

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' IDENTIFICATION OF
DESIRABLE DISPOSITIONS IN NEW TEACHER CANDIDATES:
A FOCUS GROUP STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Many new teachers will be hired in the decades to come. A school administrator screening candidates for teaching positions is faced with a decision that can have long-term consequences for a community, a school, and thousands of children. Finding the best candidates for teaching positions has never been more important. A variety of questions centering on prior experience, knowledge, or expertise may be asked by those responsible for screening candidates, yet there is another area of importance to be considered in the process, that of dispositions.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], formerly known as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE] (2008), and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium [INTASC] (2010) have emphasized the need to identify dispositions in addition to the knowledge and skills that have historically received emphasis by school districts seeking candidates and institutions preparing them. In response to this emphasis, administrators may benefit from a greater understanding of dispositions when interviewing and making hiring decisions. Administrators will also benefit by greater knowledge of the questions asked to determine if a candidate possessed a particular disposition.

The research procedure uses a focus group format to conduct a multi-round survey/discussion to obtain input and consensus on two questions asked of school administrators: (1) "What do administrators believe are the critical dispositions a teacher candidate must possess?" and (2) "Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?" Recommendations on dispositions that should be assessed and questions that may be used in the assessment of those dispositions will be developed from the results of the study.

The focus group identified 19 dispositions and 74 interview questions within 5 theme groupings. These groupings included: beliefs about children, attitudes/beliefs – willingness to act, job-related skill, structure, and other personal attributes/traits.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Many new teachers will be hired in the decades to come. A school administrator screening candidates for teaching positions is faced with a decision that can have long-term consequences for a community, a school, and thousands of children. Finding the best candidates for teaching positions has never been more important. A variety of questions centering on prior experience, knowledge, or expertise may be asked by those responsible for screening candidates, yet there is another area of importance to be considered in the process, that of dispositions.

An emphasis has been placed on the identification of dispositions, in addition to knowledge and skills, on school districts seeking candidates and institutions preparing them. In response to this emphasis, administrators may benefit from a greater understanding of dispositions when interviewing and making hiring decisions. Administrators will also benefit by greater knowledge of the questions asked to determine if a candidate possessed a particular disposition.

The research procedure used a focus group format to conduct a multi-round survey/discussion to obtain input and consensus on two questions asked of school administrators: (1) "What do administrators believe are the critical dispositions a teacher candidate must possess?" and (2) "Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?" Recommendations on dispositions that should be assessed and questions that may be used in the assessment of those dispositions will be developed from the results of the study.

The focus group identified 19 dispositions and 74 interview questions within 5 theme groupings. These groupings included: beliefs about children, attitudes/beliefs – willingness to act, job-related skill, structure, and other personal attributes/traits.

DEDICATION

This work is offered with buckets of thanks to my family, colleagues, friends, and other cheerleaders who continued to ask “How’s it coming?”

To my wife, who knew all along that I could finish this and who wrote more checks to Virginia Tech on behalf of any single student than any one ought...my life, my thanks, and my love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was undertaken in the belief that so much of what we do in the field of education is a purely human, personal endeavor. Understanding those attitudes, beliefs, and actions revealing our humanity in all we do is a critical step in improving the relationships between all stakeholders in our schools and ultimately, achievement in the classroom.

It is with heartfelt thanks that I bow to those who have supported me in this endeavor. To those who served as panelist/participants in this study, my thanks. To Dr. Parks, Dr. Cash and committee members who have read and commented on this work...and read and commented on this work...and read and commented on this work, my thanks for making this possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Effective teachers possess something in addition to the knowledge and instructional skills that define who they are as teachers. This additional *something* might be compared to the bedside manner of a doctor. A *desk-side manner*, perhaps? The quality of the desk-side manner of teachers is a critical component in creating good rapport between teachers and students. This rapport is an often-neglected component of teaching (Peters, 2006).

In an effort to identify the best teacher candidates possible, school administrators and members of human resources departments ask candidates a variety of questions in interviews. Many questions relate to prior teaching or other work experience of the candidate. Further questions may pertain to the candidate's understanding of a specific curricular program, model, or theory currently being used in the hiring district. Questions that tap into the desk-side manner, the dispositions, of applicants, might add valuable information about the suitability of teacher candidates for employment. This research is designed to answer two questions asked of school administrators: (1) "What do administrators believe are the critical dispositions a teacher candidate must possess?" and (2) "Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?"

Justification of the Study

Why study teacher dispositions? Administrators have certain criteria in mind when interviewing candidates, including specific dispositions. Through this study, we will learn more about those qualities principals look for in exemplary teacher candidates, especially the dispositions they seek in teacher candidates. Additionally, we will examine questions administrators ask teacher candidates in interviews to assess whether or not such dispositions are present.

The connection between teacher and students is important. The relationship between them is critical to the students' overall success (Peters, 2006). A teacher's interest and their motivation can also impact student success (Stronge, 2010). Teachers have been divided not by what they knew but how they interacted with students (Wirtz, Erickson, & Hyndman, 2004). A student who feels disconnected from a teacher will not learn from that teacher in the same way as

he/she would with a teacher who had a closer, more affectionate relationship with him/her (Pianta, 1999). “After all ... what is remembered most about memorable teachers ... is that they cared and ...took the time to know their students” (Hindman, Grant, & Stronge, 2010, p. 25).

It is critical that teachers are knowledgeable in their content areas. It is equally important that teachers have the skills to align curriculum, design lessons, organize instruction, maintain discipline, and communicate effectively with parents and children. An effective teacher is not necessarily one who has basic content-area knowledge and has been taught certain skills dealing with instructional methods and techniques; there has to be something more. Finding out what rests *inside* this teacher candidate seated before an administrator sets the context for effectiveness in the classroom *and* success in the profession. That which rested inside this teacher had a name: *dispositions*.

While a person may have the skills to decode text and possess knowledge of words and their definitions, they may not be a *reader*. A person may have the skills to craft a sentence, execute neat handwriting, and be a masterful speller, yet this does not necessarily mean he or she is a *writer*. Likewise, the ability to crack an egg and boil water may not transfer into being a *cook*. Each of the roles of reader, writer, and cook relies not only on the knowledge and skills required, but, among other things, the repeated demonstration of the willingness to employ those skills. This is one view of the concept of “disposition.” The same considerations can be given to those in the teaching profession. Observation can reveal a teacher’s knowledge in a subject area. A teacher’s skills are demonstrated in a number of ways as they make their plans and interact with curriculum, and yet, the degree to which the teacher employs those skills and makes the choice to use his or her knowledge to assist students is actually more demonstrative of an appropriate disposition toward teaching (Katz & Raths, 1985). With the identification and nurturing of these dispositions, teachers are more likely to hit upon the goal of becoming effective teachers (Breese & Nawrocki-Chabin, 2003; Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000).

Do the right dispositions make a difference? Teachers have been observed leaving the profession after just a few short years of service (Strauss, 2015). Reasons given for this departure vary: it may be a perceived lack of support, the lack of respect, or overwhelming expectations (Riggs, 2013). Some teachers leave the profession because they lack the personality, character, emotional makeup, or dispositional fit for the task. Stating her belief that new teachers in their first year are particularly prone to being overwhelmed and likely to quit,

Giacometti (2005) cited “emotional factors” as the largest predictor of whether a teacher chooses to quit or remain in the profession. Is this a manifestation of a dispositional mismatch? Their departure may not be wholly of their own design, as they may be encouraged or counseled into another line of work (Mack, 2005). With so many leaving the profession, along with natural growth and attrition of an aging workforce (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007), many new teachers will need to be hired in the decades to come, underscoring the need for thoughtfulness in hiring.

Accountability efforts continue to focus attention on teacher knowledge and skills while interest in teacher dispositions appears to be a growing development in teacher education programs (Columbus State University, 2015; St. Norbert’s College, 2011; University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2011). The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], known previously as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE] (2008), and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium [INTASC] (2010) have added dispositions to their standards, which include knowledge and skills required for the profession.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Putting a good teacher in a classroom is likely the best thing a school can provide to students (Goldhaber, 2002). Finding the best possible candidates for teaching positions has never been more important. A school administrator in the position of hiring effective new teachers is faced with making a decision that can have long-term consequences for a community, a school, and thousands of individual children. While it may seem frustrating or politically challenging to remove an unsuitable teacher from a position, one can’t deny the negative impact on children and the entire school community that the poor teacher might have (Wasicsko, 2004a). This is particularly true when these cumulative effects are considered over time. With the effects of a teacher on a student’s achievement measurable for at least two years, even assignment to a “good” teacher after the fact may not be enough to repair the harm done by one poor teacher in a child’s school career (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

It is not the purpose of this study to discuss the merits of specific dispositions on an all-encompassing list that might be attributed to a teacher. The *purpose of this study* was to seek input and consensus from those in the field (administrators who interview and hire teachers) as

they identify dispositions they sought in candidates as they filled teaching vacancies. The two research questions are:

1. What do administrators believe are the critical dispositions that a teacher candidate must possess?
2. Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?

Definition of Terms

Dispositions. Definitions for “disposition” include attitudes, characteristics, habits, educational values, mindsets, personal virtues, societal goals, traits, qualities, perceptions, and states of mind. These definitions are further examined in Chapter II. *For the purposes of this study*, dispositions are *those characteristics, values, and beliefs that influence behaviors that are generally observable, predictable, or otherwise seen in action.*

Limitations/Delimitations.

Limitations are those factors that cannot be controlled by the researcher. This study could be limited by the participants’ responses not truly reflecting their opinions. As they have been provided a definition of the term “dispositions” as used in the study, results depend on the participants providing responses that align with the given definition. Responses that are given will be honored and utilized. The participants were limited to those of the invited group that agreed to participate.

Delimitations are those factors that are within the control of the researcher and set parameters for the study. This study was limited to those administrators (elementary, middle, high school, and central office) who have experience in the hiring of new teaching staff. While others may have insight into desirable dispositions (students, teachers, parents and community members), their input was not sought for this study. The pool of participants was limited to those who met the criteria and were currently or formerly employed by school divisions within the Southside Middle School Conference in the Central region of Virginia.

Organization of the Study

In this first chapter, the importance of the problem as a topic of study, the purpose of the study, a definition of disposition as used in the study, and the research questions are presented.

In Chapter II, a review of the literature relative to the topic is presented. This includes an examination of commentary literature and studies conducted on the identification of dispositions and characteristics of effective teachers and those yet in pre-service training. Included in the chapter is a review of literature relative to the efforts made by teacher preparatory institutions to respond to the addition of dispositions in accreditation standards. Some institutions recommend the use of dispositions as admissions filters, others suggest they can be viewed as something that can be nurtured or developed throughout the pre-service experience, and still others think they should be used as exit criteria from teacher prep programs.

The methodology for the study is presented in Chapter III. A description of the steps in the Focus Group technique, including the development and administration of the instruments, is provided, along with the procedures used in the collection and analysis of the data.

Data gathered are examined in Chapter IV. Findings, implications, and suggestions for future research are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of literature relevant to the study of teacher dispositions. Studies, theory, and commentary literature on dispositions of practicing and pre-service teachers are examined. The efforts of teacher preparatory institutions to add dispositions to their programs in response to NCATE accreditation standards are reviewed.

The search of the literature was conducted with InfoSeek, ERIC, and Google search engines utilizing the following descriptors: *teacher disposition(s)*, *disposition(s)*, *teacher personality*, *characteristics of effective teachers*, *teacher behavior*, *focus groups*, and *teacher attitudes*. Some sources were chosen because of their relevance to the identification or assessment of dispositions. Other sources were selected because of their relevance to actions taken by teacher preparatory institutions in response to the incorporation of dispositions into licensure programs.

While it may seem a new area of study, attempts to identify and assess teacher characteristics and personalities go back many years. It was over fifty years ago that Getzels and Jackson (1963) examined these topics. They reported that while writers may have drawn conclusions about the desirable attributes of teachers, it remained something more easily discussed than measured. Difficulties continue to exist now, as then, in agreement about the definition of *disposition*, the tools available to measure dispositions, and the standards or criteria to be applied in identifying desirable dispositions. It is important to keep these difficulties in mind when reviewing the literature.

Definitions and Examples of Dispositions

Like so many words, *disposition* is one that has several definitions. The definitions are not absolute, discrete representations of the concept. Disagreement among writers can be tied to the difficulty of applying one definition to such an apparently “boundless” concept (Koeppen & Davison-Jenkins, 2007). Many of the differences in the term *disposition* are subtle, almost indistinguishable, requiring an understanding of the context to get some sense of its application or relevance. Further, one term may be used in one context to represent disposition, while another term may be used in a different context. For example, the term disposition is now a part of teacher education discussions, while the term “belief” was used in the past (Usher, 2002).

A review of teacher education programs conducted by Misco and Shively (2007) revealed further evidence of this apparent confusion. While they found overlapping definitions and lists within the colleges and universities they studied, they identified three groups of dispositions: personal virtues, educational values, and societal transformation goals. Personal values included: care, honesty, open-mindedness, prudence, respect, responsibility, skepticism, wholeheartedness, and a sense of the common good. Educational values included: a belief all students could learn, collaboration with colleagues, consensus, critical thinking, discussion, negotiation, professional growth, and a value in equal access to education. Societal transformation dispositions included: creating change events, creating equity, goals of justice, social justice, and tearing down the structures of marginalization (Misco & Shiveley, 2007).

The variety of definitions, contexts, and applications of the term *disposition* was particularly challenging in the review of the literature. The confusing “apples versus oranges” definitions are stumbling blocks to productive discussions of the concept, the resolution of which may serve as a point from which dialogue in the field can proceed (Stooksberry, 2007). Whether they are referred to as attitudes, beliefs, traits, habits, qualities, values, mindsets, philosophies, characteristics, or perceptions, an understanding of the usage of the term and perhaps a consideration of the context of that usage may be necessary to fully understand the importance of dispositions. In fact, it is in the details, expectations, and settings of dispositions that the varied definitions of dispositions make the most sense for teachers and administrators (Freeman, 2007).

Definitions of disposition. In its role as an accrediting agency for teacher preparation institutions, the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (2008) had established standards for institutions that prepare teachers. Among these standards are dispositions, which must be identified and modeled throughout teacher preparation programs. NCATE provided the following definitions for dispositions:

Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development. NCATE/CAEP expects institutions to assess professional dispositions based on observable behaviors in educational settings. The two professional dispositions that NCATE expects institutions to assess are *fairness* and the belief that all students can

learn. Based on their mission and conceptual framework, professional education units can identify, define, and operationalize additional professional dispositions. (pp. 89-90)

While this NCATE definition may be useful for NCATE's accreditation purposes, the term is defined by others in different ways and remains ambiguous in meaning. Rath (2007) believed a similar, yet earlier, NCATE definition would have us accept that dispositions are a gathering of *attitudes and beliefs*. As attitudes, they relate to a person's likelihood to hold a certain opinion, possess a certain state of mind, or act a certain way given a set of circumstances. While they may not account for the cause of a behavior, these collected actions may serve to predict future behaviors (Katz & Rath, 1985). Using this same understanding, Damon (2005) further described them as reflecting a particular position or stance on a range of issues from caring on the personal level to social justice on a grander scale. The successful candidate, then, is one who demonstrates he or she is guided by these attitudes, not simply one who possesses them.

Attitudes and beliefs are terms used interchangeably with "*perceptions*," according to the perceptual psychology of Arthur Combs (Wasicsko, 2007). It is from this perceptual perspective that Combs described behavior as a reflection of what is going on within an individual. "If behavior is a function of perceptions, it follows that teacher education must concern itself with the inner life of its students" (Combs, A., Blume, R., Newman, A., & Wass, H. 1974, p.16). Teacher education is further charged with the task of "increase[ing] the personal effectiveness of candidates by facilitating the amalgamation of dispositions (personal values, attitudes, and beliefs), professional and content knowledge, and skills so that completers become effective, integrated teaching instruments for carrying out the purposes of schools and society" (Wasicsko, 2007, p. 56).

Dispositions are sometimes defined as *tendencies*, extending beyond attitude into observable practice. A demonstration of this definition of a disposition applied to someone who was a reader or loved reading would show them to have a personal library, be seen reading or reading to others, and would be heard talking about the books they have read (Freeman, 2003). This is not to be confused with those actions that are so well performed, so completely ingrained into usage that they may appear to be *habits*, but they [the actions] remain intentional acts (Katz & Rath, 1985). For example, a person may not have the disposition to kick doors, yet they've developed the habit of giving the front door a bit of a kick because of years of sticking.

Dispositions have been defined as *characteristics* (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000), yet dispositions and characteristics may not be interchangeable terms. While dispositions may include characteristics of a person, they are more psychological than such physiological characteristics as height, weight, eye color, or other objective qualities (House, Shane, & Herold, 1996). Dispositions may be defined as personal qualities. For example, a teacher with a caring “spirit” may show concern for students as persons in addition to caring about their academic performance (Thompson, Greer, & Greer, 2004).

Dispositions have been defined as *states of mind, preferences, perceptions, or ways of organizing one’s thinking* (Usher, 2002). Using these definitions alone, dispositions might be difficult to observe. Dispositions as *values* are consistent demonstrations of personality exemplified in behaviors (Mullin, 2003). Caring and sensitivity to diversity are two examples of dispositions often expressed as values. Teachers who “go the extra mile” or stay long after school giving individual help are perceived as caring individuals whose values are expressed in their behavior. Weiner (2005) stated that those candidates who appeared responsive to the variances in culture had positive dispositions toward diversity and were more likely to teach diverse students in a caring and engaging manner.

Dispositions may be described in terms of *mindset*. When one uses the terms “flexible” or “open-minded,” they can be described as having a certain mindset - generally considered as an open, or growth-mindset as opposed to a closed, or fixed mindset (Dweck, 2006). It is this consideration of mindset that can also be examined in terms of mindfulness vs. mindlessness. In describing one aspect of this, Langer (2014) expresses openness to new information/ideas, or a consideration there may be more than one point-of-view, as a form of mindfulness. This purposeful thinking (mindfulness) can be manifested in attitudes about the profession (Hattie, 2003; Thompson, Greer & Greer, 2004), flexibility (Demmon-Berger, 1986; Hamacheck, 1969), and reflective practice (Demmon-Berger, 1986; Stronge, 2002, 2010).

Considering dispositions as *beliefs* and *values* may increase the confusion and debate surrounding the use of the term. Damon (2005) advises that a set of guiding principles be established before the assessment process is simply used to eliminate teacher candidates on the basis of their position or politics. It might, for example, be acceptable to assess skills, knowledge, or the acceptance of the belief that all children can learn, while finding it unacceptable to assess a candidate’s social/political ideologies. Social advocates might easily

apply their own agendas when discussing those required dispositions teachers must possess (Raths, 2007). It might not be possible to refute a particular teacher's knowledge of a subject area or his or her ability to engage students in a meaningful, productive lesson; yet, the lack of an "appropriate" disposition might result in that teacher's termination (Mack, 2005).

As indicated in Chapter I, for the purposes of this study, *dispositions* are those characteristics, values, and beliefs that influence behaviors that are generally observable, predictable, or otherwise seen in action. Further modification of the definition may occur as the study progresses. *Indicator questions* are defined in this study as those questions that might be asked to ascertain if a specific disposition is present, even if unobserved at the moment.

Examples of dispositions. Many researchers (e. g., Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1998; Demmon-Berger, 1986; Stronge, 2002; Usher, Usher, & Usher, 2003) have entered the discussion of desired teacher dispositions by attempting to identify those characteristics sought in a teacher (see Table 1).

Stronge (2002) identified six dispositions of effective teachers: *caring, enthusiasm and motivation, fairness and respect, friendly and personal interactions with students, positive attitude toward teaching, and reflective practice*. In stressing many of the affective components of teaching and the view of the "teacher as a person," Stronge and others (as specified in Table 1) have identified examples of the dispositions of effective teachers. This teacher-as-a-person point of view may also consider a person's character. Many of the dispositions shown in Table 1 reflect on those same "soft skills" or behaviors that show an awareness of emotions and their role in creating bonds/relationships. Such an awareness of the emotions of self and others has caused an increase in the interest of emotional intelligence. "There is an old-fashioned word for the body of skills that emotional intelligence represents: character" (Goleman, 2005, p.285).

Table 1

Researcher-Identified Desired Traits, Characteristics, and Dispositions

Trait, characteristic, or disposition	Acikgoz (2005)	Bulach, Brown, & Potter (1998)	Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson (1998)	Demmon-Berger (1986)	Hamacheck (1969)	Hattie (2003)	Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Wichter, & James (2002)	Stronge (2002, 2010)	Thompson, Greer & Greer (2004)	Usher, Usher & Usher (2003)	Wheatley (2002)
Attitude toward teaching profession						✓	✓	✓	✓		
Beliefs about others										✓	
Caring		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			
Compassion									✓		
Creativity									✓		
Empathy										✓	
Fairness					✓			✓	✓		
Flexibility				✓	✓						
Forgiveness/forgiving nature									✓		
Persistence											✓
Positive attitude toward self and others	✓				✓					✓	
Preparedness									✓		
Proactive vs. reactive				✓		✓					
Promotion of enthusiasm and motivation for learning							✓	✓	✓		
Reflective practice				✓				✓			
Respect			✓			✓		✓	✓		
Risk-taking					✓						
Sense of humor									✓		
Social interactions with students/others			✓	✓				✓	✓		
Student-centeredness				✓	✓		✓				
Warmth					✓			✓			
What the teacher is like as a person	✓					✓		✓	✓		

As part of Combs’ (1969) *Florida Studies in the Helping Professions*, Gooding conducted a study on the *Perceptual Organization of Effective Teachers*. He described effective teachers as those who perceived themselves as *able rather than unable, with people rather than apart, worthy rather than unworthy, wanted rather than unwanted, and dependable rather than undependable*. Seeing the teacher as a person, while at the same time describing the self-as-instrument, Combs continued to expand on the concept that a teacher is a “unique human being who has learned to use himself effectively and efficiently to carry out his own and society’s purposes in the education of others” (Combs, Blume, Newman, & Wass, 1974, p. 8). In step

with the work of Combs, *beliefs about others, empathy, and a positive attitude about self and others* are examples of relevant dispositions (Usher, Usher, & Usher, 2003).

Caring and respect are examples of dispositions that are often found in the literature related to effective teachers (Noddings, 2005; Stronge, 2010). Teven and McCroskey (1996) studied the role of *perceived caring* in teacher-student relationships. While “actual” caring may be preferred, the perception that the teacher cares may be more significant to the student. A Likert-type questionnaire was given to 235 college students to assess their instructors’ dispositions, including caring, responsiveness, empathy, and understanding. Results of the survey showed students who perceived the instructor as more caring tended to rate that instructor higher on evaluations, reported having a more positive outlook on the content of the course, and reported they learned more in the course.

Further evidence of the role played by creating a *caring learning community* was demonstrated when Bulach, Brown, and Potter (1998) reported that evidence of caring was important in building trust, and trust was necessary to support learner risk-taking. To support this risk-taking, the researchers sought to identify caring factors that lead to the development of trust. A total of 116 graduate students in an educational administration program were asked to describe their actions that conveyed *caring* to students. They ultimately identified 26 behaviors that were formed into a questionnaire of Likert-type items and administered to 70 graduate students in another group. While a number of behaviors were identified, each behavior could be grouped into one of five categories: (a) ability to reduce anxiety, (b) willingness to listen, (c) rewarding of appropriate behavior, (d) being a friend, and (e) appropriate use of positive and negative criticism. The authors believed that by practicing these behaviors a *caring learning community*, complete with increased learning, is created (Bulach, Brown, & Potter, 1998).

The bonds between teacher and student are strong, though perhaps difficult to “pin down.” The relationship between teacher and student is critical to this bonding. In their study of teacher education students, Aagaard and Skidmore (2002) asked students to describe their “best” and “worst” teachers. The results from the 112 Teacher Education students who returned informed consents were used. These students were asked to describe, in writing, their best and worst teachers elementary through high-school. Those teachers regarded as “best” were those who exhibited a student-centeredness, with “teaching methodology” listed as the next highest

theme. Those teachers regarded as “worst” were those who were seen as weak in their teaching methodology, with student-centeredness as a secondary flaw.

Research on impressions of their teachers and teacher-caring is not limited to graduate students or teacher education students. Middle school students were studied to examine their perceptions of caring teachers (Ferreira, 2000). Five academic teams totaling 101 students were asked to identify those peers they felt were most caring or uncaring. These ratings, along with teacher ratings, resulted in an unknown smaller body of students who were then interviewed. These findings were broken into behaviors related to content and pedagogy, along with those related to the fostering of teacher-student relationships. In the first area, students related that caring teachers were those who helped with work, explained assignments, and took an active role in the room (walking around, asking questions, etc.). Good classroom management was seen as something a caring teacher would exhibit. Teacher-student relationships were seen as being facilitated by those teachers who treated students with respect and viewed them as individuals. One important note was made through the study: that students and adults may see “caring” differently. What may be seen as important to one group may not be seen that way by another.

Teacher Dispositions and Student Outcomes

Students perceived to be higher achievers are called on more; they are pushed, they are prodded for a response. Lower achieving students are called on less, with less expected from their responses. Partially as a response to this, Sam Kerman, with assistance from the Los Angeles County Schools Office, was involved in developing a staff development program that addressed the effects of teacher expectations on student achievement (Kerman, 1979). This program, called Equal Opportunity in the Classroom (EOC), became one of the most popular staff development programs in place at the time. One of the underlying tenets of the program involved the assurance that through careful teacher training, all students received the same quantity and quality of interactions between teacher and student. This program was later referred to as TESA (Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement) and centered on 15 classroom behaviors identified as being used more frequently with perceived “high” achievers versus perceived “low” achievers. Though it remained popular for a number of years, research on TESA training showed the program failed to reflect the desired changes in teacher behaviors (Gottfredson, Marciniak, Birdseye, & Gottfredson, 1995).

While research has supported the position that *the teacher* has a significant effect on student achievement (Hattie, 2003; Marzano, 2007; Sanders & Rivers, 1996), the question of the relationship between dispositions and student outcomes is one that may lack a conclusive answer. The dispositions a teacher may have toward teaching and learning can exert a range of influences in the school setting. While teacher attitudes, beliefs, and practices may have an impact on student achievement (Palardy & Rumberger, 2008), little literature was found to show a direct link to the hard variables of student achievement (grades, performance, or standardized test scores). Stronge (2010) observed [that] “[d]espite the solid evidence on teacher qualities that so many researchers have assembled over the past several decades, there is no single set of teacher attributes that we can definitely point to and say: If a teacher has quality X, she will be an effective teacher” (p. 72).

Despite the lack of conclusive evidence to tie dispositions directly to achievement, it remains important to acknowledge the effect of dispositions on variables that might *influence* student achievement. As role models, the likes and dislikes, the interests, and the priorities a teacher may convey to students play a part in shaping the student. Success in the classroom may be attributed to the interest shown or motivation given by the teacher (Stronge, 2010). If the teacher believes the student can succeed, this may influence the teacher’s behavior and, in turn, have an impact on that student’s success (Marzano, 2007). Olatunde (2009) reminded us that “how they [teachers] behave and how they interact with students can be more paramount than what they teach. In a nutshell, teachers’ attitudes [dispositions] directly affect students’ attitudes [dispositions]” (p. 364).

Where the teacher focuses enthusiasm and positive attitude matters; being positive toward students isn’t enough when considering effects on student performance. Mayberry (1970) studied the variables of teacher attitudes towards a course and interpersonal attitudes directed toward students and the resulting effect on achievement. Highest scores were seen where the instructor attitudes were positive toward the course and toward the students. The greatest effect (and lowest level of student performance) noted was that of a negative teacher attitude toward course material, while still exhibiting a positive attitude toward students.

Students view personal characteristics of teachers as essential in facilitating their learning. The results on a teacher questionnaire as part of a study by Acikgoz (2005), given to 181 high school students enrolled in 4 different schools in Turkey, underscored the belief that

pedagogical and other professional characteristics are insufficient in creating a positive learning environment. More *personal* characteristics of the teachers were seen as influential. “Indeed, when you look at the data gathered through all of the sections, it is not difficult to conclude [that] who the teacher is and what they are like as a person are..., the most essential determinants...[of] attitudes... [toward] learning for many pupils...” (p. 112).

“Successful teachers” share common dispositions. In their study of successful teachers (identified by principals as successful teachers of high-performing students), Thompson, Ransdell, and Rousseau (2004) used the Teacher Quality Measure (TQM) to record teacher behaviors within the group they observed. The “master teachers” modeled respectful communication, had classrooms filled with literature, engaged students in learning, and enforced classroom rules. These dispositions were observed in at least 85% of the situations Thompson, Ransdell, and Rousseau (2004) studied.

Dispositions and Teacher Preparation Programs

Colleges and universities are now more aware of dispositions and are embedding them in their training programs for pre-service teachers as a result of changes by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). Some teacher preparation programs have identified dispositions their teachers-to-be should embody. As one example, the education faculty of St. Norbert College believes that their teacher candidates should be dedicated, principled, creative, proactive, strategic, inquisitive, courageous, empathetic, enthusiastic, equitable, open-minded, and respectful (St. Norbert College, 2011).

Assessment of dispositions in teacher preparation programs. Assessment of the dispositions of pre-service teachers is required by accrediting associations (INTASC, 2010; NCATE/CAEP, 2010; TEAC, 2014). These assessments are used for two purposes: (a) to either deny entrance or remove those lacking a dispositional “fit,” or (b) to identify those areas in which further experiences or reflection might need to be incorporated into the student’s program to foster the development of the desired dispositions (Wirtz, Erickson, & Hyndman, 2004). The question of assessment is influenced by the position that the dispositions are innate or that they may be something that can be acquired (Aagaard & Skidmore, 2002). If innate, what are the

screening methods used? If they are learned, what are the experiences or strategies used to impart the “desired” dispositions?

The assessment of dispositions as relates to professional accreditation should not rely on hunch or supposition, but on more defined standards. It is acceptable to assess that which candidates are given through training and instruction (knowledge, skills, and understanding), or on observable qualities related to the job (responsibility and honesty). Those characteristics having a questionable relationship to classroom performance (being shy vs. being gregarious) may not be acceptable areas to assess (Damon, 2005).

Disposition assessment as a filter for admission or completion. The assessment of dispositions may be used to limit admission to a teacher education program or to prohibit completion of the program. It may be in the best interest of the pre-service teacher, the teacher preparatory institution, and the children to be served to sort the candidate pool for those with the most congruent dispositions and encourage their candidacy, while discouraging those with poor alignment (Mack, 2005; Wasicsko, 2004a).

The application of barriers to admission and completion of teacher preparation programs has legal implications. Candidates may question the validity of using dispositions as a means of preventing them from achieving their educational goals. To overcome this problem, some institutions have developed rubrics for a number of desirable candidate dispositions (Wasicsko, 2004a) and developed policies indicating that the dispositions and rubrics are established as expectations in their programs (Richardson & Onwuegbuzie, 2003). This is done not only to foster the level of agreement between the expectations of the institution and the observed performance of the candidate, but also to reduce the amount of litigation that might proceed from a lack of such agreement (Wilkerson, 2006). Using a comprehensive assessment tool, the dispositions of teacher applicants are evaluated in an effort to provide the reviewer with the best possible information regarding the selection of teachers who possess the characteristics required for effective teaching (Wasicsko, 2002).

Disposition assessment to prescribe further experience or reflection. Dispositions are thought, by some, to be attainable, fostered, nurtured, or, otherwise developed (Maylone, 2002; Raths, 2001; Usher, 2004; Weiner, 2005; Weiner & Cohen, 2003). While some programs may use assessments of dispositions prior to admission, others incorporate dispositions throughout the program, requiring students to demonstrate certain dispositions at multiple points in their

experience (Columbus State University, 2015). Indices, interviews, checklists, and self-journals have been developed in colleges and universities to assess particular dispositions; portfolios, scenarios, or prompts might be helpful in making judgments about dispositions (Mullin, 2003; Wasicsko, 2004a; Weiner & Cohen, 2003). In those instances where growth is required, a disposition improvement plan or other supplemental experiences may be constructed to remediate deficits in an area prior to certification (Freeman, 2003; Harrison, Smithey, & Weiner, 2004; Raths, 2001; Richardson & Onwuegbuzie, 2003; Schulte, Edick, Edwards, & Mackiel, 2004; Wasicsko, 2002).

The position that anyone can make changes for the better if only given the right opportunities and experiences and that specific qualities can be fostered by identifying them and working them into a teacher's "persona" is contrary to the belief that dispositions are fixed or unchangeable (Koeppen & Davison-Jenkins, 2007). Proper dispositions can and will develop when individuals are in a setting in which they are free to grow; one in which the individual feels loved, wanted, and respected. Specific opportunities can contribute to the growth and development of dispositions (Stewart & Davis, 2005). These points-of-view are also referred to in the literature as having an open or fixed mindset (Dweck, 2006). The open mindset would hold that change can take place, that consideration of other ideas, or behaviors, may be possible.

It is in this context of developing dispositions that Breese and Nawrocki-Chabin (2003) conducted a study of pre-service teachers. Participants videotaped their instruction and, selecting a portion, completed an evaluation matrix with four categories: (a) body language, (b) language use (voice, tone, and rate), (c) classroom practice, and (d) curriculum choices or the ability to adapt text to the lesson. After completing the matrix for his or her own instruction, each participant evaluated a partner's videotape using the same matrix. Peers videotaped interviews with each other. As a final response, the pre-service teachers were asked to reflect on their experience in writing and produce a dispositional goal. By using the videotapes, students were able to examine their own body language, expression, proximity, and eye contact. The researchers looked for common responses from the pre-service teachers and noted that the pre-service teachers could identify their observable dispositions and could dialogue with peers regarding differences between the dispositions observed and the ones desired. (Did they try to convey one thing, yet signal another?) It was discovered that the development of intentional, effective dispositions could be accomplished as a part of a deliberate program with a variety of

experiences. Reflection on the experience was critical to the development and nurturing of effective dispositions.

Dispositions and teacher employment. The study of dispositions has implications that reach beyond teacher preparation. Directors of personnel, human resource departments, and hiring administrators may use dispositions when making employment decisions. While questions asked of candidates in interviews may be created by the interviewer or their institution, some interviewers turn to pre-made interview products to determine the suitability of a candidate for a position. The Teacher Perceiver Interview (TPI), a structured interview guide published by the Gallup Organization, is one such tool (Young & Delli, 2002). In the assessment of interview data collected with the TPI, an applicant's responses to open-ended questions are correlated with answers to those same questions given by those identified within a particular field as particularly competent. Wasicsko (2004b, 2006) advocated for more unusual, open-ended questions to assess whether or not a candidate would be a match for a position and further described a few questions designed to ascertain a candidate's dispositions toward self, students, and teaching. Questions Wasicsko (2006) suggested are:

1. How would your students describe you?
2. Describe a situation in which students you taught learned a significant lesson.
3. What kinds of problems do people bring to you?
4. If your life works out the best you can imagine, what will you be doing in five years?
5. How do you balance work and play in your life? (pp. 51-52)

Wasicsko (2005) believed the use of such questions could give insight into the presence of certain essential attitudes among those hired.

Whether or not a tool such as the TPI is used, or whether or not questions are generated by the interviewer at some point in the process, dispositions are being given more consideration in hiring decisions. According to Metzger and Wu (2008), nearly 2,000 school districts across the country have employed some sort of commercially available teacher interview instrument, with Cobb County in Georgia and Cedar Hill in Texas among them. Some universities have gone so far as to provide their graduates with a list of teacher qualities that prospective

employers might be seeking, along with the admonition to convey them in their interviews (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2006).

What dispositions do hiring administrators look for as they interview teacher candidates? Rike and Sharp (2009) examined the disposition ratings of 152 elementary principals in the Memphis City Schools. Of the 152 polled, 54 principals responded, creating a list of dispositions they felt applied to effective teachers. These teachers:

- adjusted or revised lesson plans as needed
- had a passion for teaching and working with children
- insured all children had a chance to achieve their best
- were accountable for student learning
- treated all students fairly while still recognizing differences
- worked professionally with colleagues, parents, and community
- recognized and valued diversity regarding student talents, perspectives, and cultures, adapting instruction accordingly
- committed to reflection, assessment, and self-assessment
- committed to the development of the whole child
- persisted in helping all children become successful, life-long learners
- recognized the value of intrinsic motivation in helping students develop the attitudes to become life-long learners
- demonstrated integrity and honesty. (Rike & Sharp, 2009)

These dispositions make up a part of the Early Childhood Behavior and Dispositions Checklist that is provided to teacher candidates at the University of Memphis and are used by faculty to help in their evaluation of those candidates (Rike & Sharp, 2009). This evaluation of dispositions is conducted at three different times, by three different instructors, of three different courses. The authors note that this evaluation can also take place any time difficulty is perceived that may need to be handled more formally.

Relevance: How This Study Grew From the Literature

The examined literature gave the researcher a general idea of desirable dispositions in a few clustered areas. Many desired dispositions can be tied to the teaching profession; some writers shared common elements related to student-centeredness, caring, respect, sense of self,

sense of humor, and a joy for teaching and learning. While sources exist related to dispositions of teachers and attempts to model, sift, or sew dispositions, what was lacking was greater insight into those dispositions sought by hiring administrators as they interviewed teacher candidates. It was this absence that drove the research questions.

Summary of Chapter II

In this chapter, a review was conducted of the variances in the definitions and applications of the term *disposition*, along with studies and commentary literature on the topic. The focus of the literature review fell into a closer examination of the definitions of dispositions, examples of dispositions, considerations of dispositions as they related to teacher preparatory institutions, and consideration of dispositions in hiring.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Planning and implementation of the study are described in this chapter. The *purpose of this study* was to seek input and consensus from those in the field (administrators who interview and hire teachers) as they identify dispositions they sought in candidates as they filled teaching vacancies. The two research questions are:

1. What do administrators believe are the critical dispositions that a teacher candidate must possess?
2. Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?

A Focus Group method provides the setting in which professionals in the field (school administrators) share their expertise related to the research questions. Results of this study may prove richly informative for teacher candidates and administrators, alike.

The Research Design

The study consisted of a Focus Group discussion centered on questions presented using a multi-round format. Final permission from the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board was granted in October, 2015, the panelists were contacted, and the focus group met on December, 29. The research questions used to generate responses from school administrators were presented in two phases, both conducted on the same date. In the first phase, a three-round procedure (Rounds A1, A2, and A3), referred to as “Phase A,” was used to gather input and consensus on the critical dispositions sought by administrators in a teacher candidate. In the second phase, a two-round procedure (Rounds B1 and B2), referred to as “Phase B,” was used to generate questions administrators might ask to determine if a candidate possesses the preferred dispositions. Details on the selection of the panel and the development and implementation of each round of the procedure follow.

Focus Group Panel Selection

As the study is designed to ascertain those dispositions sought by hiring administrators and the questions they might use to determine the presence of those dispositions, it was decided by the researcher and his advisor to apply the following criteria in selecting the panel:

1. The panelist must have been engaged in conducting teacher interviews at some point.
2. The panelist may be a current or former building-level or central-office administrator.

One of the primary researchers has served as a school administrator in a school division located in central Virginia. Identification of administrators invited to participate in the study was started by obtaining the names and contact information of the elementary, middle school, and high school principals and personnel directors or supervisors in the eleven school divisions currently participating in the Southside Middle School Athletic Conference. There were approximately 110 elementary, middle, and high school principals, personnel directors, or supervisors serving in the population at the time of the study. While this represents a more narrow range as compared to a national study, it is noted that as the school divisions included in the study are located in the same general geographic area, they are actually competing for the same teacher candidates.

Potential panelists were selected at random, contacted by phone, given a brief description of the study, and asked if they wished to be considered as a panelist (see Appendix A). Panelists were considered eligible for participation if they left their current or previous assignment and are still interested in being a part of the study. If a potential panelist declined participation, a replacement was selected at random from the remaining population. Replacement continued until at least one member from each group (elementary, middle, high, and central office) was selected or the populations were exhausted (see Appendix B). The expected number of panelists was 4-8. The final panel consisted of 5 current or former administrators, ranging in years of service from 4 to 27 years.

Phase A: The Identification of Teacher Dispositions Desired by School Administrators

Finding the best candidates for teaching positions has never been more important. While it is important to ascertain the knowledge, skills, or experience candidates may possess, there is another area of importance to be considered in the process, that of dispositions. This phase of

the research is intended to seek input and consensus on the dispositions preferred by hiring school administrators.

Field test for the focus group. A field test was conducted using the instrument in Appendix C to determine if the initial question asked would elicit data on the dispositions sought by administrators in hiring teachers. The instrument contained instructions, informed-consent information, a single content question (“From your training and experience, what critical dispositions must a teacher candidate possess?”), a question on the clarity of the instrument, and a question on the ease of use of the instrument.

Four individuals representing central office and building-level administrators were selected to respond to the field-test questionnaire. The individuals were purposefully selected because of proximity to the researcher, experience in interviewing, and the likelihood of response.

The responses from the field-test questionnaire were compiled into one list of dispositions with all reasonable responses being included and duplications being omitted or combined with similar responses. The responses were analyzed using the Maykut and Morehouse (1994) constant comparative method (described in detail below) to determine whether the responses fell within a broad range of categories of potential dispositions. A broad range of categories and dispositions would indicate that the instrument would most likely tap a broad range of categories and dispositions when administered to the panel. Clarity of the instrument and ease of use were assessed as well (see Appendix C). Once the field test was conducted and adjustments made to the instrument to improve clarity and ease of use, the final instrument was prepared for distribution to the panel. Dispositions generated from this field test will be included in the results of the study (see Appendix C).

Initial question posed to the focus group: Round A1. Round A1 is described in this section. Once the panelists are assembled and instructions have been given regarding the facility, breaks, directions for response, etc. the first of two questions will be posed to the group: “What critical dispositions must a teacher candidate possess?”

Administration of Round A1. Focus Group Panelists were given sticky notes and time in which to write a single disposition per note. Once all members of the group had indicated their completion (or 15 minutes passed, whichever was later), the responses were collected and reviewed by the group.

Analysis of Round A1 (dispositions) data. The constant comparative method of Maykut and Morehouse (1994) was used to examine the responses to Round A1. Using this inductive method, categories were created as the data were collected. The specific procedures in the process follow:

1. After reviewing the data several times, key themes were identified and written on flipchart paper, or acceptable substitute.
2. All items identified by the panelists were placed on sticky notes, one item per sticky note. Duplicate items were culled, repetitive items removed, and similar items were combined.
3. Each disposition was reviewed and successive dispositions were compared to the previous ones and grouped with those having similar meaning under the themes. If the new disposition was substantially different in meaning, it became a new column; exact or near-exact duplicates were discarded. In this way, dispositions that were similar to each other became clustered. New themes were created if items did not fit the original themes.
4. Once all dispositions had been posted, a final review was conducted to check for unclear or redundant entries. Those placed in a miscellaneous category and those placed in more than one column were reexamined for placement.
5. Even given the definition of disposition as used in the study, participants may have provided responses that failed to align perfectly and yet, were still included.

The dispositions, as refined by the Maykut and Morehouse (1994) procedure, became the basis for Round A2.

Initial question: Round A2. Round A2 is described in this section. This round consisted of the analysis of dispositions provided by the panel and an initial evaluation of the appropriateness of each disposition.

Administration of Round A2. In the first round, panelists were asked to indicate desired dispositions of teacher candidates. In the second round, the dispositions were numbered to ease in identification of each disposition, panelists were be given paper and were asked to indicate the degree to which each disposition is desirable in a teacher candidate using the following four-point rating scale: 1 = An undesirable disposition, 2 = A somewhat undesirable disposition, 3 = A somewhat desirable disposition, and 4 = A desirable disposition.

Analysis of Round A2 data. These ratings were compiled and shared with the panelists. As a means of reducing the number of dispositions, only those dispositions receiving “desirable” ratings by 80% or more of the participants were included in Round A3.

Initial Question: Round A3. Round A3 is described in this section. The round consisted of the further analysis of the data collected from the Focus Group.

Administration of Round A3. For the information of the participants, the highest and lowest rating, and percentage of the panelists rating the item as “desirable” was shown for each disposition that received a rating of four by the panelists in Round 2. Panelists were given a new sheet of paper and asked to review the data and to rate each listed disposition on the same four-point scale used in Round A2 (1 = An undesirable disposition, 2 = A somewhat undesirable disposition, 3 = A somewhat desirable disposition, and 4 = A desirable disposition). (If few items received a rating of “desirable” by the panelists, the criterion for selecting items was adjusted until an acceptable number of dispositions were achieved, as determined by the researcher and his advisor.)

Analysis of Round A3 data. The data from the Round A3 instrument were shared with the panel, including: highest and lowest rating, and percentage of panelists rating each disposition in each of the four categories (1 = An undesirable disposition, 2 = A somewhat undesirable disposition, 3 = A somewhat desirable disposition, and 4 = A desirable disposition) were calculated. As a means of further reducing this obtained list of dispositions, only those dispositions rated as “desirable” by 80% or more of the panelists were used in Phase B of the study. The development of this final list of desired dispositions concluded Phase A of the study.

Phase B: Identification of Questions Used to Identify Desired Teacher Dispositions

Where typical interview questions may address areas of candidate knowledge or experience, questions generated by panelists through this phase of the research were intended to discern the presence of the desirable dispositions identified in Phase A.

Second question posed to the focus group: Round B1. Round B1 is described in this section. Once the panelists were re-assembled and reminders had been given regarding the facility, breaks, directions for response, etc. the second of two questions was posed to the group:

“Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?”

Administration of Round B1. Focus Group Panelists were given sticky notes and time in which to write a question per note. Once all members of the group had indicated their completion (or 25 minutes had passed, whichever was later), the responses were collected and reviewed by the group.

Analysis of Round B1 data. In Round B1, panelists were asked to generate questions they might ask a teacher candidate to assess the presence of a desired disposition. The questions were grouped by disposition and one list of questions was compiled for each identified disposition. Duplicate questions were eliminated and unclear questions were revised if the intended meaning could be determined from the context. If the intended meaning was unclear for any question, the question was eliminated. Questions that did not address only one clear disposition (mutually exclusive) were eliminated, as well. Using the constant comparative method of Maykut and Morehouse (1994), the questions for each disposition were categorized to facilitate interpretation. This was the same procedure applied in the analysis of the data for Round A1 above. All of the questions that met the clarity, non-duplication, and mutual exclusivity criteria described above for each disposition were retained for Round B2.

Second question: Round B2. Round B2 (Interview Questions) is described in this section. The round consisted of the analysis of the data collected from the Focus Group panel relating to the questions asked to teacher candidates.

Administration of Round B2. In Round B2, panelists were given paper and asked to indicate the degree to which each question was an indicator of the presence of the identified disposition using a four-point rating scale: 1 = A poor question, 2 = A fair question, 3 = A good question, and 4 = An excellent question. Using this scale, a “poor” question is one that is unlikely to reveal a particular disposition. A “fair” question may reveal a disposition. A “good” question is likely to reveal a particular disposition. An “excellent” question is most likely to reveal a particular disposition.

Analysis of Round B2 data. Once data from the Round B2 had been gathered, the percentages for how panelists rated each question for each disposition were calculated. This list of questions will provide future interviewers with items to use in their interviews.

Summary of Chapter III

The methodology for conducting research using the Focus Group process was described in this chapter. A description of the process used to select the panelists for the study was presented, along with a brief description of each of the panelists. The five-step procedure for identifying dispositions and questions for assessing those dispositions was described. The procedure included a description of the development, administration, and analysis of data in each step in the process. The list of questions generated as a result of the study can be used as a guide to help teacher interviewers assess the dispositions of teacher candidates.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The data generated by this study are presented in this chapter. The *purpose of this study* was to seek input and consensus from those in the field (administrators who interview and hire teachers) as they identify dispositions they sought in candidates as they filled teaching vacancies. The two research questions were:

1. What do administrators believe are the critical dispositions that a teacher candidate must possess?
2. Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?

A total of five individuals participated in the Focus Group discussion, the results of which are presented here.

The Focus Group

The study consisted of a Focus Group discussion centered on open-ended questions presented using a multi-round format. The questions were used to generate responses from school administrators and were presented in two phases: In the first phase, a three-round procedure (Rounds A1, A2, and A3), referred to as “Phase A,” was used to gather input and consensus on the critical dispositions sought by administrators in a teacher candidate. In the second phase, a two-round procedure (Rounds B1 and B2), referred to as “Phase B,” was used to generate questions administrators might ask to determine if a candidate possessed the preferred dispositions.

Phase A: The Identification of Teacher Dispositions Desired by School Administrators

This phase of the research was intended to seek input and consensus on the dispositions sought by hiring school administrators.

Administration and analysis of Round A1. The panelists were assembled, instructions were given regarding the facility, breaks, directions for response, etc., and the first of two questions was posed to the group: “What critical dispositions must a teacher candidate possess?”

Using dispositions generated by the Field Study (see Appendix D) as a springboard, the participants were asked to answer the first of the open-ended research questions by providing dispositions of their own, writing each on a separate sticky note. Once all members of the group had indicated their completion (or 15 minutes had passed, whichever came later), the responses were collected and reviewed by the group. All dispositions identified by the panelists were collected and read aloud to the group. Duplicate items were culled and similar items were combined, with a theme heading created for that “group.” If the new disposition was substantially different in meaning, it became a new column; exact or near-exact duplicates were discarded. In this way, dispositions that were similar to each other became clustered. Dispositions that appeared to belong to more than one column were discussed further and placed in the most applicable group (see Table 2). New themes were created if dispositions did not fit the original themes. Participants generated 39 different dispositions that were grouped into six categories: beliefs about children (priorities); attitudes/beliefs and the willingness to act upon them; job-related skills; education-specific skills; structure; and personal attributes/traits.

Participants interacted and shared their thoughts throughout the process of reading and posting the submitted dispositions. They spoke openly in the comparison process as each new disposition was read. The group noted that the process of grouping the dispositions by themes highlighted the differences in the “types” of dispositions. Developed as categories/themes, it confirmed the earlier observation in this research that “dispositions,” in fact, were difficult to be grouped into any single category, or definition. Dispositions might be described as what someone *is* (Taylor & Wasicsko, 2000), who they *are as a person* (Stronge, 2002), what they *value* (Mullins, 2003), in addition to *what they do* (Freeman, 2003). In identifying desirable dispositions in the teacher candidates they might interview, the results developed by the group showed a greater number of dispositions were generated in the theme of “Personal attributes/traits” than in any of the other categories.

Table 2

Round A1: Panel Identification of Dispositions/Skills by Theme Grouping

THEMES	Beliefs about children/priorities	Attitudes/beliefs - willingness to act	Job-related skills	Education-specific skills	Structure	Personal attributes or traits
	DISPOSITIONS / SKILLS	All students can learn	Can handle crisis or incident	Communicates well	Subject matter knowledge	Organization
Values all students and staff		Ability to motivate	Team player (can do their part)	Understands curriculum	Multi-tasker	Self-motivated
Recognize importance of helping students set goals		"Whatever it takes" attitude	Plays well w/others (open minded)		Understands impact of planning	Energetic
Understands Diversity		High expectations	Problem finder			Positive
Loves Children		Life-Long learner	Problem solver			Coachable
Kids First		Growth mindset	Collaborative			Reflective
		Committed to impact the role of the teacher	Decision-maker			Professional
						Student appeal (*liked by students)
						Persistence
						Curious
					Patient	
					Empathetic	
					Confidence	
					Passion for teaching	

Dispositions highlighted by the group were not completely unique to this study with those mentioned by previous researchers including: empathy (Usher, Usher & Usher, 2003), positive attitude (Acikgoz, 2005; Hamacheck, 1969; Usher, Usher & Usher, 2003), and being reflective (Demmon-Berger, 1986; Stronge, 2002). Several of the themes/dispositions shared by the group also bore similarity to those revealed in the work of Rike and Sharp (2009) as they surveyed school administrators about what they looked for in the teachers they interviewed. The idea of a commitment to life-long learning, a passion for teaching, success for all students, and working well (professionally) within a community were dispositions held in common with the

group they studied. While the term “caring” was not mentioned specifically, many dispositions that might reflect caring were expressed (i.e., empathetic, loves children, kids first).

Administration and analysis of Round A2. The Round A2 instrument (see Appendix D) was created using the dispositions generated by the Focus Group in the previous round. The dispositions were listed by the groupings in the order in which they were shared in the discussion. From this list of dispositions, participants were given a worksheet and were asked to indicate the degree to which each disposition is desirable in a teacher candidate using the following four-point rating scale: 1 = An undesirable disposition, 2 = A somewhat undesirable disposition, 3 = A somewhat desirable disposition, and 4 = A desirable disposition. Focus Group participants used the rating scale to assess the desirability of the listed dispositions in the candidates they interviewed (see Table 3). All of the participants rated each of the 39 generated dispositions with only those dispositions rated “desirable” by 80% or more of the participants being used in Round A3. Using this scale, the total number of desirable dispositions was narrowed to 19. The results from this initial ranking followed the previously noted trend of a majority of the dispositions falling in the theme of “Personal attributes/traits.” Themes that appeared to lose the most support in this initial ranking included: “Educational skill,” which lost 2 of 2 dispositions; “Structure,” which lost 2 of 3 dispositions; and “Attitudes/beliefs-willingness to act,” which lost 5 of 7 dispositions.

Table 3

Round A2: Panel Initial Rating of Dispositions/Skills by Theme Grouping

Theme	Disposition	Ratings			
		1	2	3	4
Beliefs about children/priorities	All students can learn				100%
	Values all students and staff				100%
	Recognizes importance of helping students set goals			80%	20%
	Understands diversity			20%	80%
	Loves children				100%
	Kids First				100%

(continued)

Table 3 (cont.)

Theme	Disposition	Ratings			
		1	2	3	4
Attitudes/beliefs - willingness to act	Can handle crisis or incident			40%	60%
	Ability to motivate				100%
	"Whatever it takes" attitude			40%	60%
	High expectations				100%
	Life-Long learner			60%	40%
	Growth mindset			40%	60%
	Committed to impact the role of the teacher			60%	40%
	Communicates well				100%
	Team player (can do their part)			60%	40%
	Plays well w/others (open minded)			20%	80%
Job-related skills	Problem finder			100%	
	Problem solver			40%	60%
	Collaborative			60%	40%
	Decision-maker			20%	80%
Education-specific skills	Subject matter knowledge			60%	40%
	Understands curriculum			60%	40%
	Organization			60%	40%
Structure	Multi-tasker			20%	80%
	Understands impact of planning			60%	40%

(continued)

Table 3 (cont.)

Theme	Disposition	Ratings			
		1	2	3	4
Personal attributes or traits	Flexible				100%
	Self-motivated				100%
	Energetic				100%
	Positive				100%
	Coachable			60%	40%
	Reflective			60%	40%
	Professional			60%	40%
	Student appeal				100%
	Persistence			40%	60%
	Curious			80%	20%
	Patient			20%	80%
	Empathetic			20%	80%
	Confidence			60%	40%
	Passion for teaching				100%

Administration and analysis of Round A3. The Round A3 instrument (see Appendix D) was created using the dispositions generated by the Focus Group in the previous round. The dispositions were listed by the groupings in the order in which they were shared in the discussion. From this list of dispositions, participants were given a worksheet and were asked to indicate the degree to which each disposition is desirable in a teacher candidate using the following four-point rating scale: 1 = An undesirable disposition, 2 = A somewhat undesirable disposition, 3 = A somewhat desirable disposition, and 4 = A desirable disposition. Focus Group participants used the rating scale to assess the desirability of the listed dispositions in the candidates they interviewed (see Table 4). All five of the participants rated each of the 19 remaining dispositions with only those dispositions rated “desirable” by 80% or more of the participants being used in Round B1. Using this scale, the total number of desirable dispositions remained at 19, with the group expressing satisfaction with the final determination.

Table 4

Round A3: Final Panel Rating of Dispositions/Skills by Theme Grouping

Theme	Disposition	Ratings			
		1	2	3	4
Beliefs about children/Priorities	All students can learn				100%
	Values all students and staff				100%
	Understands diversity			20%	80%
	Loves children				100%
	Kids First				100%
Attitudes/beliefs - willingness to act	Ability to motivate				100%
	High expectations				100%
Job-related skills	Communicates well				100%
	Plays well w/others (open minded)				100%
	Decision-maker				100%
Structure	Multi-tasker			20%	80%
Personal attributes or traits	Flexible				100%
	Self-motivated				100%
	Energetic				100%
	Positive				100%
	Student appeal				100%
	Patient				100%
	Empathetic			20%	80%
	Passion for teaching				100%

Phase B: Identification of Questions Used to Identify Desired Teacher Dispositions

Where typical interview questions may address areas of candidate knowledge or experience, questions generated by panelists through this phase of the research were intended to discern the presence of the desirable dispositions identified in Phase A.

Administration and analysis of Round B1. Following a short break, the participants were reassembled and the second of the two open-ended research questions was posed to the group: “Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?”

Focus Group Panelists were given sticky notes and time in which to write a question per note (see Table 5).

Table 5

Round B1: Initial Questions to Ascertain Candidate Dispositions/Skills by Theme Grouping

DISPOSITIONS	QUESTIONS
Beliefs about children... importance/priorities	
1. Belief that all students can learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How do you view the abilities of students in your classroom – and how do you respond to those who may be unsuccessful? -What would be your approach when working with a student who had been retained? -What is your philosophy on student learning? -What are your beliefs about student learning? <u>Can all students learn?</u> Why or why not?
2. Values all students and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What do you see as the role of classified staff in students’ success? -In what ways do you feel students and staff contribute to your success as a teacher? (Or lack, thereof) -What kinds of value do students and staff bring to school? -In your belief system, what do you believe about students? Staff?
3. Understanding of diversity/differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How would you address student success in a diverse classroom? In a collaborative classroom? -What opportunities have you provided to your students to express individual differences in the classroom? -Talk to me about student success in the classroom dealing with different cultures... -Tell me about diversity – and, as a teacher, how do you accommodate for that? -Explain your ideas on dealing with diversity in the classroom...
4. Loves children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How do you handle the difficult student in your class? -What is it about the growth and development of children that you find most interesting? -Tell me why you became a teacher... -What are some kid-friendly activities that you do?

(continued)

Table 5 (cont.)

DISPOSITIONS	QUESTIONS
Beliefs about children... importance/priorities	
5.Kids first (decisions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What are your priorities in your classroom? -How do you accommodate the needs of your students? -What does the term “kids first” mean to you?
6.Ability to motivate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How do you encourage the underachiever? -What ideas do you have relating to motivating students to learn? -How do you motivate the unmotivated? -How do you motivate students to do their work? -How would you excite a reluctant learner?
7.High expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How do you establish expectations for performance in your classroom? -How would you ensure success for all students? -If you teach 100 students/day, how many would be successful...explain the process. -What kind of expectations do you have for yourself? Your students? Why? -Do you believe we should have high expectations for every student? Explain.
Job-related skill (ANY area)	
8.Communicates well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What strategies do you use to keep parents informed? -Tell me about your last written communication to a parent. -Tell me about successful parent-teacher meetings. -Ask for a writing sample on a given topic.
9.“Plays well” with others (open minded)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What role do you assume when on a team project? -How important is it to you to work within a grade level or subject area team to be successful? -What are some characteristics of a team? How does this apply to teaching? -Do you like working in a team, or alone? Explain. -How can you become an effective part of a team?
10.Decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -When facing a difficult choice, how would you go about developing a course of action? -What steps do you take before making a decision? -Scenario: all at once...an angry parent calls, the Superintendent is on the phone, and a fight breaks out... Explain how you would handle this. -Describe your decision-making process.
Structure	
11.Multi-tasker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How do you organize your day/calendar to address the variety of the needs of your students and the requirements of your job? -Would you consider yourself a multi-tasker? If so, would you give an example? -Well-differentiated instruction requires that several things take place at once in your class. What would that look like? -How are you able to handle all the responsibilities in a day?
Personal attributes/traits	
12.Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How would you respond to an unexpected change in a schedule? -How flexible would you consider yourself? Give an example. -How important is it important to be flexible as an instructor? -Your lesson is constantly interrupted by the intercom; how would you handle this? -Only half of your class shows up today. What do your plans look like?

(continued)

Table 5 (cont.)

DISPOSITIONS	QUESTIONS
	Personal attributes/traits (continued)
13.Self-motivated	-When facing a need in your classroom (material or instructional), how would you proceed? -What drives your desire for success? -How important is being self-motivated to a teacher? -What motivates you?
14.Energetic	-(observed) -How would others describe your level of energy on a scale of 1 – 10? -Describe how students would perceive your teaching style: Cool, Energetic, or Authoritarian...and why. -How would I know you are excited about teaching?
15.Positive	-(observed) -Do you see problems as an opportunity or a setback? Explain. -You always seem to get the new kids in school. How do you feel?
16.Student appeal	-What strategies do you employ to make connections with students/parents and how do you feel you are viewed? -Give me three examples of what is trending in the lives of your students. -What words would students use to describe you?
17.Patient	-How do you approach working with a low-performing student? -How would you exercise patience when dealing with an individual? -I am not going to “get” your lesson the first time. How will you teach me?
18.Empathetic	-How do approach working with a low-performing student? -What is it about your students that you feel they struggle with the most OUTSIDE of academics? -As a teacher, how does empathy play a role? -I just lost my mom and I’m in your class...how can you help me? -Describe a situation when you have empathized with a student?
19.Passion for teaching	-(observed) -Tell me why you want to teach.

Once 25 minutes had passed, participants were asked to finish up and the responses were collected and reviewed by the group. Only one participant failed to have at least one question for each of the identified dispositions.

The questions were grouped by disposition and one list of questions was compiled for each identified disposition. Duplicate questions were eliminated and unclear questions were revised for clarity. Using the constant comparative method of Maykut and Morehouse (1994), the questions for each disposition were held up to the previous question for consideration as a unique or duplicated question. This is the same procedure applied in the analysis of the data for Round A1. All of the questions that met the clarity, non-duplication, and mutual exclusivity criteria described above for each disposition were retained for Round B2. In addition to

questions asked directly to teacher candidates, participants indicated that the dispositions of energetic, positive, and a passion for teaching might somehow be observed by the interviewer throughout the interview. No specific methods were indicated by the Focus Group participants beyond general appearance, body language, rate of speech, or ability to convey/emote regarding these particular dispositions.

Administration and analysis of Round B2. Using the list of questions provided In Round B1, panelists were given a worksheet (see Appendix D) and were asked to indicate the degree to which each question was an indicator of the presence of the identified disposition using a four-point rating scale: 1 = A poor question, 2 = A fair question, 3 = A good question, and 4 = An excellent question. Using this scale, a “poor” question is one that is unlikely to reveal a particular disposition. A “fair” question may reveal a disposition. The questions were numbered to facilitate this process. A “good” question is likely to reveal a particular disposition. An “excellent” question is most likely to reveal a particular disposition. The results of this rating process are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Round B2: Rating of Questions to Ascertain Candidate Dispositions/Skills by Theme Grouping

DISPOSITIONS	QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4
Beliefs about children... importance/priorities					
1. Belief that all students can learn	-How do you view the abilities of students in your classroom – and how do you respond to those who may be unsuccessful?			20%	80%
	-What would be your approach when working with a student who had been retained?			60%	40%
	-What is your philosophy on student learning?		20%	60%	20%
	-What are your beliefs about student learning? <u>Can all students learn?</u> Why or why not?			60%	40%
2. Values all students and staff	-What do you see as the role of classified staff in students’ success?		20%	40%	40%
	-In what ways do you feel students and staff contribute to your success as a teacher? (Or lack, thereof)			40%	60%
	-What kinds of value do students and staff bring to school?			60%	40%
	-In your belief system, what do you believe about students? Staff?		40%	60%	

(continued)

Table 6 (cont.)

DISPOSITIONS	QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4
Beliefs about children... importance/priorities					
3.Understanding of diversity/differences	-How would you address student success in a diverse classroom? In a collaborative classroom?			80%	20%
	-What opportunities have you provided to your students to express individual differences in the classroom?			40%	60%
	-Talk to me about student success in the classroom dealing with different cultures...		20%	80%	
	-Tell me about diversity – and, as a teacher, how do you accommodate for that?		20%	40%	40%
	-Explain your ideas on dealing with diversity in the classroom...			60%	40%
4.Loves children	-How do you handle the difficult student in your class?			40%	60%
	-What is it about the growth and development of children that you find most interesting?			40%	60%
	-Tell me why you became a teacher...			20%	80%
	-What are some kid-friendly activities that you do?		20%	60%	20%
5.Kids first (decisions)	-What are your priorities in your classroom?			60%	40%
	-How do you accommodate the needs of your students?			80%	20%
	-What does the term “kids first” mean to you?			20%	80%
Attitude/Beliefs – willingness to act					
6.Ability to motivate	-How do you encourage the underachiever?			20%	80%
	-What ideas do you have relating to motivating students to learn?			40%	60%
	-How do you motivate the unmotivated?			20%	80%
	-How do you motivate students to do their work?			60%	40%
	-How would you excite a reluctant learner?			20%	80%
	-How do you establish expectations for performance in your classroom?			40%	60%
7.High expectations	-How would you ensure success for all students?			40%	60%
	-If you teach 100 students/day, how many would be successful...explain the process.		20%	40%	40%
	-What kind of expectations do you have for yourself? Your students? Why?			20%	80%
	-Do you believe we should have high expectations for every student? Explain.			60%	40%

(continued)

Table 6 (cont.)

DISPOSITIONS	QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4
Job-related skill (ANY area)					
8.Communicates well	-What strategies do you use to keep parents informed?			20%	80%
	-Tell me about your last written communication to a parent.			60%	40%
	-Tell me about successful parent-teacher meetings.			20%	80%
	-Ask for a writing sample on a given topic.				100%
9.“Plays well” with others (open minded)	-What role do you assume when on a team project?			80%	20%
	-How important is it to you to work within a grade level or subject area team to be successful?		20%	20%	60%
	-What are some characteristics of a team? How does this apply to teaching?			60%	40%
	-Do you like working in a team, or alone? Explain.			40%	60%
	-How can you become an effective part of a team?			20%	80%
	-When facing a difficult choice, how would you go about developing a course of action?			20%	80%
10.Decision making	-What steps do you take before making a decision?		20%	40%	40%
	-Scenario: all at once...an angry parent calls, the Superintendent is on the phone, and a fight breaks out... Explain how you would handle this.			60%	40%
	-Describe your decision-making process.			20%	80%
	Structure				
11. Multi-tasker	-How do you organize your day/calendar to address the variety of the needs of your students and the requirements of your job?			20%	80%
	-Would you consider yourself a multi-tasker? If so, would you give an example?		20%	20%	60%
	-Well-differentiated instruction requires that several things take place at once in your class. What would that look like?		20%	40%	40%
	-How are you able to handle all the responsibilities in a day?				100%

(continued)

Table 6 (cont.)

DISPOSITIONS	QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4
Personal attributes/traits					
12.Flexible	-How would you respond to an unexpected change in a schedule?			20%	80%
	-How flexible would you consider yourself? Give an example.		20%	20%	60%
	-How important is it important to be flexible as an instructor?		20%	20%	60%
	-Your lesson is constantly interrupted by the intercom; how would you handle this?		20%	40%	40%
	-Only half of your class shows up today. What do your plans look like?			80%	20%
	-When facing a need in your classroom (material or instructional), how would you proceed?				40%
13.Self-motivated	-What drives your desire for success?			20%	80%
	-How important is being self-motivated to a teacher?		20%	60%	20%
	-What motivates you?			40%	60%
	-(observed)				100%**
14.Energetic	-How would others describe your level of energy on a scale of 1 – 10?		20%	20%	60%
	-Describe how students would perceive your teaching style: Cool, Energetic, or Authoritarian...and why.			60%	40%
	-How would I know you are excited about teaching?			20%	80%
	-(observed)				100%**
15.Positive	-Do you see problems as an opportunity or a setback? Explain.			60%	40%
	-You always seem to get the new kids in school. How do you feel?			60%	40%
	-What strategies do you employ to make connections with students/parents and how do you feel you are viewed?				100%
16.Student appeal (liked by students)	-Give me three examples of what is trending in the lives of your students.			20%	80%
	-What words would students use to describe you?			20%	80%

(continued)

Table 6 (cont.)

DISPOSITIONS	QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4
Personal attributes/traits					
17.Patient	-How do you approach working with a low-performing student?				100%
	-How would you exercise patience when dealing with an individual?			40%	60%
	-I am not going to “get” your lesson the first time. How will you teach me?			20%	80%
	-How do approach working with a low-performing student?			40%	60%
18.Empathetic	-What is it about your students that you feel they struggle with the most OUTSIDE of academics?			60%	40%
	-As a teacher, how does empathy play a role?			60%	40%
	-I just lost my mom and I’m in your class...how can you help me?				100%
	-Describe a situation when you have empathized with a student?			40%	60%
19.Passion for teaching	-(observed)				100%**
	-Tell me why you want to teach.				100%

*Note.*** Participants felt these dispositions, while valuable, might best be discerned through observation during an interview in addition to any questions that might be asked.

Once data from Round B2 were gathered, the percentages for how panelists rated each question for each disposition were determined. In the interest of not narrowing the pool of questions further, they were not subjected to an additional rating round, as were the dispositions in the earlier phase. Results shown in Table 6 can be used to advise anyone as they develop individual questions.

It is observed in the results that the style of questions generated by the participants were more open-ended in nature, perhaps not having any one correct answer. Questions focused on how the candidate would approach a situation, how they viewed a condition, or how they perceived their own possession of a disposition (i.e., “How flexible would you consider yourself?”). In this regard, the questions given might be further broken into two groups, explicit and implicit. In the first, by asking “What motivates you?” the candidate might give evidence they are self-motivated. In the other, one might get a sense of their decision-making process by asking them to describe the steps in resolving a situation where an angry parent is on the phone, at the same time the Superintendent calls, and a fight breaks out. Both types may prove useful to the interviewer.

Summary of Chapter IV

The data from two different phases of the Focus Group discussion were gathered and examined in this chapter. The Focus Group discussion was an open-ended instrument designed to address the two research questions relative to those dispositions sought by administrators in the teacher candidates they interview: “From your training and experience, (1) what critical dispositions must a teacher candidate possess, and (2) do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions? Through the discussion in the first Phase, 39 dispositions of teachers were initially identified. This number was reduced by the group to 19 following an additional round of rating. Through the identification of desirable dispositions in the teacher candidates they might interview, the Focus Group’s results showed a greater number of dispositions were generated and remained highly rated in the theme of “Personal attributes/traits” than in any of the other theme categories. It is also noted that while a definition of dispositions as used in this study was presented to the panel, some responses were provided by the panel and used while not fitting the definition, as given.

The second research question was addressed in the next phase of the study. In this phase, group participants generated questions designed to ascertain the presence of a desired disposition. The group then rated the generated questions. Questions developed by the participants could be seen as explicit or implicit in how they helped discern the presence of a desired disposition.

CHAPTER V

OVERVIEW, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

An overview of the study and results from Chapter IV, findings, implications for the practitioner, and suggestions for future research are presented in Chapter V.

An Overview of the Study.

The *purpose of this study* was to seek input and consensus from those in the field (administrators who interview and hire teachers) as they identify dispositions they sought in candidates as they filled teaching vacancies. The two research questions were:

1. What do administrators believe are the critical dispositions that a teacher candidate must possess?
2. Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?

The study setting consisted of a Focus Group discussion centered on open-ended questions presented using a multi-round format. The questions were used to generate responses from school administrators and were presented in two phases: In the first phase, a three-round procedure (Rounds A1, A2, and A3), referred to as “Phase A,” was used to gather input and consensus on the critical dispositions sought by administrators in a teacher candidate. In the second phase, a two-round procedure (Rounds B1 and B2), referred to as “Phase B,” was used to generate questions administrators might ask to determine if a candidate possessed the preferred dispositions.

Findings

Finding 1. Administrator panelists believe that critical teacher dispositions include their “beliefs about children and the importance/priorities” placed upon their responsibilities to them [children]. Eighty percent, or higher, consensus was reached on the following dispositions: they believe in the ability of all children to learn, they value all students and staff, they value diversity, and they put kids first. Helping students with goal-setting was listed initially but failed to reach a final favorable rating. Several findings of this study within

this theme area are consistent with those of other researchers examined within the scope of this study. Within this are dispositions that hold that all students can learn (NCATE, 2008), that students and staff are valued, that an understanding of diversity/differences exists (Weiner, 2005), that the candidate loves children, and places “kids first” as they make their decisions. Other researchers have shared this prioritizing of student needs, though perhaps by calling this “student-centeredness” (Aagaard & Skidmore, 2002; Demmon-Berger, 2006; Hamachek, 1969; Minor, et al., 2002).

Finding 2. Administrator panelists believe that critical teacher dispositions include beliefs about their “Attitudes and willingness to act in response to the needs of children.”

One-hundred percent consensus was reached on the following dispositions: the ability to motivate and having high expectations. Can handle crisis, a “whatever it takes attitude,” life-long learner, growth mindset, and committed to impact the role of the teacher were dispositions listed but failed to reach a final favorable rating. Several findings of this study within this theme area are consistent with those of other researchers. The ability to motivate (Stronge, 2002, 2010) and having high expectations (Kerman, 1979) have long been felt to have a positive impact on student achievement.

Finding 3. Administrator panelists believe that critical teacher dispositions include beliefs about “Job-related skills (any area).” This theme includes dispositions that may be applicable to employment outside of education in addition to being useful in the school setting. Eighty percent, or higher, consensus was reached on the following dispositions: communicates well, “plays well with others” (open-minded), and decision-maker. Being a team player, problem-finder, problem-solver, and being collaborative were listed dispositions failing to reach a final favorable rating. Where “playing well with others” (being open-minded), and having solid decision-making abilities are offered by this administrator panel, the ability to communicate well (Thompson, Ransdell, & Rousseau, 2004) has additional support in agreement in the literature examined as a part of this study.

Finding 4. Administrator panelists believe that teacher dispositions including beliefs about the candidate’s “Educational skill” were not critical and failed to rate them as desirable, overall. While dispositions were given in this area (subject matter knowledge and understanding curriculum), when asked to provide a rating, the panelists did not feel these dispositions were “critical” and failed to give them a favorable rating. This finding is consistent

with work of Acikgoz (2005) in expressing that certain professional dispositions were not as important as those that might be considered more personal.

Finding 5. Administrator panelists believe that critical teacher dispositions include their beliefs about “Structure.” While dispositions relating to organization and understanding the impact of planning were given in this theme-area, only the disposition relating to the ability to multi-task received a final “desirable” rating by 80% of the panel. Literature reviewed as a part of this study did not appear to support this finding.

Finding 6. Administrator panelists believe that critical teacher dispositions include their beliefs about the candidate’s “Personal attributes/traits.” Eighty percent, or higher, consensus was reached on the following dispositions: flexible, self-motivated, energetic, positive, student appeal (being liked by students), patient, empathetic, and having a passion for learning. Being coachable, professional, curious, persistent, and confident were given as somewhat desirable dispositions, though they did not remain in consideration once the panel had given their final ratings. The literature examined in the course of this study provided support for those dispositions found to be desirable, including: being flexible (Demmon-Berger, 2006; Hamachek, 1969), self-motivated (Minor, et al., 2002; Stronge, 2002, 2010; Thompson, Greer & Greer, 2004), energetic, positive (Acikgoz, 2002; Hamachek, 1969; Usher, Usher & Usher, 2004), patient, empathetic (Usher, et al., 2004), as well as being liked by their students (student appeal)(Pianta, 1999), and a passion for teaching (Hattie,2003; Minor, et al., 2002; Stronge, 2002, 2010; Thompson,et al, 2004). This theme area represents the largest, by comparison, of the groupings and reveals the understanding that many of those characteristics, those making us who we are, *the teacher as a person* (Stronge, 2002, 2010), may be perceived as having a greater influence on that what makes a candidate preferred over other skills or attributes.

Finding 7. Administrator panelists believe that questions may be asked of a teacher candidate in an effort to discern the presence of a desirable disposition. The Focus Group panel was able to create at least one question per disposition identified as an acceptable (Good or Excellent) question. This finding is consistent with the research reviewed as a part of this study. Questions and/or checklists have been developed and used to discern the presence of dispositions with teachers and students of education in a variety of settings (Rike & Sharp, 2009; University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 2013; Wasicsko, 2004b, 2005, 2006; Young & Delli, 2002). Questions provided by the panel for use in interviews have been compiled into a list (see Appendix E).

Finding 8. Administrator panelists believe that certain dispositions may be observed in teacher candidates (during the interview). This may, or may not, preclude any questions that may be asked. Panelists expressed that the dispositions relating to being energetic, positive, and having a passion for teaching might be something observable during the interview setting. These may or may not be present due to other factors (nervousness, fatigue, etc.), yet represent another way the administrator may discern the presence of a disposition. Research reviewed as a part of this study did not specifically mention observing specific dispositions during the actual interview.

Implications for Practice

While implications of the findings of this study can apply to teacher candidates, those who interview those candidates as they fill teacher vacancies, and those institutions of teacher preparation as they train teachers to meet the needs of school divisions nation-wide, those implications most relevant for school leaders are given here:

Implications for school leaders

Implication 1. School leaders should make decisions regarding those dispositions they seek in the candidates they choose to interview. Time and practice has shown that programs and priorities in Education may come and go. Whole language, direct-instruction, and open-classrooms, once buzzwords in the profession, rarely heard about today. A candidate who is well-versed in an area that will be obsolete in the near-future may not represent the wisest investment and there is no doubt that hiring the best teacher remains critically important (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). While the focus of this study was not purely a “Dispositions: Yes or No?” event, this study *is* designed from the point of view that interviewers have already accepted the importance of dispositions and **now need to consider which dispositions might be most relevant**. A determination of who the teacher is as a person has value (Stronge, 2010).

Implication 2. Having previously identified the dispositions considered desirable in a teacher candidate, school leaders should make decisions regarding the creation or compilation of questions designed to discern the presence of a specific desirable disposition. A study of the dispositions given in this work would be beneficial to the interviewer. Additionally, a study of the questions offered as intended to discern the presence of the desired disposition may prove useful and time-saving.

Implication 3. School leaders should utilize a set of open-ended questions when conducting interviews with teacher candidates. This implication is supported by research advocating the use of open-ended questions in interviews (Wasicsko 2004b, 2006; Young & Delli, 2002). This research has produced such a list shown in the previous chapter, but also provided as a Focus Group Instrument in Appendix E.

Recommendations for Future Research

Data on the desirable dispositions of new teacher candidates may be examined in other ways by considering the following:

- Replicate this study in the future with the same panelists to determine if a change in opinion has taken place.
- Replicate this study using a more homogeneous grouping of administrators: the same school division, the same level (elementary, middle, high, central office), or the same level of experience with interviewing. Doing this, check for similarities and differences between the groups.
- Replicate this study using other criteria for creating the groups: Special vs. Regular Education administrators, administrators from wealthy vs. poverty-stricken areas, or administrators from successful vs. struggling situations.

Conclusions

Many new teachers will be hired in the decades to come. A school administrator screening candidates for teaching positions is faced with a decision that can have long-term consequences for a community, a school, and thousands of children. Finding the best candidates for teaching positions has never been more important. A variety of questions centering on prior experience, knowledge, or expertise may be asked by those responsible for screening candidates, yet there is another area of importance to be considered in the process, that of dispositions.

As a result of this study, administrators may benefit from a greater understanding of dispositions when interviewing and making hiring decisions. Administrators will also benefit by greater knowledge of the questions asked to determine if a candidate possessed a particular disposition.

The research procedure used in this study utilized a focus group format to conduct a multi-round survey/discussion to obtain input and consensus on two questions: “From your training and experience, (1) what critical dispositions must a teacher candidate possess, and (2) can a person ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions?”

The focus group identified 19 dispositions within 5 theme groupings (see Appendix D). These groupings included: beliefs about children, attitudes/beliefs – willingness to act, job-related skill, structure, and other personal attributes/traits. Implications for practice were made and suggestions for future research were offered.

The focus group identified 74 questions, by theme groupings, designed to discern the presence of a specific desired disposition in the teacher candidate interviewed (see Appendix E). A matrix/overview of the study can be found in Appendix E. This overview relates the Research Questions to the Data/Findings and the Implications.

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APPENDICES

(It is important to note that while relevant text is included, headings, letterheads, and answer boxes used in actual correspondence or website directions may be omitted in these appendices.)

APPENDIX A
VIRGINIA TECH IRB DOCUMENTATION

Virginia Tech IRB Permission Memorandum

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 9, 2015
TO: Carol S Cash, Wesley W Eary
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires July 29, 2020)
PROTOCOL TITLE: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS’S IDENTIFICATION OF DESIRABLE DISPOSITIONS IN NEW TEACHER CANDIDATES: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY
IRB NUMBER: 14-455

Effective October 9, 2015, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the Amendment request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at: <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:
Approved As: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 2**
Protocol Approval Date: **May 23, 2014**
Protocol Expiration Date: **N/A**
Continuing Review Due Date*: **N/A**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

IRB Number 14-455 page 2 of 2 Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board

Date* OSP Number Sponsor Grant Comparison Conducted?

* Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.

APPENDIX B
PANELIST INFORMATION AND INITIAL CONTACT SCRIPT

Panelist Demographic Information Form

Participant	Levels of experience in administrative role				Total yrs admin
	ELEM	MIDDLE	HIGH	CENTRAL OFFICE	
1	X	X	X	X	27
2	X	X	X		19
3	X	X			24
4	X				4
5	X	X	X	X	25

General Script for Initial Phone Contact

Good afternoon!

Thank you so much for taking my call. My name is Wes Eary, most recently principal of the middle school in Amelia County. I'm part of a research team from Virginia Tech conducting research on those dispositions administrators seek when interviewing new teacher candidates. The pool of participants in this study consists of current or former administrators from divisions represented by the Southside Middle School Conference of which, as you may know, your division is a part. The study will be conducted by the use of a focus group made up of several of these administrators sharing their thoughts on the matter. The group will meet once, at a time and date convenient to the participants. Results of the discussion will be published and used for dissertation purposes. Can I count on your participation in this group?

Once they have agreed, I will read:

Informed Consent

This Focus Group discussion is conducted as a study of teacher candidate dispositions in education. Results of this study will be published and used for dissertation purposes.

As a participant in this part of the study, you are asked to respond to the directions and questions offered in the discussion. Other information on your participation follows:

- There is no compensation for participating in the study.
- There are minimal risks to you for participating. All data will be held in strict confidence, your name will not be used in any reports, and all data will be kept on password-protected computers by the researchers. The data will be destroyed when the report of the study is completed. Names and codes will be kept in a separate file from the data on password-protected computers by the researchers.
- You may withdraw from the study at any time.

This study has been reviewed by the VT Institutional Review Board for compliance with human subjects' protections. If you have questions about this study or Institutional Review Board rules and regulations, please contact any of the following:

- Wesley Eary, Researcher, Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech, weary@vt.edu, (804) 241-2025
- Carol Cash, Researcher, VirginiaTech, ccash48@vt.edu, (804) 836-3611
- David Moore, Chair, VT Institutional Review Board, moored@vt.edu, (540) 231-4991

A written copy of this will be provided at the time the Focus Group meets.

APPENDIX C
FIELD TEST DOCUMENTATION AND RESULTS

Field-Test Instrument for Round A1

Informed Consent

This is the first part of a study of teacher candidate dispositions in education. This part is an assessment of how well the first question in the study performs. Your responses will be used to make changes in the format and wording of the directions and the item in the questionnaire, as needed.

As a participant in this part of the study, you are asked to complete and return the questionnaire as requested below. Other information on your participation follows:

- There is no compensation for participating in the study.
- There are minimal risks to you for participating. All data will be held in strict confidence, your name will not be used in any reports, and all data will be kept on password-protected computers by the researchers. The data will be destroyed when the report of the study is completed. Participant codes are used to facilitate follow up of those not responding. Names and codes will be kept in a separate file from the data on password-protected computers by the researchers.
- You may withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, by not completing and returning the questionnaire. At that point, all data that were collected from you will be destroyed.

This study has been reviewed by the VT Institutional Review Board for compliance with human subjects' protections. If you have questions about this study or Institutional Review Board rules and regulations, please contact any of the following:

- Wesley Eary, Researcher, Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech, weary@vt.edu, (804) 241-2025
- Carol Cash, Researcher, VirginiaTech, ccash48@vt.edu, (804) 836-3611
- David Moore, Chair, VT Institutional Review Board, moored@vt.edu, (540) 231-4991

I have read and understand the above informed consent. All of my questions have been answered. I agree to complete and submit the questionnaire as requested in the directions. (If you mark "yes," please continue on to complete the questionnaire.)

- Yes.
 No.

Directions: This is a test of an instrument developed to identify *dispositions* of teacher candidates you would consider for employment. Please do the following:

1. Think about the qualities, beliefs, traits, or behaviors that you attribute to a high-quality teacher. Please do not include the professional teaching skills you look for in candidates; we are looking for the *softer* skills of the candidates, often referred to as *dispositions*.
2. Write these dispositions or qualities, beliefs, traits, or behaviors in the space below. Please start each item on a new line.
3. After identifying the dispositions, please help us assess the questionnaire by responding to the items following the box in which you recorded the dispositions.

Thank you for participating in this study.

Please record your identification number in the space provided.

ID Number:

In your professional opinion, what are the critical dispositions (qualities, beliefs, traits, or behaviors) a teacher candidate must possess to be employed in your school or school district/division?

Examples of potential dispositions follow:

(Behavior) Demonstrates care for the feelings of students.

(Belief) Thinks that gifted students deserve as much attention as struggling students.

(Quality) Perceives that there are multiple sides to controversial issues.

(Trait) Motivated to perform well as a teacher.

These are examples only. Don't try to identify the category to which your items belong; just list as many as readily come to mind, regardless of the category in which they may fit.

(Box for responses was here.)

1. Was the informed consent clear?

- No
 Yes

If you answered No, please indicate how you would change the informed consent.

(Box for responses was here.)

2. Are the directions for identifying your dispositions clear?

- No
 Yes

If you answered No, please indicate how the directions can be changed to clarify them.

(Box for responses was here.)

3. Overall, is the questionnaire easy to use?

- No
 Yes

If you answered No, please indicate how it might be changed to make it easier to use.

(Box for responses was here.)

Field Test Results

Empathetic without being a pushover
A sense of humor
The ability to quickly connect with students, parents, and staff members
Confidence
A positive attitude
Well spoken
Professional appearance
Dedication
Strong work ethic
Self-motivated

- 1-Passion for teaching, students, knowledge
- 2-Work ethic-commitment to- "whatever it takes"
- 3-Communication
- 4-Recognition and belief in the value and importance of the role of each individual
- 5-Thoughtfulness/critical thinking/strong decision making skills
- 6-Belief that all students can learn....
- 7-Professionalism - presentation, demeanor, etc.
- 8-strong teamwork/collaborative approach
- 9-self-confidence/sensitivity

Has a positive outlook
Sees challenges, not problems
Communicates well
Is motivating
Flexible
thinks children first
understand the curriculum
sees importance of well planned lesson
compassionate
Passionate
Has a confidence in their subject matter
gets along well with people
believes in diversity
can work well with different people
can manage multiple tasks
energetic
positive

APPENDIX D
FOCUS GROUP CONSENT AND INSTRUMENTS

Consent for Group Discussion

Informed Consent (to be provided to participants prior to the discussion)

This Focus Group discussion is conducted as a study of teacher candidate dispositions in education. Results of this study will be published and used for dissertation purposes.

As a participant in this part of the study, you are asked to respond to the directions and questions offered in the discussion. Other information on your participation follows:

- There is no compensation for participating in the study.
- There are minimal risks to you for participating. All data will be held in strict confidence, your name will not be used in any reports, and all data will be kept on password-protected computers by the researchers. The data will be destroyed when the report of the study is completed. Names and codes will be kept in a separate file from the data on password-protected computers by the researchers.
- You may withdraw from the study at any time.

This study has been reviewed by the VT Institutional Review Board for compliance with human subjects' protections. If you have questions about this study or Institutional Review Board rules and regulations, please contact any of the following:

- Wesley Eary, Researcher, Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech, weary@vt.edu, (804) 241-2025
- Carol Cash, Researcher, VirginiaTech, ccash48@vt.edu, (804) 836-3611
- David Moore, Chair, VT Institutional Review Board, moored@vt.edu, (540) 231-4991

By signing below, I have read and understand the above informed consent. All of my questions have been answered. I agree to participate as requested in the directions.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Focus Group Instrument: Discussion Questions

Round A1: “What critical dispositions must a teacher candidate possess?” Focus Group Panelists will be given sticky notes and time in which to write a single disposition per note. Once all members of the group have indicated their completion (or 15 minutes have passed, whichever is later), the responses will be collected and reviewed by the group.

Round A2: In the second round, the dispositions will be numbered to ease in identification of each disposition. Panelists will be given paper and are asked to indicate the degree to which each disposition is desirable in a teacher candidate using the following four-point rating scale: 1 = An undesirable disposition, 2 = A somewhat undesirable disposition, 3 = A somewhat desirable disposition, and 4 = A desirable disposition.

Round A3: The same question regarding the degree to which a disposition is desirable is asked but only of those dispositions receiving 80% “desirable” rating from the previous round.

Round B1: “Do administrators believe that a person can ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are the questions administrators can ask to determine if the candidates possess those dispositions?” Focus Group Panelists will be given sticky notes and time in which to write a question per note. Once all members of the group have indicated their completion (or 25 minutes have passed, whichever is later), the responses will be collected and reviewed by the group.

Round B2: In Round B2, panelists will be given paper and are asked to indicate the degree to which each question is an indicator of the presence of the identified disposition using a four-point rating scale: 1 = A poor question, 2 = A fair question, 3 = A good question, and 4 = An excellent question. Using this scale, a “poor” question is one which is unlikely to reveal a particular disposition. A “fair” question may reveal a disposition. The questions will be numbered to facilitate this process. A “good” question is likely to reveal a particular disposition. An “excellent” question is most likely to reveal a particular disposition.

Focus Group Instruments: Worksheets for Rounds A2, A3, and B2

Worksheet for Round A2

Initial Dispositions Rating

Theme	Disposition/Question	1	2	3	4
Beliefs about children...importance/priorities	Belief that all students can learn				
	Values all students and staff				
	Recognize importance of helping students set goals				
	Understanding of diversity/differences				
	Loves children				
	Kids first				
Attitude/Beliefs – willingness to act	Handle crisis incident parent or student				
	Ability to motivate				
	Work ethic “Do whatever it takes” to ensure opportunities				
	High expectations				
	Life-long learner				
	Growth mindset				
Job-related skill (ANY area)	Committed to impact of the role of the teacher				
	Communicates well				
	Team player (can do their part)				
	“Plays well” with others (open minded)				
	Problem finder				
	Problem solver				
	Collaborative				
Educational skill	Decision making				
	Subject matter knowledge				
Structure	Understand curriculum				
	Organization				
	Multi-tasker				
Personal attributes/traits	Understand impact of planning				
	Flexible				
	Self-motivated				
	Energetic				
	Positive				
	Coachable				
	Reflective				
	Professional				
	Student appeal				
	Persistence				
	Curious				
	Patient				
	Empathetic				
	Confidence				
Passion for teaching					

Worksheet for Round A3

Disposition Rating A3

Theme	Disposition/Question	1	2	3	4	
Beliefs about children...importance/priorities	1. Belief that all students can learn					
	2. Values all students and staff					
	3. Understanding of diversity/differences					
	4. Loves children					
	5. Kids first (decisions)					
Attitude/Beliefs – willingness to act	6. Ability to motivate					
	7. High expectations					
Job-related skill (ANY area)	8. Communicates well					
	9. “Plays well” with others (open minded)					
	10. Decision making					
Structure	11. Multi-tasker					
Personal attributes/traits	12. Flexible					
	13. Self-motivated					
	14. Energetic					
	15. Positive					
	16. Student appeal					
	17. Patient					
	18. Empathetic					
	19. Passion for teaching					

Worksheet for Round B2

Disposition/Question Rating

Theme	Disposition/Question	1	2	3	4	
<p>Beliefs about children... importance/priorities</p>	<p>1. Belief that all students can learn -How do you view the abilities of students in your classroom – and how do you respond to those who may be unsuccessful? -What would be your approach when working with a student who had been retained? -What is your philosophy on student learning? -What are your beliefs about student learning? <u>Can all students learn?</u> Why or why not?</p>					
	<p>2. Values all students and staff - What do you see as the role of classified staff in students’ success? - In what ways do you feel students and staff contribute to your success as a teacher? (Or lack, thereof) -What kinds of value do students and staff bring to school? - In your belief system, what do you believe about students? Staff?</p>					
	<p>3. Understanding of diversity/differences - How would you address student success in a diverse classroom? In a collaborative classroom? - What opportunities have you provided to your students to express individual differences in the classroom? -Talk to me about student success in the classroom dealing with different cultures... -Tell me about diversity – and, as a teacher, how do you accommodate for that? - Explain your ideas on dealing with diversity in the classroom...</p>					
	<p>4. Loves children - How do you handle the difficult student in your class? -What is it about the growth and development of children that you find most interesting? -Tell me why you became a teacher... -What are some kid-friendly activities that you do?</p>					
	<p>5. Kids first (decisions) - What are your priorities in your classroom? -How do you accommodate the needs of your students? -What does the term “kids first” mean to you?</p>					
<p>Attitude/Beliefs – willingness to act</p>	<p>6. Ability to motivate - How do you encourage the underachiever? -What ideas do you have relating to motivating students to learn? -How do you motivate the unmotivated? -How do you motivate students to do their work? -How would you excite a reluctant learner?</p>					
	<p>7. High expectations -How do you establish expectations for performance in your classroom? -How would you ensure success for all students?</p>					

	<p>-If you teach 100 students/day, how many would be successful...explain the process.</p> <p>-What kind of expectations do you have for yourself? Your students? Why?</p> <p>-Do you believe we should have high expectations for every student? Explain.</p>					
Job-related skill (ANY area)	<p>8.Communicates well</p> <p>- What strategies do you use to keep parents informed?</p> <p>-Tell me about your last written communication to a parent.</p> <p>-Tell me about successful parent-teacher meetings.</p> <p>-Ask for a writing sample on a given topic.</p>					
	<p>9.“Plays well” with others (open minded)</p> <p>- What role do you assume when on a team project?</p> <p>-How important is it to you to work within a grade level or subject area team to be successful?</p> <p>-What are some characteristics of a team? How does this apply to teaching?</p> <p>-Do you like working in a team, or alone? Explain.</p> <p>-How can you become an effective part of a team?</p>					
	<p>10.Decision making</p> <p>- When facing a difficult choice, how would you go about developing a course of action?</p> <p>-What steps do you take before making a decision?</p> <p>-Scenario: all at once...an angry parent calls, the Superintendent is on the phone, and a fight breaks out... Explain how you would handle this.</p> <p>-Describe your decision-making process.</p>					
Structure	<p>11.Multi-tasker</p> <p>- How do you organize your day/calendar to address the variety of the needs of your students and the requirements of your job?</p> <p>- Would you consider yourself a multi-tasker? If so, would you give an example?</p> <p>- Well-differentiated instruction requires that several things take place at once in your class. What would that look like?</p> <p>- How are you able to handle all the responsibilities in a day?</p>					
Personal attributes/traits	<p>12.Flexible</p> <p>- How would you respond to an unexpected change in a schedule?</p> <p>- How flexible would you consider yourself? Give an example.</p> <p>-How important is it important to be flexible as an instructor?</p> <p>- Your lesson is constantly interrupted by the intercom, how would you handle this?</p> <p>- Only half of your class shows up today. What do your plans look like?</p>					
	<p>13.Self-motivated</p> <p>- When facing a need in your classroom (material or instructional), how would you proceed?</p> <p>- What drives your desire for success?</p> <p>-How important is being self-motivated to a teacher?</p> <p>-What motivates you?</p>					

Personal attributes/traits (continued)	<p>14. Energetic - (observed) - How would others describe your level of energy on a scale of 1 – 10? - Describe how students would perceive your teaching style: Cool, Energetic, or Authoritarian..and why. - How would I know you are excited about teaching?</p>					
	<p>15. Positive - (observed) - Do you see problems as an opportunity or a setback? Explain. - You always seem to get the new kids in school. How do you feel?</p>					
	<p>16. Student appeal - What strategies do you employ to make connections with students/parents and how do you feel you are viewed? - Give me three examples of what is trending in the lives of your students. - What words would students use to describe you?</p>					
	<p>17. Patient - How do you approach working with a low-performing student? - How would you exercise patience when dealing with an individual? - I am not going to “get” your lesson the first time. How will you teach me?</p>					
	<p>18. Empathetic - How do approach working with a low-performing student? - What is it about your students that you feel they struggle with the most OUTSIDE of academics? - As a teacher, how does empathy play a role? - I just lost my mom and I’m in your class...how can you help me? - Describe a situation when you have empathized with a student?</p>					
	<p>19. Passion for teaching - (observed) - Tell me why you want to teach.</p>					

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTION LIST

Interview questions to be used by administrators

Theme: Beliefs about children... importance/priorities

Belief that all students can learn

- How do you view the abilities of students in your classroom – and how do you respond to those who may be unsuccessful?
- What would be your approach when working with a student who had been retained?
- What is your philosophy on student learning?
- What are your beliefs about student learning? Can all students learn? Why or why not?

Values all students and staff

- What do you see as the role of classified staff in students' success?
- In what ways do you feel students and staff contribute to your success as a teacher? (Or lack, thereof)
- What kinds of value do students and staff bring to school?

Understanding of diversity/differences

- How would you address student success in a diverse classroom? In a collaborative classroom?
- What opportunities have you provided to your students to express individual differences in the classroom?
- Talk to me about student success in the classroom dealing with different cultures...
- Tell me about diversity – and, as a teacher, how do you accommodate for that?

Loves children

- How do you handle the difficult student in your class?
- What is it about the growth and development of children that you find most interesting?

Kids first (decisions)

- Tell me why you became a teacher...
- What are some kid-friendly activities that you do?
- What are your priorities in your classroom?
- How do you accommodate the needs of your students?
- What does the term “kids first” mean to you?

Theme: Attitude/Beliefs – willingness to act

Ability to motivate

- How do you encourage the underachiever?
- What ideas do you have relating to motivating students to learn?
- How do you motivate the unmotivated?
- How do you motivate students to do their work?
- How would you excite a reluctant learner?

High expectations

- How do you establish expectations for performance in your classroom?
- How would you ensure success for all students?
- If you teach 100 students/day, how many would be successful...explain the process.
- What kind of expectations do you have for yourself? Your students? Why?
- Do you believe we should have high expectations for every student? Explain.

Theme: Job-related skill (ANY area)

Communicates well

- What strategies do you use to keep parents informed?
- Tell me about your last written communication to a parent.
- Tell me about successful parent-teacher meetings.
- Ask for a writing sample on a given topic.

Plays well" with others (open minded)

- What role do you assume when on a team project?
- How important is it to you to work within a grade level or subject area team to be successful?
- What are some characteristics of a team? How does this apply to teaching?
- Do you like working in a team, or alone? Explain.
- How can you become an effective part of a team?

Decision making

- When facing a difficult choice, how would you go about developing a course of action?
- What steps do you take before making a decision?
- Scenario: all at once...an angry parent calls, the Superintendent is on the phone, and a fight breaks out... Explain how you would handle this.
- Describe your decision-making process.

Theme: Structure

Multi-tasker

- How do you organize your day/calendar to address the variety of the needs of your students and the requirements of your job?
- Would you consider yourself a multi-tasker? If so, would you give an example?
- Well-differentiated instruction requires that several things take place at once in your class. What would that look like?
- How are you able to handle all the responsibilities in a day?

Theme: Personal attributes/traits

Flexible

- How would you respond to an unexpected change in a schedule?
- How flexible would you consider yourself? Give an example.
- How important is it important to be flexible as an instructor?
- Your lesson is constantly interrupted by the intercom, how would you handle this?
- Only half of your class shows up today. What do your plans look like?

Self-motivated

- When facing a need in your classroom (material or instructional), how would you proceed?
- What drives your desire for success?
- How important is being self-motivated to a teacher?
- What motivates you?

Energetic

- (observed)
- How would others describe your level of energy on a scale of 1 – 10?
- Describe how students would perceive your teaching style: Cool, Energetic, or Authoritarian..and why.
- How would I know you are excited about teaching?

15.Positive

- (observed)
- Do you see problems as an opportunity or a setback? Explain.
- You always seem to get the new kids in school. How do you feel?

Student appeal

- What strategies do you employ to make connections with students/parents and how do you feel you are viewed?
- Give me three examples of what is trending in the lives of your students.
- What words would students use to describe you?

Patient

- How do you approach working with a low-performing student?
- How would you exercise patience when dealing with an individual?
- I am not going to “get” your lesson the first time. How will you teach me?

Empathetic

- How do approach working with a low-performing student?
- What is it about your students that you feel they struggle with the most OUTSIDE of academics?
- As a teacher, how does empathy play a role?
- I just lost my mom and I’m in your class...how can you help me?
- Describe a situation when you have empathized with a student?

Passion for teaching

- (observed)
- Tell me why you want to teach.

Matrix/overview of the study.

<p>Research Question 1: From your training and experience, what critical dispositions must a teacher candidate possess?</p>	<p>Research Question 2: From your training and experience, can a person ask candidates questions to determine if they possess those dispositions? If so, what are they?</p>
<p>Data and Findings from the study: Panelists generated 39 dispositions, finally identifying 19 critical dispositions grouped into five theme groups: -Beliefs about children/priorities -Attitude/beliefs – willingness to act -Job-related skills -Structure -Personal attributes/traits</p>	<p>Data and Findings from the study: Panelists generated 74 questions grouped into five theme groups: -Beliefs about children/priorities -Attitude/beliefs – willingness to act -Job-related skills -Structure -Personal attributes/traits</p>
<p>Implications from the Data/Findings: -School leaders should make decisions regarding those dispositions sought in a teacher candidate. Value exists in better understanding “who” the candidate is in addition to “what” they know.</p>	<p>Implications from the Data/Findings: -School leaders should make decisions regarding the creation or compilation of questions designed to discern the presence of a specific desirable disposition. Useful questions serve to identify dispositions. - School leaders should utilize a set of open-ended questions when conducting interviews with teacher candidates. A list of useful, open-ended questions can be found. The list generated is one.</p>