

**DISPOSITIONS FOR TEACHING IN HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS:
AN INVESTIGATION OF PROGRAM PREPARATION AND STUDENT
PERCEPTIONS**

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Recent research has revealed that out of 3.4 million public school teachers, an estimated 230,000 leave the profession on a yearly basis. During that same time period, an additional estimated 227,000 teachers move from urban schools to suburban or private schools. As a result, schools in under-resourced areas have less experienced teachers who have not yet achieved a track record of teaching effectively. The purpose of this study was to investigate and document the specific ways in which the P&TC Program at the Riverton University prepares preservice teachers to plan and execute effective pedagogical practices in concert with their development of relevant dispositions to serve high-need schools.

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PREFACE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

My research focuses on how teacher education programs are preparing candidates to teach in high-need schools. Specifically, I am interested in how the Applied Developmental Psychology-Combined Accelerated Studies in Education (P&TC) program at the Riverton University addresses the development of dispositions that would prepare candidates for teaching in high-need schools.

According to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a high-need school is “within the top quartile of elementary and secondary schools statewide, as ranked by the number of unfilled, available teacher positions; or is located in an area where at least 30 percent of students come from families with incomes below the poverty line; or an area with a high percentage of out-of-field-teachers, high teacher turnover rate, or a high percentage of teachers who are not certified or licensed” (2002, p. 232). Most high-need schools are in urban or rural areas, and they need teachers.

However, according to Ingersoll and Smith (2003), “the teaching profession suffers from chronic and relatively high annual turnover” (p. 2). Additionally, Boyd et al. asserts that “across the United States, approximately half a million teachers leave their schools each year” (2011, p. 304). Moreover, Ingersoll and Smith maintain that “total (teacher) turnover is fairly evenly split between two components: attrition (those who leave teaching altogether); and migration (those who move to teaching jobs in other schools)” (p. 2).

This yearly attrition often leaves schools in under-resourced areas with less experienced teachers who have not yet achieved a track record of successful teaching. Furthermore, the USDE's Office for Civil Rights Data Collection (2014) found that Black and Native American students are four times more likely than White students to be enrolled in schools with faculty of whom more than 20% are first year teachers. Latino students are three times as likely to be enrolled in schools with such faculty. Often, faculty do not represent the cultural diversity of their students. For example, Banks et al. (2007) state, "most U.S. teachers are European Americans from middle-class backgrounds who speak only English. Many of their students are racial and ethnic minorities, live in poverty, and speak a first language other than English. Thus, most teachers do not have the same cultural frames of reference and points of view as their students" (p. 237). In other words, Banks et al. maintain that "all teachers need to develop cultural competence in order to effectively teach students with backgrounds different from their own" (p. 237).

Cultural diversity is a characteristic of not only high-need schools in particular, but all schools in general. According to The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), "[although] students of color are expected to make up 56 percent of the student population by 2024, the elementary and secondary educator workforce is still overwhelmingly white... [Additionally] a nationally representative survey of teachers and principals, showed that 82 percent of public school teachers identified as white" (p. 1). Secretary of Education, John B. King, Jr. states, "We've got to understand that all students benefit from teacher diversity. We have strong evidence that students of color benefit from having teachers and leaders who look like them as role models and also benefit from the classroom dynamics that diversity creates. But it is also important for our white students to see

teachers of color in leadership roles in their classrooms and communities” (p. 1). This is particularly important in high-need schools because “both quantitative and qualitative studies find that teachers of color can improve the school experiences of all students; further teachers of color contribute to improved academic outcomes while serving as strong role models for students” (p. 2).

Despite a variety of efforts to narrow the achievement gaps for Hispanic and Black students in relationship to White students, research shows that disparities in math and reading still exist. According to NAEP (2011), “closing the Hispanic-White achievement gap remains a challenge. While Hispanic students’ average scores have increased across the assessment years, White students had higher scores, on average, on all assessments” (p. iii). According to *Achievement Gaps: How Hispanic and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (2011), “scores [in math] remained unchanged for both Hispanic and White students in grade 4, and the gap remained at 21 points. The scores for both groups increased at grade 8, but the gap remained at 26 points” (p. 4). In reading, the research shows that “scores increased for both Hispanic and White Students but gaps did not differ significantly at grades 4 and 8” (p. 5). For example, by 2009, the achievement gap in grade 4 was 25 points and the achievement gap in grade 8 was 24 points (NAEP, 2011).

According to *Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (2009), “nationally, at both grades and in both subjects [mathematics and reading], Black and White students scored higher in 2007 than in either the early-1990s or in 2005. Even as scores were improving for both groups, the gaps narrowed between Black and White fourth-graders

over the longer time period” (2009, p. 2). However as recently as 2009, their research found that the achievement gap between Black and White students was still significant with a 26-point differential in mathematics scores in 4th grade and a 31-point differential in 8th grade. Additionally, the reading scores showed that there was still a 27-point difference between Blacks and Whites in 4th grade, as well as, a 26-point differential in 8th grade (NAEP, 2009).

1.1 TEACHER PREPARATION RELATED TO STUDENT ACADEMIC SUCCESS

How can teachers be prepared to address disparities in academic achievement? While all teachers are required to “demonstrate subject-matter competency in the core academic subjects taught” (NCLB, 2010, p. 20), the standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) 2001 foreground the importance of preparation that goes beyond academics.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review is to address the following questions:

- How do current models of teacher preparation address preservice teachers' dispositions?
- How have teacher dispositions been represented in the literature?
- What research has been done about the kinds of preparation provided to preservice teachers related to dispositions?

2.1 HOW DO CURRENT MODELS OF TEACHER PREPARATION ADDRESS DISPOSITIONS?

In 1986, Shulman introduced a framework for teaching that he called Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). According to Shulman, PCK is a “kind of content knowledge... which goes beyond knowledge of subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching” (Shulman, p. 6). In other words, PCK represents knowledge for teaching to include content knowledge, knowledge of pedagogy, or instructional methods, as well as knowledge of how students learn. Shulman’s PCK framework has been a powerful influence on teacher education and on models of teacher preparation. However, Ball and her

colleagues (2008) found it troubling that after twenty years of application, the “bridge between knowledge and practice was still inadequately understood and the coherent theoretical framework Shulman called for remained underdeveloped” (Ball et al., p. 389). Ball and her colleagues located the problem in the term PCK itself. Specifically, the researchers suggested that, “the term [lacks] definition and empirical foundation, limiting its usefulness” (p. 389).

In order to address this issue, Ball, Thames, and Phelps (2008) attempted to refine the framework, emphasizing how “scholars can help specify the nature of content knowledge needed [with the use of]... greater precision about the concepts and methods involved” (Ball et al., p. 394). Additionally, they placed “emphasis on the use of knowledge in and for teaching rather than on teachers themselves” (p. 394) within the context of the following research questions: “What do teachers need to know and be able to do in order to teach effectively? Or, what does effective teaching require in terms of content understanding” (p. 394)? And, “by ‘teaching,’ [they] mean everything that teachers must do to support the learning of their students” (p. 395).

Working within the discipline of mathematics, Ball et al. (2008) asserted that what was most interesting to them was growing evidence that teaching, in all probability, requires a “specialized form of pure subject matter knowledge – ‘pure’ because it is not mixed with knowledge of students or pedagogy and is thus distinct from PCK identified by Shulman and his colleagues and ‘specialized’ because it is not needed or used in settings other than mathematics teaching” (p. 396). This finding is important to refining the PCK framework in that it begins to establish a more explicit definition of PCK.

Ball et al. (2008) crafted a conceptual model that incorporated the three domains of

PCK (knowledge of content and students; knowledge of content and teaching; and knowledge of content and curriculum) into a model that included domains they suggested were missing from Shulman's original work. They identified these as: specialized content knowledge; common content knowledge; and horizon content knowledge. Besides providing material to make PCK a more fully formed concept, these new categories are also beneficial for the following reasons. First, "it would be useful to ascertain whether there are aspects of teachers' content knowledge that predict student achievement more than others" (p. 405). Second, it could "be useful to study how different approaches to teacher development have different effects on particular aspects of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge" (p. 405). Finally, "a clearer sense of the categories of content knowledge for teaching might inform the design of support materials for teachers as well as teacher education and professional development" (p. 405).

The influences of Shulman (1986) and Ball et al. (2008) on preservice teacher programs have to be acknowledged because they provided foundational frameworks for schools of education to incorporate how to teach (pedagogy) with what to teach (content). However, their frameworks, are not completely comprehensive. Specifically, their emphasis on content and pedagogy fails to acknowledge an important aspect of teacher proficiency – dispositions. In other words, "the school has paid scant attention to the personal and cultural knowledge of students and has concentrated on teaching them school knowledge" (Banks, 1993, p. 8). Thus, "the challenge that teachers face is how to make effective instructional use of the personal and cultural knowledge of students while at the same time helping them to reach beyond their own cultural boundaries" (Banks, p. 8)

The concept of teacher dispositions is an integral part of the 2008 NCATE standards.

Those standards include a “rubric” with definitions as to what are unacceptable, acceptable and target behaviors regarding professional teaching dispositions for preservice teaching candidates. According to NCATE (2008), an acceptable candidate is “familiar with professional dispositions delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards... Their work with students, families, colleagues, and communities reflects these professional dispositions.”

Candidates demonstrate classroom behaviors that create caring and supportive learning environments and encourage self-directed learning by all students. Candidates recognize when their own professional dispositions may need to be adjusted and are able to develop plans to do so” (p. 20). The notion of teacher dispositions is not new, but the NCATE standards have brought attention to dispositions and educational scholars have responded. The next section provides a review of how teacher dispositions have been represented in the literature.

2.2 HOW HAVE TEACHER DISPOSITIONS BEEN REPRESENTED IN LITERATURE?

Teacher dispositions have been represented in the professional literature in several ways. For example, NCATE (2008) represents teacher dispositions, among other things, as the ability to “demonstrate classroom behaviors that create caring and supportive learning environments and encourage self-directed learning by all students” (NCATE p. 20). In other words, teachers should develop classroom contexts that are nurturing as well as challenging, contexts.

NCATE (2008) also characterizes teacher dispositions as the ability to “encourage

students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills" (p. 22), as well as helping, "teacher candidates foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom" (p.22). In essence, teachers are supposed to be able to help students think through and develop a variety of solutions for problems that they encounter.

While NCATE emphasized teacher dispositions in terms of the ability to create supportive learning environments that engage students in active learning, other scholars have used Dewey's notion of habits of mind to emphasize other facets of teachers' dispositions. According to Dewey (2008), habits of mind involve both knowledge and judgment.

Talbert-Johnson (2006) subscribes to Dewey's notion of habits of mind, foregrounding the importance of such habits in addressing issues of social justice and cultural awareness. According to Talbert-Johnson, "content knowledge and pedagogical expertise are not enough if a teacher does not have the attitude to work at becoming an effective teacher" (p. 154). She further connects her research with Dewey's beliefs when describing the disposition of a caring, highly qualified teacher.

Specifically, Talbert-Johnson (2006) places a high degree of emphasis on three characteristics: (a) open-mindedness (the ability to absorb the facts without allowing personal filters to skew them); (b) wholeheartedness (the ability to self-reflect and to become better from those reflections); and (c) responsibility (the ability to make learning engaging and interesting for students and to become life-long learners). These characteristics interlock with her belief that "more emphasis must be placed on genuine preparation of teachers who are fully prepared to consider school, family, and community contexts in connecting concepts to students' prior experiences and applying the ideas to real-world problems" (p. 157).

The characteristics proposed by Talbert-Johnson related to dispositions have been

further specified by scholars such as Dottin (2009) and Thornton (2006). Dottin (2009), for example, foreground the importance of habits of mind in making professional conduct more intelligible or transparent and nurturing and assessing dispositions (habits of mind) for transfer.

For Dottin (2009), the key to developing habits of mind is participation in authentic school settings. He recommends that schools of education develop programs that allow “professional educators [to] participate in communities of practice in ways that make clear the knowledge, skills and habits of mind (dispositions) required for effective professionalism, and having them model those abilities for their candidates facilitates the process of transforming teacher education from a collection of courses to a moral developmental growth process” (p. 87). Basically, Dottin suggests that new teachers need to be in situations where they are able to connect with more seasoned educators who can show P&TC the habits of quality, effective teachers and push the neophytes toward sustainable growth both emotionally and professionally.

According to Dottin, while knowing content and having certain skills are important, it is what the teacher does with the preceding in differing contexts and situations that makes the difference. For example, Dottin (2009) contends that teachers’ actions stem from their thoughtful consideration of situations in which they must act and within which their dispositions are embedded. Therefore, he concludes that dispositions are habits of mind for making professional behavior more thoughtful, providing opportunities for developing amplified judgment.

Dottin, Johnson and Weaver (2013) have documented the effectiveness on preservice teachers’ knowledge and dispositions of opportunities to use problem solving strategies via

P&TC studies focused on twelve habits of mind. These habits of mind include: Questioning and Posing Problems; Thinking Flexibly; Managing Impulsivity; Persisting; Metacognition; Striving for Accuracy; Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision; Applying Past Knowledge to New Situations; Responding with Wonderment and Awe; Thinking Interdependently; Taking Responsibility; and Listening with Understanding and Empathy. Additionally, an analysis of the habits of mind rating scale revealed that their students demonstrated statistically significant changes in students' perceptions of the following habits of mind: Questioning and Posing Problems; Managing Impulsivity; Persisting; and Taking Responsible Risks.

Thornton (2006) also made use of Dewey's notion of habits of mind in representing dispositions in action as "habits of mind including both cognitive and affective attributes that filter one's knowledge, skills, and beliefs and impact the action one takes in classroom or professional setting. They are manifested within relationships as meaning-making occurs with others and they are evidenced through interactions in the form of discourse" (p. 62).

While the scholars described above emphasize the importance of dispositions, Diez (2007) argues that there are problems with how schools of education incorporate dispositions into their preservice teaching programs. According to Diez (2007), "many teacher education programs seem to be responding to the state or NCATE mandate rather than to be thoughtfully exploring whether it makes sense to assess dispositions separately or in the context of candidates' practice in classrooms" (p. 393). To put it another way, Diez criticizes the idea that many schools of education just "check the box" of providing a disposition framework for students in order to remain in compliance with the organizations to whom they have to report.

Diez (2007) also contends, however, that the proper use of dispositions with preservice

teachers can transform education. That sentiment is demonstrated when she “argue[s] that promoting such consciousness is only the beginning; attending to dispositions has the potential to expand the power of teacher education, to develop teachers who are ready to enter the profession able to make a difference in the way schools function to help all children learn” (p. 393).

Additionally, Diez (2007) emphasizes that schools of education are not doing enough to help their preservice teachers learn how to transform the culture of P-12 education. “It seems to me that our concern with dispositions must be broader and deeper... dispositions cannot focus only on individuals one at a time, but must engage them as part of a learning community that includes candidates, university faculty and school personnel” (p. 394). In other words, she believes that, if applied, dispositions could become the overarching framework of the entire school of education.

Ultimately, Diez (2007) displays her antagonistic stance against the status quo by asserting “teacher education must move beyond the mandate of dispositions” (p. 395) in order to “build a community of professional practice capable of addressing the needs of all learners” (p.395).

Hines (2007) connects the current literature about teacher disposition to the mental hygiene requirements of the past. In both cases, candidates were subjected to evaluations in order to demonstrate their ability to be a professional. Mental hygiene, was a construct related to the process of testing and helping teachers to maintain mental health through treatment and education, and personality that was standard practice in the 1940’s.

Hines (2007) also questioned why teacher educators and their programs were the ones to assess the personal beliefs of their preservice teachers. She contends that “policing

personality and dispositions is just a way for teacher educators to extend their control even further into the classroom” (Hines, p. 60). In other words, Hines suspects that using the notion of dispositions, schools of education can hold sway over entire populations of children by indoctrinating their preservice teachers into ways of thinking about social justice that may not coincide with those teachers’ beliefs. For example, she supposes that because schools of education ask students to “act as leaders and agents for organizational change in their classrooms, schools, and society” (p.60), it is really their way of “acting as ideological gatekeepers to... public schools” (p. 60). Hines also points out how relatively easy it could be for schools of education to clandestinely fulfill a progressive political agenda.

In summary, teacher dispositions have been represented in the professional literature in a variety of ways. NCATE represents teacher dispositions as aptitudes for creating engaging and robust learning environments for students. Dewey stressed teacher dispositions as habits of mind that allow teachers to use their knowledge and judgment in order to encourage students to fully participate in the learning process. Furthermore, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) (2007), defines dispositions as the following,

Knowledge and skills are not sufficient by themselves to prepare excellent teachers. The transformation of a person from one who merely possesses knowledge and technique into a superior teacher must also include the development of characteristics such as a capacity for active and creative communication, a tendency to probe, a willingness to explore topics from a variety of perspectives, and a desire to engage and encourage students who have a dizzying range of abilities, interests, and temperaments (Teacher Preparation, 2007, para. 6).

The aforementioned definition of dispositions aligns with my definition of dispositions which is not only knowing what to do, but also, having the inclination to act upon that knowledge.

2.3 WHAT RESEARCH HAS BEEN DONE ABOUT HOW TO SUPPORT PRESERVICE TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING DISPOSITIONS?

There has been limited research conducted pertaining to the kinds of preparation schools of education provide for preservice teachers regarding dispositions. For the most part, research has focused on assessing rather than engendering dispositions. Wadlington and Wadlington (2011) investigated the “effect that teacher’s dispositions have upon their teaching effectiveness, teaching style, job satisfaction and other factors” (p. 323).

To conduct their investigation, Wadlington and Wadlington recruited one hundred and fifty teachers who were enrolled in graduate courses. The teachers were then asked to complete a battery of assessments, including The Birkman Method questionnaire (which measures personality, social perceptions and occupational interests), a teacher temperament and style survey, and an assessment that measures work burnout.

They discovered “teacher dispositions and teaching styles are significantly related” (p. 324). For example, teachers who are less collaborative with others tend to be more authoritarian; thus, are more teacher-centered in their approach to teaching. In essence, they want total control of their classrooms. Conversely, teachers who are more collaborative tend to display student-focused teaching styles. In other words, they see the students as collaborators and co-constructors of their learning experiences.

Wadlington and Wadlington (2011) also uncovered a correlation between teachers who are “interested in maintaining their image of competence and are not willing to ask for help” and those “who are constantly trying to improve themselves” (p. 324). They found that the former “are more likely to feel stress and burnout” (p. 324), whereas the latter report less burnout. Additionally, they found that teachers “with direct, extroverted communication

styles seem to stay in the teaching profession longer” (p. 324) than those who have more indirect, introverted communication styles. They stay in the profession longer because they “are more likely to get their needs met and settle conflicts before they fester” (p. 324).

Rike and Sharp (2008) developed the Early Childhood Education Behaviors and Dispositions Checklist. The checklist was created by the early childhood faculty at the University of Memphis to address four needs, to:

- (a) provide the faculty a clear means to express what is expected of their students in terms of their dispositions and the way they will be assessed
- (b) meet the professional obligation of the preservice teacher program to emphasize the appropriate use of dispositions being just as vital to quality teaching as pedagogy and content; create a consistent assessment tool that meets NCATE’s accreditation process; and
- (c) help preservice teachers “develop the habit of thinking like a professional educator while... still in college” (p.151).

The data collected from the checklist has been mostly anecdotal. However, the faculty members found that “through identification of specific behaviors and dispositions related to becoming an effective practitioner... it is possible to cultivate positive aspects and decrease the influence of the more negative factors” (p. 153). Additionally, the faculty members understood the “process enormously benefits preservice teachers by aiding them in building on their strengths and correcting weaknesses” (p.153). Basically, the checklist afforded students opportunities to grow through observation, reflection and repetition.

Mueller and Hindin (2011) conducted research to evaluate and verify the factors that shape dispositions in preservice teachers. Their research was conducted with a cohort

of sixty preservice teachers. The school assessed their teaching candidates' dispositions utilizing three data sources: (a) entry and exit surveys; (b) field evaluations; and (c) micro-case scenarios. Mueller and Hindin focused on the analysis of the micro-case scenarios. Preservice teachers were asked to read the scenarios, to find the problem in each, and to determine how they would have handled the situation differently. Through analysis responses, the researchers found that while teacher preparation courses could support teacher candidates' developing dispositions," field experiences could stunt those dispositions. For example, Mueller and Hindin cite research suggesting that up to 70% of mentor teachers have negative attitudes toward both inclusion and cultural stereotypes.

While the above studies have focused on *assessing* dispositions, a study by Worthy and Patterson has attempted to address the notion of *developing* dispositions. According to Worthy and Patterson (2001), preservice teachers can develop dispositions that would allow them to empathize with students from backgrounds that are totally disparate from their own by working with those students in one-on-one situations.

To conduct the study, Worthy and Patterson recruited a cohort of 71 preservice teachers and mandated they do field work in tutoring programs in high-need, predominately Hispanic schools near their university. The teacher candidates were required to maintain detailed, reflective notes on themselves and each of the students they tutored.

Worthy and Patterson derived the following conclusions from the study:

- (a) the development of personal, caring relationships between the preservice teacher and the student they were tutoring played a major role in the student's enthusiasm toward learning;
- (b) the tutoring experience allowed the preservice teacher to "solidify their content and

procedural knowledge [and]... become more attuned to a child as a valuable individual” (p. 339); and

- (c) supportive long-term interactions with students can help preservice teachers change their dispositions regarding students of different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

Ever since Dewey (1922) drew attention to the importance of habits of mind in the realm of teaching and pedagogy, the idea of dispositions has been, in one form or another, part of the cultural narrative of schools of education. However in 2001, when NCATE determined that teacher education programs should include professional dispositions as an element of their conceptual frameworks for training preservice teachers, the idea of dispositions moved from a theory to an actual component of practice. Therefore, it became imperative for teacher preparation programs to do two things:

1. determine an appropriate way to incorporate the teaching of dispositions into their curriculum
2. create a system of assessing the development of teacher candidate dispositions in order to comply with the mandates set forth by NCATE

2.3.1 Defining dispositions and research questions

Currently, many teacher preparation programs are having a difficult time finding a consistent way to integrate the study of dispositions into their programs. I believe it is because of two reasons. First, there is no clear definition of dispositions for schools of education to use as a foundation upon which to build their courses. And second, most schools maintain their primary focus on ensuring teaching candidates are immersed in pedagogical

content knowledge (PCK). In other words, the focus is on what to know and how to teach it.

For the purposes of this investigation, I am defining the development of dispositions as including opportunities for candidates to work in authentic school settings (Dottin 2009), to develop relationships with students that foster mutual understanding (Worthy & Patterson, 2001), and engage in situations that involve the use of problem-solving strategies (Johnson & Weaver, 2009) and multiple perspectives.

In order to discover how dispositions are being addressed in current teacher preparation programs, I investigated the P&TC program at the Riverton University.

These questions guided my inquiry:

- Does the P&TC program at Riverton University address the development of dispositions defined as including opportunities for candidates to work in authentic school settings (Dottin 2009), to develop relationships with students that foster mutual understanding (Worthy & Patterson, 2001), and engage in situations that involve the use of problem-solving strategies (Johnson & Weaver, 2009) and multiple perspectives as a program goal?
- Does the P&TC program at Riverton University support students in developing dispositions by providing them with opportunities to work in authentic school settings; to develop relationships with students that foster mutual understanding; and to engage in situations that allow them to use problem-solving strategies from multiple perspectives?

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the P&TC program at the Riverton University addresses dispositions to prepare preservice teachers to teach in high-need schools. In the sections that follow, I explain the methods used to conduct that investigation.

3.1 CONTEXT

The current research was conducted at the Riverton University (RU) in the School of Education's Department of Instruction and Learning. RU is a Pennsylvania state-related research institution that was founded in 1787. In addition to the main campus, it has four satellite campuses. It has approximately 35,000 students (25,000 undergraduate/10,000 graduate). The Department of Instruction and Learning currently has approximately 1025 students with almost 200 of them being undergraduate students.

The Psychology and Teaching Certification (P&TC) program is situated in the Department of Instruction and Learning. It is a five-year program of undergraduate and graduate coursework that allows students to complete an undergraduate degree in Applied Developmental Psychology and a Masters of Education (M.Ed.) degree in Instruction and Learning. Additionally, the program prepares its graduates for a certification in both Pre-Kindergarten through 4th grade general education and Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade in special education.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this investigation include the director of the P&TC Program and a sample of the program graduates who have taught or are currently teaching in high-need schools. Since 2012, there have been ninety-seven graduates from the P&TC program. Of those ninety-seven students, fourteen have worked in or are currently working in high-need schools. Through the assistance of the P&TC program director, I was able to contact those graduates and ask them to complete a survey. Additionally, a few of the graduates knew of other graduates,, and they forwarded the survey link to them. Thus, the survey was sent to eighteen P&TC graduates, started by fourteen and completed by eleven.

3.3 DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS

The primary data sources for this investigation include: (a) program descriptions of the P&TC program available on the RU website, (b) syllabi for courses in the program, (c) transcript of interview with the P&TC program director, and (d) surveys completed by graduates of the P&TC program. All data sources were analyzed for evidence of attention to dispositions related to teaching in high-need schools as they were represented in descriptions of the program, as they were evidenced in course reading and assignments, as they were addressed by the director of the program, and as they were perceived by graduates of the program. The Riverton University website, the course syllabi, and director's interview transcript were analyzed using content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). That is, I specifically identified any references to dispositions

or to information related to my working definition of dispositions and to the opportunities that I identified as important for nurturing the development of dispositions. The survey was analyzed by the Qualtrics program which provided percentages of responses in each category. Evidence of dispositions would include opportunities for students to: (a) work in authentic school settings, (b) develop relationships with students in order to foster mutual understanding, and (c) engage in situations that would elicit problem-solving strategies and multiple perspectives. See Appendix A for the interview protocol. See Appendix B for the survey protocol.

3.3.1 Online program descriptions of the P&TC program

I visited the P&TC website and read the program descriptions online as applicants would. I subsequently downloaded the information and searched for any references related to dispositions or high-need schools.

3.3.2 Course syllabi

I secured copies of syllabi for the following courses in the P&TC program as recommended by the director.

- IL 1042/2042: Language and Literature for the Young Child
- IL 1045: Teaching young English Language Learners
- IL 1208: Reading/Writing Methods 1: Pre-K – Grade 1
- IL 2853/54: Student Teaching/Student Teaching Seminar
- PSYED 1016: Developmental Curriculum and Activities

- PSYED 1025: Professional Issues Seminar
- PSYED 1036: Developmental Meaning of Cultural Distinction

I then identified any reading or assignments that specifically related to field placements in authentic school settings, opportunities to develop relationships with students in order to foster mutual understanding, and situations that would elicit problem-solving strategies and multiple perspectives.

3.3.3 Interview with P&TC program director

I conducted, audiotaped, and transcribed an interview with the director of the P&TC program on December 13, 2016. The interview protocol is in Appendix A. I identified specific responses that related to opportunities for students to (a) work in authentic school settings, (b) develop relationships with students in order to foster mutual understanding, and (c) to engage in situation that would elicit problem-solving strategies and multiple perspectives, I organized excerpts from the interview related to each of these topics.

3.3.4 Surveys sent to P&TC graduates

The surveys sent to P&TC graduates included items calling for ratings and items calling for written responses. The survey is in Appendix B.

The surveys were provided in a survey tool called *Qualtrics*, which is provided by RU. Qualtrics provides statistical information about rating items. For example, in addition to the total respondents and the total number of responses, it also calculates the minimum value; the maximum value; the average value, variance, and standard deviation.

Qualtrics also collects written responses. I analyzed these responses by identifying specific comments related to dispositions as noted above. Then, I used content analysis to develop codes to describe those comments (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

4.0 RESULTS

Patterns identified from the analyses of the data sources yielded a number of interesting results; however, few of the sources provided ample evidence of the use of dispositions. The findings for each category are discussed below.

4.1 WEBSITE INFORMATION

After examining the P&TC Website, I found that the majority of the information listed pertained to the requisite qualifications needed to be accepted into the program. Additionally, the website provided an overview of the program and the degrees a student would earn upon completion. For example, students participate in a program that allows them to earn both their Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in a five year period. The program prepares each cohort to earn Pennsylvania Department of Education certification in the following two areas: Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 4; and Special Education (Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8). However, while reviewing the site, I only found two instances of one of the three facets of dispositions. The facet of dispositions regarding working in authentic school settings is addressed when the students participate in an early childhood or elementary school-based practicum during their senior year as well as the thirty weeks of student teaching during their post-graduate year.

4.2 SYLLABI ANALYSIS

Upon examination of the aforementioned course syllabi, the following kinds of assignments were readily apparent in many of the documents: (a) assignments intended to increase P&TC students' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK); (b) assignments requiring review and implementation of pedagogical practices; and (c) assignments pertaining to lesson planning protocols.

In the sections that follow, I describe specific courses that include assignments and readings that relate to dispositions.

4.2.1 IL 2853/54: Student teaching/Student teaching seminar

IL 2853/54: Student Teaching/Student Teaching Seminar provides opportunities for P&TC students to work in authentic school settings; to develop relationships with students in their student teaching placements to foster mutual understanding; and to engage in situations that elicit problem-solving strategies and multiple perspectives.

First, P&TC students are required to complete fifteen weeks of student teaching in both the Fall and Spring terms of their post-graduate year. Additionally, the university mandates that they have two weeks of full teaching responsibility in both semesters. Hence, they are working in authentic school settings.

Second, throughout the student teaching process, P&TC students are required to manage the classroom environment; to deliver instruction; to monitor student progress; to provide individual, small group, and whole-class instruction; and communicate with families. These

requirements are in place to ensure the P&TC student is afforded the opportunity to promote relationships with students where both parties are mutually understood.

Third, during their student teaching placements, P&TC students are required to participate with their mentor teachers and support staff to identify students who need services on both the low and high ends of the educational spectrum. Additionally, they are required to collaborate with their mentor teacher and others to develop an action plan to support students who are having academic and/or behavior issues.

There is no required text or additional readings for this course. However, in order to have full participation in classroom discussions, students are expected to maintain detailed reflective journals of their student teaching experiences. Additionally, the course requires students to prepare a professional portfolio to display their teaching accomplishments during interview settings. They are also given the opportunity to participate in a mock interview in order to provide them with some interviewing experience prior to graduation.

4.2.2 PSYED 1016: Developmental curriculum and activities

In PSYED 1016: Developmental Curriculum and Activities, students are required to use problem solving strategies as part of their classroom competencies. For example, P&TC students are required to plan a field trip and provide a rationale that includes the learning goals, objectives and essential questions in order to demonstrate how the field trip enhances learning. A second example requires P&TC students to design their classrooms being mindful of the specific academic, social, and emotional needs of their students. Concurrently, P&TC students are required to imagine using an \$800 budget to purchase items for their classroom and to

provide a rationale behind each purchase and justify how the items they chose will enhance the learning experience of their students.

The PSYED 1016 course also provided its P&TC students with a simulated opportunity to develop relationships with their potential students by requiring the preservice teachers to plan a Family Night that includes activities which focus on a content area such as math, science, social studies, or language arts. In addition, part of that assignment includes the composition of a letter to send home to parents that tells the parents how excited they are to have their children participating in the event. This assignment, should it be pursued during their teaching practice, will provide the students of PSYED 1016 with an opportunity to develop strong relationships with their students and their parents.

Finally, students of PSYED 1016 have the opportunity to experience an authentic school setting by fully participating and reflecting upon their experiences in a Pre-K classroom. This experience is not explained in detail in the syllabus. However, the instructor notes that the experience will be a topic of discussion during the first day of class.

The P&TC students receive support in completing the aforementioned assignments through course readings. Many of the readings such as Julie Bullard's *Creating Environments for Learning: Birth to Age Eight* (2010); the Pennsylvania State Standards; and the Pennsylvania Prekindergarten Standards focus primarily on lesson planning, classroom logistics and PCK. However, although the position statement on developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) does not provide the students with explicit evidence of dispositions, it does provide implicit evidence. Specifically, it includes an example of dispositions in developing strong relationships with students by insisting that DAP necessitates meeting students where they are academically, socially and emotionally in

order get to know them in order to help them reach the overarching goals and standards of the school system. It also maintains that these activities take place in authentic school settings. Finally, the position statement contends that teachers are on the front line of solving the problem of the achievement gap as it relates to race and socioeconomic status.

4.2.3 IL 1208 Reading/Writing Methods 1: Pre-K – Grade 1

In IL 1208 Reading/Writing Methods 1: Pre-K – Grade 1, students are required to create projects and coursework that use the 21st century skills of critical thinking and creativity. For example, in addition to writing lesson plans and rubrics, the P&TC students are expected to become intimately familiar with the nuances of teaching pre-readers how to read and write utilizing curriculum that they are just becoming aware of themselves. Additionally, the teaching candidates will make use of the aforementioned information and pedagogical practices with first graders.

In order for P&TC students to successfully complete their assignments, they are expected to integrate information from a series of readings provided by the instructor throughout the semester. The assigned readings by Beck and Beck (2013); Beck and McKeown (2001); Button, Johnson and Furgerson (1996); and Yopp and Yopp (2000) emphasize PCK and lesson planning strategies as they pertain to teaching young children. For example, students learn instructional approaches associated with decoding, phonics and spelling. They learn how to select and teach content appropriate vocabulary. They also learn how to connect their early childhood students with ways to use writing and the print code to organize and express their ideas. Through these tasks preservice teachers can begin to display evidence of dispositions by engaging in problem-

solving related to assessing and supporting students' literacy development and beginning to build strong relationships with their students in their school placements.

4.2.4 PSYED 1025 Professional Issues Seminar

PSYED 1025 Professional Issues Seminar, requires P&TC students to create approaches for corresponding with and advocating for children, parents, and coworkers. This course of action provides multiple opportunities for students in the course to not only research best practices, but also to actively participate in building mutually respectful relationships with their Pre-K students and their families.

Secondly, the course provides situations that allow the P&TC students to examine the qualities of extremely, effective educators and how they solve problems in the areas of lesson mastery, positive expectations, and classroom management/logistics. For example, throughout the semester, the P&TC students are allotted multiple opportunities during classes to be introduced to issues that full-time teachers face and even more importantly are encouraged to have thoughtful, guided discussions of the strategies used and from which perspectives the identified issues could be tackled.

Both texts from the course, Wong and Wong (2009) and Bornfreund and Tooley (2014) reinforce the statements above. Bornfreund and Tooley (2014) directly address the importance of teachers developing relationships with their students when they state “the value of developing these skills across the PreK–12 grade continuum—and sharing the research that supports educators’ ability to do so—is essential for any... school that wants to prioritize Skills for Success (SFS) and academic learning. Additionally, involving teachers, parents, and the community in helping to identify the specific skills that students need and being transparent

about the approaches taken to foster them will help head off potential concerns” (p. 10). On the other hand, Wong and Wong (2009) provides a step-by-step guide for the novice teacher to frame classroom expectations and to create an environment that is welcoming and both teacher- and student-centered. It provides the P&TC student with a framework that enhances problem-solving from a myriad of viewpoints.

4.2.5 PSYED 1036 Developmental Meaning of Cultural Distinction

In PSYED 1036 Developmental Meaning of Cultural Distinction, P&TC students are expected to learn methods to enhance their ability to not only create relationships with their future students, but also with the community at large. For instance, in addition to the coursework, students are required to go on several field trips to various sites including both a Jewish synagogue and a Hindu Temple. These experiences along with other coursework allow students to have genuine exchanges with individual members of the community and the community as a whole.

Moreover, the students are expected to utilize the information gathered from the above mentioned assignments to actively involve themselves in deciphering dilemmas that arise from interacting with students from multiple cultures. In other words, they are continuously reminded that there may be students from a religious, cultural or ethnic background that differs from their own. Thus, the assignments from the course impress on students the need to be mindful of their positionality when interacting with students from different upbringings.

The readings from the course buttress the assignments by providing preservice teachers with lenses through which they can view the assignments and help relate the experiences in class to their future experiences as classroom teachers. For example, the Banks (2013) readings

support P&TC students by helping them consider the information from both the in-class and out-of-class projects in order to design instructional approaches that reflect the experiences of the preservice teachers and their ability to translate the pertinent information from those experiences to their students.

4.2.6 IL 1042/2042: Language and Literature for the Young Child

In IL 1042/2042 Language and Literature for the Young Child, students spend the majority of the course studying methods of incorporating literature into simulated relationship building opportunities. Throughout the semester, P&TC students are provided with opportunities to become proficient in pedagogical practices that will encourage their “virtual” students to begin a lifelong appreciation of reading. As an illustration, in a replicated school setting, P&TC students choose developmentally appropriate texts from Pre-K – Grade 4 to perform read-alouds to their simulated students (members of their cohorts).

The P&TC students are also required to perform an elaborate storytelling activity for their classmates. This activity requires the student to tell the story in an extemporaneous manner and use props in order to encourage children to develop their opportunities for engaging with the imagined worlds in literature.

These assignments work in conjunction with the readings in order to help preservice teachers use literature as a tool to not only teach reading but to also forge the skill set of establishing and securing relationships with their students. For example, students read Schickedanz and Collins (2013) who fortify those philosophies by reminding preservice teachers that good relationships with the students encourage children to read and write, which is as important as providing the skills and insights crucial for learning to write and read.

4.2.7 IL 1045: Teaching young English Language Learners

IL 1045 Teaching young English Language Learners presents P&TC students with opportunities to spend time in authentic school settings with students from other cultures. In addition to traditional course requirements (e.g. learning content, creating lesson plans, etc.), students have two opportunities to observe English Language Learners (ELL) in Pre-K classrooms. The instructors provide checklists to intentionally guide students about where their focus should be during the observations.

Furthermore, the course readings provide in-depth guidance into the lives of ELL students through which many preservice teachers are unfamiliar. According to the article, English Language Learners in Public Schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), the number of ELL students is increasing each year with California having the highest at 22.7 percent and West Virginia with the lowest at 0.7 percent. However, the numbers keep increasing. In the 2013-2014 school year, there were almost 4.35 million ELL students in public schools in the United States. These statistics emphasize the need for preservice teachers to have multiple experiences working with students who have English as a second language and to strive to learn about diverse cultures in order to have a deeper understanding of the funds of knowledges as well as the needs of ELL students.

4.3 DIRECTOR INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

I conducted, audiotaped, and transcribed an interview with the director of the P&TC program on December 13, 2016. (See Appendix A for the interview protocol.)

In the sections that follow, I focus on the director's comments to these questions.

1. In what ways does the P&TC program provide opportunities for preservice teachers to learn how to develop an understanding of the students with whom they will work? Specifically, how does the program support them in recognizing and appreciating students' backgrounds, interest, abilities, and challenges?
2. In what ways does the P&TC program support preservice teachers in problem solving; for example, knowing how to analyze students' work and assessments to identify student understandings and misunderstandings, their beginning skills and the skills they need to develop?
3. How does the P&TC program encourage preservice teachers to develop a willingness to consider issues and explore topics from multiple perspectives of stakeholders including their students?
4. How does the P&TC program prepare graduates to teach in high-need schools?

4.3.1 Recognizing and appreciating students' backgrounds, interests, abilities, and challenges, and multiple perspectives

The director teaches the PSYED 1036: Developmental Meaning of Cultural Distinction and many of her responses focused on how the course engages preservice teachers in considering their students in terms of their diverse backgrounds, interests, abilities, and challenges from multiple perspectives.

[The class] hits it really hard with discussions about religion, about race, about gender, about culture – intense discussions. We really sort of push them a little bit to jump in and get involved in the discussions because we always say that there are a lot of teachers

out there who have never had those kinds of discussions and then it hurts them when they're out in schools, especially in diverse schools.

A lot of students have not been exposed to so many things that our kids, young students, come across.

... understanding backgrounds of diverse learners, understanding... the complexities of living in, you know, certain settings. And, it's not always urban. It can be suburban sometimes. And, it definitely could be rural as well. And, what that... what your setting, what your environment and your background does to you and what impact it has on you... as a learner.

You have to understand the child. And so, we talk about creating relationships. And, it's constantly talking about creating relationships with the child and with the family and sometimes it's not easy to do.

[We are also] looking at the history of education, discussing segregation, desegregation. How it's more segregated now than it was even in the sixties in schools. And discussing, like, what has gone on in communities to make schools the way they are.

4.3.1.1 Problem Solving

The director focused on problem-solving opportunities related to both coursework and field experiences.

What we try to do is have scenarios that we can talk to them about, you know, like 'what if this happens? What if that that happens?... How are you going to respond to a child?'

[They preservice teachers] will come back sometimes and be very... upset sometimes after the way they've heard a teacher talk to a child. But, just the fact they realize that wasn't appropriate was a learning experience. Because, they can say, 'okay, that is something that I would not do.' And, we have discussions about that.

They go in and do an assessment on children, but they're working with them one-on-one.

They go to the University Child Development Center and assess through observations. So, a lot of that is informal, holistic and anecdotal sorts of assessments that we teach them about. So, they're not just relying on tests.

We also have them doing like sort of an analysis of what kind of assessment that go on in the class and what are teachers doing with those assessments. So, they are always trying to look at, on the academic side: where is the struggle? What are they doing to help with the struggle?

4.3.1.2 Preparation for Teaching in High-Need Schools

The director's comments about preparations for teaching in high-need schools focused on the multiple placement experiences that students had throughout the program.

We prepare them by being in this... They go through four different student teaching experiences. By the time they get to full-time student teaching, they have 400+ hours in the classroom. And for some of them, it's all in urban settings.





They have two full-time student teaching placements. So by the time they start to teach, they have about 2,000 hours teaching in the classroom. And , that's what makes them know that they can do it, like be confident.

4.4 SURVEY ANALYSIS

During the month of January 2017, I sent a survey to eighteen graduates of the P&TC program. Of the eighteen who received the survey, fourteen started it and eleven completed it. For purposes of this study, I only used data from completed surveys (See Appendix B for the survey protocol). Of the eleven respondents, nine were female and two were male.

All questions called for a five-point, Likert Scale Rating ranging from "strongly agree to strongly disagree." Thus, there was a minimum value of one and a maximum value of five assigned to every question. The lower the value the more the respondents agreed with the question. Additionally, each question called for a short written response which I used to support the quantitative data.

1. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to reflect on my own history and on my experiences as a member of specific groups, including race, class, gender, religion, academic ability, and physical ability.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly agree		3	27.27%
2	Somewhat agree		5	45.45%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		1	9.09%
4	Somewhat disagree		2	18.18%
5	Strongly disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		11	100.00%

2. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)




*We were continually asked to reflect on our own experiences and look at the same thing from someone else point of view. Throughout the special education classes, we constantly took into consideration academic and physical abilities. One of the best experiences for seeing this first hand were the four separate student teaching placements. During our second year in the CASE program, I completed two practicum placements in low income schools, one of which was a reverse inclusion classroom. Though I came from a completely different setting myself, the reflections I had done during my course assignments changed my thinking. **Strongly Agree***

*I feel like our culture class with Anna allowed us this opportunity because we explored a variety of cultures and environments for learning. **Strongly Agree***

*This, I feel, was not really a focus of the program. I feel that simply through being in the classroom and school environment is so diverse in the areas that were mentioned above. **Somewhat Disagree***

Figure 1. Results of Survey of P&TC Graduates

3. The P&TC Program provided opportunities for me to research the culture and community of the field placements in which I worked.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly agree		2	18.18%
2	Somewhat agree		4	36.36%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		2	18.18%
4	Somewhat disagree		2	18.18%
5	Strongly disagree		1	9.09%
	Total		11	100.00%

4. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)

*In field experience, I felt that I was placed in a variety of school settings that exposed me to different philosophies of education. Spending a significant number of hours in these settings showed me to immerse myself in their culture. **Strongly Agree***




*The field placement gave me many opportunities to explore the culture of the school. Therefore, any events both during and after school hours that I was able to participate in... helped me to understand, appreciate, and become a part of the culture of my field placement. **Strongly Agree***

*During my student teaching placements, I was able to talk to teachers, students, and parents in the community. However, I wouldn't necessarily say I did research on the culture and community, but more so did observations. **Strongly Disagree***

*While I completed different field experiences in different communities, I wasn't necessarily given an opportunity to research the specific culture/community of that area in which I was assigned to complete a field experience. **Strongly Disagree***

Figure 1 continued

5. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to learn how to develop an understanding of the students I worked with. Specifically, the program supported me in coming to understand students' backgrounds, interests, abilities, and challenges.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly agree		5	45.45%
2	Somewhat agree		5	45.45%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		0	0.00%
4	Somewhat disagree		1	9.09%
5	Strongly disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		11	100.00%

6. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)


*I strongly agree with this in all areas especially in terms of students' interests. [I] feel that it was made a priority to look into students' interests... For example, the students I worked with really enjoyed... THE HOBBIT. We did an entire language arts unit that went into multiple directions [that] culminated in an eight act play. The students enjoyed every minute of it. **Strongly Agree***

*I was given opportunities to teach and not just be an observer. My mentors allowed me to plan lessons, interact with students, and take charge of my role as a student teacher. **Strongly Agree***

*I remember several experiences related to ESL. I don't remember many experiences outside of this. Although, I think that would have been helpful! **Somewhat Agree***

Figure 1 continued

7. The P&TC program provided me with opportunities to work with skilled teachers who had expertise and were willing to support me in gaining that expertise.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly agree		11	100.00%
2	Somewhat agree		0	0.00%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		0	0.00%
4	Somewhat disagree		0	0.00%
5	Strongly disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		11	100.00%

8. Describe the cooperating teachers you worked with in terms of their expertise and ability to support your developing expertise. (Short Answer)

*Though the mentor teacher at my first practicum placement was horrible, my other three were FANTASTIC! I cannot describe how much knowledge I learned from observing and working with the three women I did. By the end, two of them felt like family. They really invested themselves in me. **Strongly Agree***



*The teachers I worked with went above and beyond. There were numerous times that the teachers took extra time to meet with me to share resources, feedback and ideas. They would do anything to help me succeed. **Strongly Agree***

*My cooperating teacher was a veteran educator. He was a life-long learner, constantly working to perfect his craft of teaching. He was positive, constantly looking for the “good” in my lessons while also providing ideas and “food for thought” on how to improve my work even further. **Strongly Agree***

*Each cooperating teacher that I worked with was professional and knowledgeable about their craft. They were also willing to support me in learning more about their teaching experiences. **Strongly Agree***

Figure 1 continued

9. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to analyze and critique curriculum resources and instructional approaches suggested in course reading and also enacted in my field placements.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly agree		6	54.55%
2	Somewhat agree		1	9.09%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		1	9.09%
4	Somewhat disagree		2	18.18%
5	Strongly disagree		1	9.09%
	Total		11	100.00%

10. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)

*We looked at multiple math resources including Bridges and Investigations. We had the Lucy Caulkins' Writing Workshop Curriculum. And, we also created much of our own curriculum for subjects such as language arts and science. These opportunities helped me to see how to work and act through a curriculum; how to modify lessons within a curriculum; and how to create lessons appropriate for the students and topics we wanted to cover. **Strongly Agree***

*Reading Methods Courses allowed me to access various types of curriculum. I was able to teach using various curricular materials and practicing writing curriculum in my field experience. **Strongly Agree***





*We were asked to look at different resources and instructional approaches during many courses. **Neither Agree nor Disagree***

*I don't remember having an opportunity to look at curriculum. **Somewhat Disagree***

*I don't recall analyzing curriculum. **Strongly Disagree***

Figure 1 continued

11. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to study demographic information about schools in the local area as well as in other parts of the country with specific attention to race, socioeconomic status, and first language.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly agree		0	0.00%
2	Somewhat agree		4	36.36%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		4	36.36%
4	Somewhat disagree		2	18.18%
5	Strongly disagree		1	9.09%
	Total		11	100.00%

12. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)

We did study the demographics of the schools we were placed at and compared them with our classmates. However, we did not look outside our direct areas, especially not in other parts of the country. Somewhat Agree

There was a great diversity of students and situations within my placement, but this was not made to be much of a focus. In the seminar class, we would occasionally talk about each other's placements and how they differed in these areas and also what we could do to help with these issues. Somewhat Agree


We spent a small amount of time on this, maybe one or two assignments. Somewhat Agree

While I did complete experiences in different demographic areas, I didn't actually study the demographic information of those schools. Somewhat Disagree

We didn't really do this. Strongly Disagree

Figure 1 continued

13. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to develop a willingness to consider issues and explore topics from multiple perspectives.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly agree		7	63.64%
2	Somewhat agree		2	18.18%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		1	9.09%
4	Somewhat disagree		1	9.09%
5	Strongly disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		11	100.00%

14. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)




*Completing various experiences in a wide variety of school settings is what pushed me to explore topics from different perspectives, particularly my reading methods course. **Strongly Agree***

*College in general helps you think about the ways that other people think. Working with parents through our practical experience also helped with that. **Somewhat Agree***

*I think the program focused on problem solving creatively and in different ways but not as much as looking at it from others' perspectives. **Somewhat Disagree***

Figure 1 continued

15. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to interact with students with challenging academic and/or social behaviors and also provided me with a variety of strategies with which to assist those student in reversing those behaviors.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly agree		5	45.45%
2	Somewhat agree		5	45.45%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		0	0.00%
4	Somewhat disagree		1	9.09%
5	Strongly disagree		0	0.00%
	Total		11	100.00%

16. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)






*As a third year student, I participated in the annual “Philadelphia Urban Seminar” and spent two weeks at an inner-city school in Philly which has many challenging academic and social behaviors. I worked with my professors and fellow education majors to document and analyze my experiences and develop strategies [with] which to help. **Strongly Agree***

*Through observation of cooperating teachers; reflection on lessons I taught; and through lesson planning; I felt that I was able to have the right tools to deal with the challenges students presented me with. Overall, I fell that patience was still the most valuable tool that I used. **Strongly Agree***

*We did not really have many behavior issues [in my placement]. I learned all those things after working at a public school after leaving the program. **Somewhat Disagree***

Figure 1 continued

17. The P&TC program prepared me to teach in high-needs schools.

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Strongly agree		1	9.09%
2	Somewhat agree		5	45.45%
3	Neither agree nor disagree		2	18.18%
4	Somewhat disagree		2	18.18%
5	Strongly disagree		1	9.09%
	Total		11	100.00%

18. What do you consider to be the major strengths of the P&TC program? Why?

I believe a major strength would be allowing me to see schools in various demographic settings. Because, it gave me a different perspective regarding the role of an educator and to see how what's "most important" can change considerably given different schools.

I believe having four opportunities to be in the classroom teaching was huge... I feel starting with two practicum placements significantly helped my student teaching.

I think the biggest advantage of being a part of CASE program was the significant amount of time spent in the classroom...Being able to spend a significant amount of time at a variety of schools really helped me to develop my own teaching philosophy. I also think that the dual-certification piece of the program is a major strength. Being dually certified makes me a better teacher because I am better equipped to meet the needs of all students in my classroom.

I feel that the major strength is the placement experience.

Figure 1 continued

19. What do you consider to be the features of the P&TC program that need to be changed? Why?

I think there could have been more focus on classroom management and less on curriculum... A focus on how to control a classroom would have been much better preparation.

It seems that by the time student teachers become comfortable with the routines of the classroom and the needs of their students, they have to go their next placement... I feel that staying at one placement would lead to stronger solo week experiences, which in the end is a simulation of what the students in the program want to do.

I think that the program, at times, was disorganized. There were times when I was informed of my placement hours before having to be there and times when I felt the expectations weren't always clear. I feel strongly that the expectations sometimes depended on who your supervisor was and what they expected of students rather than a clear expectation set by RU.

I do believe that the most beneficial way to learn best practices regarding teaching is to get actual teaching experience. While I had classroom experiences, I wish there would have been more. I'm a completely different teacher now than I was when I first graduated because of the experiences I've had as a substitute and full-time teacher.

Figure 1 continued

The survey results revealed a range of responses. And although most of the graduates expressed more positive than negative evaluations of the P&TC program, there were some expressions of discontent with the program evident throughout the data. Of particular importance was that although the respondents acknowledged their placements exposed them to diverse students and situations, they did not spend a lot of time getting to know the demographical information (e.g. race, socioeconomic status, first language, etc.) of the area that they were assigned. Thus, they weren't provided with many opportunities to develop a deep understanding of their students by learning more about their lives and cultures both inside and,

more importantly, outside of the school setting. This compromised their ability to develop relationships with their students.

On a positive note, every respondent strongly agreed with the statement that the program gave them multiple opportunities to work with quality, mentor teachers. Specifically, their responses presented a perspective that the university tends to do an ideal job of pairing P&TC students with mentor teachers who do all they can to meet the needs of their students and the preservice teachers.

4.5 HOW THE FINDINGS PROVIDE ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As stated previously, “for the purposes of this investigation, I am defining the development of dispositions as including opportunities for candidates to work in authentic school settings (Dottin, 2009), to develop relationships with students that foster mutual understanding (Worthy & Patterson, 2001), and engage in situations that involve the use of problem-solving strategies (Johnson & Weaver, 2009) and multiple perspectives” in order to answer the following questions:

- Does the P&TC program at Riverton University address the development of dispositions defined as including opportunities for candidates to work in authentic school settings (Dottin 2009), to develop relationships with students that foster mutual understanding (Worthy & Patterson, 2001), and engage in situations that involve the use of problem-solving strategies (Johnson & Weaver, 2009) and multiple perspectives as a program goal?

- Does the P&TC program at Riverton University support students in developing dispositions by providing them with opportunities to work in authentic school settings; to develop relationships with students that foster mutual understanding; and to engage in situations that allow them to use problem-solving strategies from multiple perspectives?

Based on the data collected, the answer to the first question regarding the development of dispositions as defined as a goal of the program, the P&TC program does not intentionally speak to that issue. However, it does speak to the development of some aspects of my definition of dispositions by providing preservice teachers multiple opportunities to observe and ultimately, work in authentic school settings. For example, prior to graduation, P&TC students are required to spend approximately two thousand hours of observation and practice in the classroom. Furthermore, the data reveals that students were given opportunities to engage in eliciting problem-solving strategies in both field experiences and coursework. Specifically, the program allowed the preservice teachers to find solutions for students with challenging academic and/or behavioral problems. However, it doesn't allow them to formally consider looking at the concerns from multiple perspectives such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc. Finally, the data does not uncover many opportunities for P&TC students to learn to better understand their students through relationship building strategies.

In answering the second question regarding the development of dispositions to teach in high-need schools, about (55%) of graduate expressed that the program prepared them to teach in high-need schools on some level [e.g. strongly agreed (1) or somewhat agreed (5)]. Moreover, the director of the P&TC program emphasized that because many of the program's in-school

placements are in high-need settings, preservice teachers have multiple opportunities to have first-hand knowledge of the day-to-day working conditions in such schools.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the methods in which the Riverton University's School of Education addresses their P&TC students development of dispositions needed in order to succeed in high-need schools. The study consisted of analyzing data collected from the following sources: (1) the program's website; (2) selected course outlines from the program; (3) interview with director of the program; and (4) the survey given to graduates of the program. Upon completion of the study, three things stood out to me that I believe should be further investigated. First, the P&TC program does not provide a well-defined vision statement. Second, the program does not have a systematic way to secure feedback from its graduates. Third, I suggest that the development of dispositions, specifically related to teaching in high-need schools should become a deliberate, intentional aspect of the program.

5.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF ARTICULATING A VISION FOR THE PROGRAM

I believe there are compelling reasons the P&TC program to craft a vision statement. First, a vision statement provides both the faculty and students with a clear understanding of the purposes and goals of the program that is clear to all. For example, in the survey, a respondent expressed the need for this type of clarity when she stated, "I feel strongly that the expectations

sometimes depended on who your supervisor was and what they expected of students rather than a clear expectation from RU.”

Second, a vision statement would influence coursework development. For instance, during my interview with the director of the P&TC program, she declared that one thing she would like to see in the program is a way to ensure “that 80% of my colleagues don’t think it’s only my job in my classes to talk about diversity and equity and high needs and differentiation and understanding families that are under toxic stress.” She also says, “That’s something that should not just be in a culture course. When you’re thinking about all those other things, there should be a discussion about it in all courses.” I am of the opinion that a clearly articulated vision statement for the program would provide the necessary guidelines for curriculum development across courses. As case in point is the EdD program. After three years, the EdD committee has drafted a strong vision statement for the program that emphasizes social justice, collaboration, practical scholarship, and adaptive leadership. Those goals will be infused across all courses and experiences in the EdD program and will be shared with students at the outset.

5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURING FEEDBACK FROM GRADUATES

In my view the P&TC program needs to construct and maintain a database of graduates in order to inform program development. The Riverton University School of Education collects employment data, but the P&TC program needs to collect feedback about the program itself after students have graduated. That feedback should be used to inform course development and field placement experiences. It may even be possible to set up an advisory board of graduates who can contribute to program development.

5.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISPOSITIONS FOR TEACHING IN HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS

Given the current job market with openings in high-need schools, the P&TC program needs to address the development of dispositions for teaching in such schools. For example, the opportunity to develop relationships with students in order to foster mutual understanding does not seem to be apparent in the program. What I have found is that many of the experiences encountered by the preservice teachers were more superficial (e.g., the school is in a neighborhood unfamiliar to them) than profound.

Another aspect of my working definition of dispositions, the opportunity to engage in situations that elicit problem-solving strategies, is evident throughout the program. However, the critical part of the definition regarding problem-solving from “multiple perspectives” is noticeable in its absence. The director of the program provided illustrations of how problem-solving strategies are taught to their preservice teachers. She shared, “we also have them doing like sort of an analysis of what kind of assessment that go on in the class and what are teachers doing with those assessments? So, they are always trying to look at, on the academic side: where is the struggle? What are they doing to help with the struggle?” The director also stated, “what we try to do is have scenarios that we can talk to them about, you know, like ‘what if this happens? What if that happens?... How are you going to respond to a child?’”

Although I must agree with the director that problem-solving strategies are incorporated during the classroom instruction in the P&TC program, eliciting strategies from multiple perspectives (e.g. race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.) were not readily apparent in my inquiry. It is my hope that my inquiry will provide some perspectives for the director to consider in the future development of the program. There are many positive aspects in the current

program, but the results of the survey as well as the analysis of the website and syllabi should provide some important insights for future directions.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR MY PRACTICE

Prior to beginning my journey as a scholarly practitioner, I did not possess the tools to use academic research methods in an intentional manner. Thus, I would haphazardly tackle a problem without an organized strategy to resolve the situation. However, the coursework, the discussions, and the assignments in the EdD program provided me with opportunities to transform my thinking into a person who could see how theory and practice could work together. The development of that schema assisted in my understanding of how to frame researchable questions, to conduct thorough literature reviews, and to develop an inquiry plan to attack problems in a way that can qualify or disqualify hypotheses I have regarding a myriad of challenges.

6.0 DEMONSTRATION OF SCHOLARLY PRACTICE

I intend to share my inquiry report with the director of the P&TC program. I will also make it available to the co-directors of teacher education at the Riverton University. Finally, I will consider submitting an article based on the dissertation to the journal *Impacting Education*, which publishes EdD dissertations. The journal is edited by Dr. Jill Perry at Riverton University.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR DIRECTOR OF P&TC PROGRAM

1. In what ways does the P&TC program provide opportunities for preservice teachers to learn how to develop an understanding of the students with whom they will work? Specifically, how does the program support them in recognizing and appreciating students' backgrounds, interest, abilities, and challenges?
2. In what ways does the P&TC program support preservice teachers in problem solving; for example, knowing how to analyze students' work and assessments to identify student understandings and misunderstandings, their beginning skills and the skills they need to develop?
3. How does the P&TC program encourage preservice teachers to develop a willingness to consider issues and explore topics from multiple perspectives of stakeholders including their students?
4. How does the P&TC program prepare graduates to teach in high-need schools?

APPENDIX B

SURVEY FOR P&TC GRADUATES

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the P&TC Program?	A Strongly Agree	B Somewhat Agree	C Somewhat Disagree	D Disagree
1. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to reflect on my own history and on my experiences as a member of specific groups, including race, class, gender, religion, academic ability, and physical ability.				
2. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)				
3. The P&TC Program provided opportunities for me to research the culture and community of the field placements in which I worked.				
4. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)				
5. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to learn how to develop an understanding of the students				

<p>I worked with. Specifically, the program supported me in coming to understand students' backgrounds, interests, abilities, and challenges.</p>				
<p>6. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)</p>				
<p>7. The P&TC program provided me with opportunities to work with skilled teachers who had expertise and were willing to support me in gaining that expertise.</p>				
<p>8. Describe the cooperating teachers you worked with in terms of their expertise and ability to support your developing expertise. (Short Answer)</p>				
<p>9. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to analyze and critique curriculum resources and instructional approaches suggested in course reading and also enacted in my field placements.</p>				
<p>10. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)</p>				
<p>11. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to study demographic information about schools in the local area as well as in other parts of the country with specific attention to race, socioeconomic status, and first language.</p>				
<p>12. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)</p>				
<p>13. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to develop a willingness to consider issues and explore topics from multiple perspectives.</p>				

14. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)				
15. The P&TC program provided opportunities for me to interact with students with challenging academic and/or social behaviors and also provided me with a variety of strategies with which to assist those student in reversing those behaviors.				
16. What specific course readings, assignments, or experiences provided these opportunities? (Short Answer)				
17. The P&TC program prepared me to teach in high-need schools.				
18. What do you consider to be the major strengths of the P&TC program? Why?				
19. What do you consider to be the features of the P&TC program that need to be changed? Why?				

Figure 2. Survey for P&TC Graduates

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