

# Assessing a Teacher Candidate's Preparedness from the College Supervisor and Cooperating Teacher During Student Teaching

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**Abstract:** *This study specifically examined the candidates' dispositions as assessed by both their college supervisor and cooperating teacher during their student teaching semester. If the teacher education candidate is to reflect, change, and grow then the feedback they receive needs to be consistent. The results of this study provided a clear picture of whether there is a difference in the assessment of the teacher education candidate. By comparing the assessment of both college supervisors and cooperating teachers, we can determine if their expectations are consistent and thereby providing meaningful feedback to the teacher education candidates. This information is critical in moving forward in making decisions about the effectiveness of the institution and the teacher education program, including adding more opportunities that allow for growth in developing effective teacher education candidates.*

**Keywords:** Disposition, assessment, teacher candidate, college supervisor, cooperating teacher

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to determine if candidates' disposition assessments used by an institution preparing the teacher candidates were effective in improving candidates' disposition. Were the disposition assessment results providing helpful, meaningful feedback for teacher education candidates in their student teaching semester? This study acknowledges that dispositions throughout the program are beneficial as well however, this study looks at the reliability of those assessing the teacher education candidate during student teaching. Is there a difference when teacher education candidates are assessed by college faculty and by their cooperating teacher? This is important as these assessment results provide information to the candidate for growth and therefore, consistency is crucial. The information the candidate receives from the assessment should indicate strengths and growth opportunities as assessed by professionals in the field. This information could be counter-productive if the assessments received are different and varied in the information they provide. In other words, if the college supervisor scores a candidate high but the cooperating teacher scores the candidate low in the same area, then the information received would be confusing at best and not productive in helping the candidate to grow and improve. The significance of this project was that this research focused on the comparison of teacher candidate assessments between college supervisors and cooperating teachers. The scores were compared to determine if there was a statistical significance between the two assessments.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Da Ros-Voseles and Moss (2007), teacher preparation institutions are focusing on dispositions and send the message to future teachers that content knowledge alone will not suffice in the classroom today. According to Da Ros-Voseles and Moss, the educational process is about understanding the needs of their students. Da Ros-Voseles and Moss stated that a teacher's disposition will set the tone for the classroom, which in turn affects the overall climate for students to be successful. In other words, setting a climate for success depends on the dispositions of the teacher in the classroom. As most experienced educators know, teachers must support the emotional and social well-being of the students to facilitate an atmosphere conducive to learning. According to Da Ros-Voseles and Moss, "As NCATE mandates that dispositions of teacher candidates continue to be evaluated, teacher education programs must consider how to strengthen candidates' desired dispositions, while discouraging dispositions that might negatively impact their teaching skills and practices" (p. 90). Dispositions such as critical reflection, perseverance, empathy, and compassion should be strengthened throughout the teacher preparation program. Conderman and Walker (2015) discussed a strong disposition and the quality of student learning. Teachers need to have a positive line of communication with all involved in the educational process. Teachers must talk with others and keep everyone on the same page about things happening in the classroom and at school as a whole. These communication and collaboration connection between a teacher's skills will further develop leadership skills for the future. Conderman and Walker (2015) made an interesting point about teacher perceptions about disposition, including: perceptions about self, others, subject field, purpose, and process of education, and one's general frame of reference perceptions, and that teacher candidates should model these appropriate dispositions. Conderman and Walker demonstrated a rubric for acceptable and unacceptable dispositions for teachers where there are five distinct categories of acceptable disposition, including: caring, collaboration, creative and critical thinking, lifelong learning and scholarship, and diversity.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was quantitative to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the disposition assessment of teacher education candidates as assessed by their college supervisor and their cooperating teacher. The sample size included 81 students in their student teaching placement during the 18-19 and 19-20 school year. The institution is a small regional college in southeastern Nebraska with a history as a teacher's college. This sample was chosen as it includes all 81 students that were student teaching in the program during these four semesters. The goal was to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the disposition assessment of teacher education candidates as assessed by the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher. The study data were collected from the assessment instrument administered to the college supervisors and cooperating teachers for candidates enrolled in the teacher education preparation program in a small college in Southeast Nebraska. The institution is part of the Nebraska State College System and is the oldest teacher preparation college in Nebraska. The data gathered from the college supervisor disposition assessment teacher disposition assessment were compared to data from the cooperating teacher disposition assessment at the end of their student teaching program. The data gathered were analyzed for statistical significance to determine if the candidates' disposition assessments differed from their college supervisor and their cooperating

teacher. The results of those assessments were examined to determine if there was a significant difference between the two and if there was consistency between assessment evaluators to determine if this method was effective. The research question asked if there was a statistically significant difference between the disposition assessment of teacher education candidates as assessed by the college supervisor and the cooperating teacher. The disposition assessment consists of nine statements, all aligned with InTASC standards.

### **RESULTS/CONCLUSIONS**

The findings of this study revealed that for the four semesters that were analyzed, three semesters (Fall 2018, Fall 2019 and Spring 2020) showed no significant difference. However, one semester (Spring 2019) did show statistical difference between the college supervisor and cooperating teacher assessments. ANOVA for data resulted in a statistically significant findings at  $p < .05$  as researchers compared means for items identified as dispositions. The results were expected because it is one of the goals of the institution to have a significant impact on their teacher candidate's dispositions. The findings reflect consistent assessment data for teacher education candidate's dispositions for three of the four semesters. This was encouraging as consistency is crucial for providing feedback to teacher education candidates regarding disposition assessments. These results can be utilized by leaders of other institutions who may be considering the option of implementing disposition assessments that result in consistent results from college supervisor to cooperating teachers, thus strengthening that connection between college preparations and real-world expectations.

### **EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE**

The results of this study will help guide faculty and support the notion that teacher candidates are better prepared when they are given real world experiences in addition to content area requirements. As presented at the conference, there were four areas of importance identified:

- focus on examining candidates' dispositions as assessed by college supervisor compared to cooperating teacher to identify trends for individual teacher candidates;
- results help inform program, help identify any areas of weakness and recognize area of strengths. Identify trends inform program changes;
- emphasize the importance of opportunities as part of teacher training. Continue to emphasize dispositions in these experiences;
- allow opportunities for candidates' to reflect on their dispositions, personal growth and areas that may need to be strengthened. The teacher candidate can lead this conversation.

The impact made when preparing effective educators when there are multiple opportunities for teacher candidates to experience professionalism and collegiality, while being mindful of interpersonal relationships off campus, can be significant. This information will be critical for planning and implementing a successful strategy for teaching and learning, strengthening relationships with partners such as cooperating teachers, college supervisors and area service units while considering even more opportunities that allow teacher candidates to learn through various professional experiences. The assessment for teacher candidates continues to be valuable especially when there are multiple assessors using the same instrument and providing feedback.

A limitation to the study is the fact that the groups produce similar results does not imply significant impact on teacher candidate's dispositions as data was collected only at the end of the program. The study shows consistency but not necessarily imply effectiveness.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were suggested as a result of the study:

- Address dispositions when the EDA is completed including the self-assessment. (ex. beginning, halfway point of the teacher candidates' education program to identify any concerns during the process and at the end.
- Admission & Retention - Using evidence from EDA to help inform strategies for an improvement plan.
- Reflective Practice - develop a reflective guideline document or checklist that would highlight key areas that need strengthening. (self-efficacy, understanding perspectives)
- Introduce Early -videos, self-assessment, interpretations.

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