiquette. Some of the issues with etiquette tended to be simple, one-time issues. None the less, the issues were situations which needed to be addressed. For example, one candidate's file included an email exchange between the candidate and a faculty member. The email to the faculty member stated the candidate "was unable to attend class" on the previous day and stated, "…could you let me know what I missed and if there is anything I need to have done for next week." The faculty member's responded with a reminder to the candidate to call or email the professor before an absence occurs as "it's the professional thing to do". The faculty member added, "…as I've stated before, always first check with other classmates about what you missed. Then, if you still have questions, I would be glad to answer those specific questions." This is the extent of the documentation in the file. The importance of attending class regularly is hard to argue against. The faculty member in this experience related to the student the importance of attending and when not able to attend class, notifying the faculty member ahead of time. The manner in which this was

communicated to the candidate and the fact that the student had no other documentation of attendance issues shows the impact a faculty member can have on candidate attendance (Rocca, 2004).

Another file contained a letter from the candidate in which previous documented situations escalated to a point where the candidate was removed from the student teaching experience. In the letter to appeal the removal from student teaching, the candidate neglected to accept any responsibility for the events which led up to the candidate's removal from the classroom. The candidate did not attempt to own the behaviors and stated, "I believe that what happened during my student teaching assignment were for the most part due to the roles of the cooperating teacher, principal, and supervisor NOT being fulfilled." The candidate continues, "If I have to wait [to complete the student teaching requirement], I can see no other option but to use the appeals process that is made available to students in my position." The letter was submitted to the appeals committee to determine whether or not the candidate would be able to continue with the student teaching semester. The letter was written in such a way that the writer's voice could be interpreted as rude and threatening as opposed to a professional voice of an individual who is asking permission to continue with the student teaching placement.

In another student teaching situation, the candidate demonstrated a lack of understanding etiquette by talking about the student teaching experience with others who were not directly involved in the day-to-day classroom procedures. Speaking with the individual with whom there is a problem is not only a professional courtesy, but a very

important aspect of the learning process for student teachers. The university supervisor wrote in an email to the coordinator of field experiences,

> [The candidate] goes to other teachers to talk about the problems [the
>
> candidate]… is having with [the cooperating teacher] and, of course… this is not
>
> helpful. So, I would say [the candidate] needs a little more maturity on that
>
> aspect.

This habit of speaking negatively about others in a professional environment eventually led to a situation outside of the school building. The cooperating teacher emailed the university supervisor with some concerns. The candidate had apparently taken the concerns of the classroom and negative comments about her cooperating teacher outside the building where it was discussed with another individual. What the candidate said to the individual outside of the situation eventually got back to the cooperating teacher. The cooperating teacher stated,

> I was recently told that another teacher in the district heard negative comments
>
> that came from [the candidate] about her cooperating teacher and her experience
>
> at our school. I feel that [the candidate] should be made aware that districts aren't
>
> as large as they seem, and that actions and words often come back to haunt us.

The file contained one final email from the university supervisor. Apparently, the candidate found out that her comments were heard by the cooperating teacher and the candidate was very upset. The university supervisor spoke with the candidate about the consequences of what is said and to whom it is said. The university supervisor encouraged the candidate to start a dialogue with the cooperating teacher in order to

attempt to resolve the situation. From the university supervisor's email, the reader can surmise that the candidate learned an important lesson about etiquette and professionalism.

Role of Candidate

The role of the candidate is the final theme which emerged from the data. This theme was interesting in that at times the candidates did not seem to grasp what role they were playing in specific situations. The experiences describe situations where the candidate was in the role of student, but acted like the teacher or vice versa. Candidates may have believed they were in the role of friend to students when they should have been demonstrating the role of teacher. In a few examples, the candidates seemed to play the role of child and not the role of a professional or even an adult. It is important for candidates to understand what role they are in at different times during the teacher preparation program. The roles they play are important for acquiring new skills as a professional and as a member of the larger society (Kochan, 2000). These roles will shift and change throughout a candidate's professional career, so there is a greater importance for understanding them now. As stated before, the themes of communication, etiquette and the role of the candidate can be included under the idea of dispositions. Therefore, the examples provided under this theme could also come under other dispositional issues not listed.

The first example of a candidate not realizing the role they were playing was a common one for candidates who were early in the teacher preparation program. The evaluation of one candidate completing a field experience provided an example of a

candidate not understanding roles. The evaluation completed by the cooperating teacher related to the coordinator of field experiences the manner in which the cooperating teacher first met the candidate. The candidate "came into the classroom drinking a … soda while trying to communicate that [the candidate] needed to schedule a field experience." This entrance did not leave a positive first impression and from the rest of the document, it showed the candidate failed to recognize this fact. After the schedule was set for the field experience, the candidate "did not show up or call for [the] first scheduled day". When the student showed up for the second field experience, the cooperating teacher stated that the candidate "came in jeans and a tight sweatshirt." The cooperating teacher remarked, "[The candidate's] appearance was not of a professional-to-be." A comment by the candidate in front of students prompted the cooperating teacher to say in the evaluation that the comment was not appropriate for any student to hear from a "teacher".

Another file contained a detailed letter from a faculty member regarding an upsetting interaction with a candidate. The candidate, who had a grade of 98%, challenged the faculty member on a few answers on a test that was returned to the class. The faculty member answered the candidate's questions and awarded the candidate partial credit for one of the answers. The following week when the tests were handed back, the candidate once again asked about the same question. The faculty member wrote, "[The candidate] did not accept my explanation and asked to speak to me in private during the break in the class." When the candidate again did not accept the explanation of the answer as given by the faculty member, the candidate "expanded …

criticism to include [the faculty member's] overall conduct of the class... tests, and ... inability to relate to the poorly performing students." The candidate then proceeded to tell the faculty member how to teach the course commenting that "most of the students would never use the material presented". In this situation, it would seem as though the candidate would be the student, however, the candidate felt the need to play the role of teacher.

In one situation, the candidate was observing in a school as a guest and proceeded to correct the cooperating teacher who was teaching at the time. The cooperating teacher contacted the coordinator of field experiences regarding the candidate's conduct and lack of understanding the role of "observer". The coordinator of field experiences documented the concerns voiced by the cooperating teacher. When the candidate observed again in the cooperating teacher's classroom, the candidate "kept correcting [the cooperating teacher]" as the lesson was being presented to the class.

Another file relates the candidate's experience of not wanting to take on certain roles. When asked to grade papers, the candidate responded that he/she would not. The candidate stated that he/she "wasn't hired for that". This happened in a paid internship situation, where, in fact, the candidate was "hired for that". The same candidate also showed "resistance to suggestions" and asked "why" when given direction. The candidate was confused as to what level of participation was expected, even though the candidate had been given direction and suggestions by the cooperating teacher. Possessing a reflective disposition toward teaching and the responsibilities associated with the role of teacher, have an impact on the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.

The areas of instructional behavior, classroom organization, and teacher expectations are all impacted by the candidate's disposition toward effective teaching strategies (Giovannelli, 2003). In the documented candidate's experiences, the lack of willingness to participate in the role in which they are working reflects upon the candidate's disposition toward teaching.

Chapter 5

Summary of Findings

Four years of conference record forms revealed the experiences of candidates at risk of completing a teacher preparation program at one college of education. The files were initially divided into four categories based on the conference record form designed by the college of education. The categories were basic skills, professional competencies, professional relationships, and professional responsibilities. The four categories were then grouped according to themes which emerged from the data. The themes which emerged were basic skills, application of teaching skills, communication, etiquette and role of candidate.

The five themes which emerged from the data aligned with the NCATE standards of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The knowledge and skills areas revealed similar issues as previous research concerning at-risk students. The area of dispositions, however, revealed at-risk candidates had common issues in the areas of proper communication, proper etiquette in various situations, and misconceptions on the part of the candidates as to the correct role they were to play in a given situation.

Discussion

The experiences recorded in the conference of concern files were varied and distinct. The files revealed the experiences of the candidates were as different as the individual candidates. The concerns were as simple as a miscommunication between a faculty member and a candidate or a candidate yelling at staff members. The range of concerns found in the individual files were not unusual given the range of individuals

who enter the field of education. Education is a field where the subjects being taught range from the proper structure of a sentence to the structure of a cell, therefore, the candidates who wish to become teachers must be reflective of the subjects and areas of interest taught in schools. The concerns appear in each of the areas which are highlighted by NCATE – that of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. It is the third category of dispositions which revealed some of the more unusual experiences which have been documented.

Limitations of Study

The study itself has many limitations – the first being the lack of triangulation. Due to the sensitivity of some of the situations and the negative feelings the experience may evoke, it would be next to impossible to interview the individuals with conference of concern records. The files which were carefully documented reveal the time, effort and emotional investment for all who were involved.

Another limitation of the study is the fact that the area of dispositions is still in its infancy. Professionals in the field of education are still working to understand all that the field of dispositions has to offer. Ensuring that all individuals – faculty, staff, candidates, and other professionals, understand dispositions needs to be conquered first. Yet dispositions itself has a certain mystique. The accounts of the experiences submitted to the conference of concern files is only one person's perception of the experience in question. One question the college faces is what qualifies as an experience which needs to be documented as a conference of concern. At this point in time, the filing of a conference record form is at the discretion of the person filing the record.

Another limitation of the study is that these documents are one sided. Only the college associates enter documentation into the file. Candidates cannot enter information in to the folder and, at times, are not aware of the specifics of the information in the files. While the college strives to be objective when filing the concerns, it may be interesting to look at the dispositions of the faculty and staff who submit the documents in the first place. Since the files try to assess the disposition of the candidates, it is interesting to note that the dispositions of the faculty, staff, and other individuals who have brought up concerns have not been assessed. This may be something which further research could reveal – the dispositions of the college personnel.

Since the idea of dispositions is still a rather new concept to the field of education, do some faculty members have a better sense of dispositions? What are the dispositions and agendas of the faculty who routinely submit conference record forms? Why do some faculty members not submit, even refuse to submit, conference of record forms even though they may be aware of situations which may need to be documented? Since we are dealing with people, we cannot assume to understand all people. People have a perception of "other" based on the individual's personal background and experience. In addition, how an individual views his/her position in a given situation may provide some additional ideas about who files a conference record and why a conference record form is filed. Finally, do all faculty members believe it is the college's responsibility to aid candidates in developing dispositions in the professional arena known as education?

Conclusion

This research hopes to add to the body of research currently available in the area of dispositions. By no means is this research a complete picture of dispositions as a whole, but a picture of only one college's attempt to document and understand the experiences of students identified as being at risk for completing the teacher preparation program. Further research needs to be conducted in the area of dispositions and how to best assess, understand, and aid candidates in improving dispositions in the field of education. In addition, the effects of such things as age, generations, and knowledge of societal roles in relation to dispositions needs to be researched. A more comprehensive understanding of dispositions will assist teacher preparation programs in the development of candidates who are successful teaching in a diverse, every-changing environment.

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NEBRASKA'S HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

February 20, 2006

Sarah Edwards, PhD
UNO - College of Education
UNO - VIA COURIER

IRB#: 110-03-EX

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: Defining Dispositions
Three Year Re-write

Dear Dr. Edwards:

The IRB has reviewed your Three Year Re-write Exemption Form for *Exempt Educational, Behavioral, and Social Science Research* on the above-titled research project. According to the information provided, this project is exempt under 45 CFR 46:101b, category 1 and 4. You are therefore authorized to begin the research.

It is understood this project will be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines. It is also understood that the IRB will be immediately notified of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project.

Please be advised that the IRB has a maximum protocol **approval period of three years** from the original date of approval and release. If this study continues beyond the three year approval period, the project must be resubmitted in order to maintain an active approval status.

Sincerely,

Ernest Prentice, PhD / MDK

Ernest D. Prentice, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, IRB

EDP/gdk

College of Education
Professional Dispositions Statement

Teaching is a profession that requires its potential candidates to be individuals of integrity. Prospective teachers must be able to demonstrate that they are individuals of strong moral character who can make mature decisions for themselves and for the students whom they will teach. Teachers are responsible for the education, safety, and well-being of anyone in their charge. The College of Education prepares future teachers who show a high degree of moral character and the ability to act responsibly inside and outside the classroom. These individuals must be able to serve as representatives of the College and the University, and must demonstrate the personal and professional dispositions of the teaching profession.

Inappropriate behaviors on the part of candidates, which in the College's reasonable judgment, violate the university's Student Code of Conduct, establish a lack of integrity or moral/ethical character, or demonstrate conduct and patterns of behavior inconsistent with the personal and professional dispositions expected in the teaching profession, shall be sufficient grounds for 1) denial of admission to or enrollment in and 2) dismissal or removal from programs, courses, observations, field experiences, practica, student teaching, and similar field based experiences that lead to certification. Displays or patterns of behaviors may be established by any credible means including, but not limited to, the facts surrounding a record of arrests or convictions.

Candidates who exhibit inappropriate behaviors may be referred for a Conference of Concern. The purpose of this conference is to formally identify the unsuitable behaviors, recommend corrective action(s), and determine the candidate's suitability for continuing in teacher preparation.

I swear/affirm that I have read and understand the Professional Dispositions Statement of the College of Education.

Signature _____ Date _____

College of Education
Conference Record Form

Student Name:_____   . NU ID: _____

Date:_____   . Major: _____

I. Information to Student: Email _____   Phone _____   Meeting _____   Other _____
                                    (DATE)   (DATE)   (DATE)   (DATE)

The candidate has been informed that this Conference of Record will be filed. _____ Yes _____ No

II. Areas of Concern Representing Knowledge, Dispositions and Skills
      (Please circle appropriate areas and provide explanations/descriptions of behavior.)

A	Basic Skills	B	Professional Competencies	C	Professional Relationships	D	Professional Responsibilities
1	Oral Expression	1	Subject Knowledge	1	Candidate/ Faculty/Staff	1	Attendance/ Punctuality
2	Written Expression	2	Teaching Skills	2	Candidate/ Candidate(s)	2	Meeting Obligations
3	Reading Skills	3	Planning	3	Candidate/ Student(s)	3	Care/Concern for Students
4	Reflective Skills	4	Presentation	4	Candidate/Other Professionals	4	Ethics
5	Technology Skills	5	Classroom Management	5	Candidate/ Parent	5	Integrity
6	Handwriting	6	Assessment	6	Candidate/ Community	6	Equity/Diversity
7	Nonverbal	7	Developmental Awareness	7	Other	7	Other
8	Other	8	Other				

III. Explanation/Description/Data:

_____   _____
Professor Signature   Student Signature (required at time of formal intervention)

_____   _____
Date   Date