

**This feedback was provided by the external consultants, at the request of Georgette Nemr.**

### Thoughts and Questions about the Classroom Management Survey

The purposes for this assessment instrument outlined in the grant proposal are to:

- survey candidate dispositions or attitudes;
- have candidates demonstrate capacity to analyze and reflect on their dispositions; and,
- indicate the effects on students' learning at various points in the program.

#### General Questions/Issues

The overarching question is what is being measured by the assessment. Is the focus disposition; pedagogical knowledge, behavior, or something else?

NCATE defines dispositions as the “*values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and developments as well as the educator’s own professional growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. For example, they might include a belief that all students can learn, a vision of high and challenging standards, or a commitment to a safe and supportive learning environment.*” Is this how the University of Hartford defines dispositions as well?

1. The assessment is being designed to measure candidate dispositions. What are the defined the dispositions the University of Hartford wants its teacher preparation candidates to have? In what ways are these attitudes and dispositions embedded into the scenarios and statements in the survey?

It appears that there are some characteristics of teachers that cut across the questions. For example, some responses seem to elicit information about whether a candidate values a classroom where students are involved in establishing the rules, the norms, and the consequences or if the candidate believes that the teacher is the authority and decision maker for all of these issues. Some responses elicit information about the candidate’s valuing of seeking the advice of other professionals (e.g., school psychologists, social workers, nurses, special education teachers) while others suggest the teacher should handle the situation by him or herself. There is a theme of sending students to the principal for discipline issues or handling them within the classroom. Some items elicit information about

public humiliation (or at least calling attention to students' inappropriate actions publicly) as contrasted with more private handling of situations. One variable seems to be something related to self-confidence and authority of the teacher (e.g., does the teacher stand up to parents, students, other teachers, the principal or does she or he defer to them). It seems there is an undercurrent of school as fun as contrasted with school as a place for learning. There is a pattern of items related to ignoring inappropriate behavior to intervening to change the behavior.

Could the University of Hartford identify the disposition that is a focus of the assessment item, articulate the continuum, and then map all items that would contribute to a candidate's "score" for that disposition.

For example:

Collaboration: Seeks out colleagues to meet student needs to solves all problems on own (Instruction 3, Teacher 3; Instruction 3, Teacher 4; Instruction 6, Number 3: Instruction 8, Teacher 5; Assessment 1; Numbers 4 and 5; Assessment 2, Number 2; Reflecting 2, Number 1; Reflecting #4, Teacher 4)

2. Does the current draft also try to measure aspects of general pedagogical knowledge and classroom management? Some questions seem to have "right answers" for each of the scenarios? What would happen if you removed the Likert scale and asked candidates to choose the correct or best response? We ask this question for two reasons.

First, it seems as if some of the responses have a basis in the literature about effective teaching. Was that a deliberate part of the design? If so, what led to the decision? Is the hope that scores of candidates who take the test prior to entering the program and scores of students exiting the program will show that opinion has been informed by research leading to changed beliefs as a result of preparation? Do all University of Hartford faculty members agree on these responses?

For Example: Scenario Four of Development, Learning, and Motivation, reads, "*Ms. Stafford is a seventh-grade history teacher. One of her students, Marie was a well-liked straight A student with good manners. After the end of the first quarter, Marie earned a B in the course. Marie asked Ms. Stafford to give her an "A" and she promised to work hard to improve during the next quarter.*" There are four options. Give her an A, because you know she'll work hard to improve; give her an A because this quarter was just a fluke; give her a B, that's what she earned; or give her a C, since that will really motivate her. Is there really more than one choice here?

Second, many of the scenarios (and in some instances the responses) lack sufficient information to adequately address the question.

For Example: Scenario One of Development, Learning, and Motivation, reads, "*Mr. Michaels understands that many students don't like to be in*

*school and have a hard time paying attention in class for long periods of time. Therefore, he gives his students several five-minute breaks throughout the day, to give them a chance to work off excess energy, refocus their attention and to keep them motivated to learn. However her finds that instruction of keeping students interested, often he has a hard time getting all of the students back on task after a break."*

Each of the five statements below the scenario provides an action Mr. Michaels can take. It isn't clear what dispositions or attitudes are represented in each statement. Have the developers correlated the desired attitudes and dispositions to each of these statements? Additionally, the item becomes more complicated to answer without knowing the age of the students or some of the context alluded to in the statements. For example, to rate statement number one, "Mr. Michaels should eliminate the breaks; students have enough of a break during recess," it would be important to know exactly how long recess is and what a student schedule is like. The age of the students would also be an important consideration.

*In scenario one of Instruction, "Mr. Silva is a certified teacher and has always been instructing this way. When teaching his fifth-grade science class, Mr. Silva likes to explain physical principals using the information from the textbook first, then show the students how it can be applied in the natural world. For example, when he discusses friction, he shows how a piece of paper falls at different rates when a flat sheet is crumpled up. However, he finds that students often do poorly on the exams that test material from the text book, although they seem to understand the material when he presents it in class."*

The statements under the scenario seem to be measuring pedagogical knowledge and child development instead of attitudes and dispositions.

*In Scenario Six of Instruction the responses are open to too much interpretation. "Mr. Tobias is a first year teacher. He is planning his instruction for the year. He had a successful fall student teaching experience in the same grade that he will be teaching this year. He plans on teaching the same units because the students enjoyed them."*

Option one suggests that he should create new units and lesson plans to gather richer experiences. *Richer for him or the students? How do we know they will be richer? What does richer mean?*

Option two says he should use the already created unit plans because he will have greater success the second time around. *Is the curriculum framework the same in each district? Are the students similar in interests, ability, prior knowledge? Was he successful initially or did the students just enjoy the lessons?*

Option three suggests he copy his colleague's plans. *If they are good plans this might be a good starting point.*

Option four says only teach plans that match the district's curriculum. *Is the assumption that the others don't?*

3. The issue of context also raises the question of whether these items are part of an item bank or if they constitute a form of the assessment. The distribution of items presented is as follows: The categories for the scenarios are divided in this manner

Development, Learning, and Motivation	28%
Curriculum	8%
Instruction	32%
Assessment	8%
Reflecting	24%

Are the categories equally valued? This would not be supported by the current distribution.

4. In what ways has the group defined what is meant by each of the categories? Some scenarios didn't seem to fit the category under which they were placed. This is especially true of items categorized as assessment and reflection.

5. There are also validity questions related to ability to understand the subtleties of some items. How would content vary by certification area? Should secondary English candidates be expected to answer questions about elementary classrooms? Should an early childhood candidate be expected to answer the questions about fourth and fifth grade classrooms? How would it vary by the point of assessment? Are candidates at admission knowledgeable enough about the role of school psychologist to respond accurately to the question?

6. How will this assessment, more specifically the results of this assessment, be used in the program. Are there scores that would lead to someone being denied admission? Are there scores that would preclude a candidate from student teaching? Are there scores that would lead to the University not recommending someone for licensure? What do those profiles look like?

7. The format uses and even numbered Likert scale with both ends anchored with terms. The Likert scale in the instrument has a "1" rating meaning "strongly disagree" and a "6" rating meaning, "strongly agree." Should all of the responses between "1" and "6" also be labeled? Will respondents know what is represented by their choosing a "4" or a "5"? What is the difference between a response of "4" and a response of "5"? Will different survey respondents have a similar understanding of what each response represents? Should there be an opportunity for a neutral rating or is the forced choice by design?

8. The format varies across items. Most responses begin with either the teacher's name or a set of recommendations from other teachers. For consistency of format, one option or the other should be used. All responses that appear to be recommendations could have

been written, Ms. X does. .... (as if she had taken the advice). There are some anomalies in other items. DLM #5 starts with “classroom rules.” Assessment #1 starts with the student’s action instead of the teacher’s. Reflecting #2 option #4 starts with the principal’s action. Reflecting #3, option #2 starts with the school’s action.

**Possible Next Steps:**

1. Identify the attitudes and dispositions they believe are being rated in the assessment instrument.
2. Create a matrix that links these attitudes and dispositions to scenario and associated response. Add items or responses as necessary to assure that the matrix is balance in terms of positive and negative characteristics for each disposition.
3. Link the attitudes and dispositions articulated in Step 1 to the attitudes and dispositions required by the teacher education program as evidence of the alignment between program competencies and the assessment.
4. Encourage individual developers to take the survey and then discuss their ratings and how they believe they relate to the identified dispositions.
5. Revisit the design process by beginning with the key dispositions that are essential to the program. Then discuss whether or not a multiple choice instrument is the most valid and reliable measure.

## Letter to University of Hartford Magnet School Teachers

Dear Colleague,

A working group of division of education faculty has been involved in the development of a survey targeted to assess candidates' dispositions. This project was conducted through a grant given by the State Department of Education. Assessing dispositions is an area that the state wants to investigate in order to improve the quality of teacher candidates in Connecticut.

We would like to receive feedback from experienced teachers, and you have been chosen to help us refine our survey. You would be given a matrix of the dispositions we are assessing, and the survey. The survey is in vignette form with statements/responses on a Likert scale. There is also a space for the candidate to give a reason for the response selected for each statement. Please complete the survey.

We would also like feedback on the following:

- 11) Do the vignettes and responses measure the dispositions of professionalism and reflective practice?
- 12) Do the responses target the dispositions we would like our candidates to possess exhibit?
- 13) What suggestions do you have for improving any of the responses?

For your assistance and feedback, we are offering a \$100 payment. You will be required to fill out some paperwork if you are interested in helping us. We need this information by June 6<sup>th</sup> 2003.

Thanking you in advance for your support in this project.

Sincerely,

Joan Pedro Ph.D.  
Principal Investigator