

Ph.D. Specialization in Educational Psychology Professional Dispositions and Ethical Conduct

The highest levels of ethical and professional conduct are expected of all professional educational psychologists and educational psychologists in training. The Program Faculty are committed to helping each student successfully learn and adopt professional dispositions and ethical practices as they prepare to become professional educational psychologists. At USF, faculty and students alike are expected to model ethically and professionally appropriate behavior in all contexts, including the University, professional activities, as well as field settings.

The conceptual framework of the College of Education, which establishes the goals, outcomes, and philosophies that guide the college's educator preparation programs, defines "**dispositions**" as: "...*the habits of mind and commitments that lead to intentional, conscious, and voluntary patterns of behavior toward students, families, colleagues and communities.*" The following professional dispositions, as identified by the College of Education, are required of both faculty and students:

1. **Commitment to collaboration:** Educational psychologists must work together with their professional colleagues in schools and agencies, as well as with students, families, and communities to achieve common goals and solve problems. Collaboration is founded upon the intentional seeking out of the opinions, expertise, and knowledge of others, consideration of all points of view, and a willingness to compromise to reach common goals.
2. **Continuous professional learning:** To meet high standards of instruction and service, and to assist those served to achieve their full potential, educational psychologists must strive to increase their own knowledge and skills. They continuously improve their own practice through self-assessment, progress monitoring and consultation and collaboration with colleagues. They remain current with theory and practice in their field and with technological innovations.
3. **Reflective thinking:** Educational psychologists engage in active analysis of information and data acquired through inquiry and practice. Reflective thinking results in careful deliberation and reasoning in making decisions and in choosing courses of action in instruction and service. Educational psychologists also critically examine the personal and social contexts in which they practice.
4. **Respect for diversity:** Educational psychologists treat all individuals equitably and fairly. Their interactions with colleagues, families, and community reflect sensitivity to diverse values, norms, and points of view. They engage in practices that promote opportunities for learning and development among the diverse array of students they serve.
5. **Ethical responsibility:** Educational psychologists are guided by a commitment to adhere to professional codes of behavior. They hold themselves to high standards of conduct in their interactions with students, colleagues, families, and the community.

6. **Care and advocacy for students¹:** Educational psychologists take an active interest in the physical, emotional, and intellectual health, well-being and growth of students served. They take appropriate steps to intervene when student health or well-being is in jeopardy, and support and encourage students to reach their full potential.

Unacceptable professional disposition, ethical practice, or behavior, as judged by the Program Faculty, may jeopardize a candidate's progress in or completion of the degree program. Please see **Appendix** for sample indicators that further elaborate the intent of each of these dispositions. These dispositions are consistent with the College of Education's *Professional Disposition and Ethical Practices Standards Policy* and USF's Student Code of Conduct, which outlines expectations for students' and professional educators' behaviors and ethical practices: <http://generalcounsel.usf.edu/regulations/pdfs/regulation-usf6.0021.pdf>.

Evaluation of Professional Dispositions and Ethical Conduct

In most cases, a student's professional work characteristics will be evaluated through courses, research experiences, and teaching experiences. To the extent they are relevant to a specific course, evaluation of these characteristics may also be reflected in the assignment grades, as well as in the final course grade.

Professional dispositions and ethical conduct are considered to be equal in importance to the knowledge and professional skills that must be demonstrated through courses and other relevant experiences in the Program. Students may be provided an opportunity to retake a specific course or practicum to remediate identified weaknesses in professional work characteristics that result in course grades below a "B". They may, however, be dismissed from the Program if problems relating to professional work characteristics are not remediated or are demonstrated across Program experiences and environments. Students also may be dismissed from the Program for documented unethical conduct. Faculty and students are responsible for personal familiarity with the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association² and must conduct themselves in accordance with those principles. Actions to dismiss a student must follow the procedures described below, and must assure the student of his/her due process rights and privileges throughout the process.

The Evaluation Process, Chronology, and the Protection of Student's Rights

Student progress is evaluated on an ongoing and continuous basis. Each student is assigned a faculty mentor upon entrance to the Program. This mentor will remain with the student until the student selects a chairperson for their Ph.D. committee. At that time, the chairperson of the committee becomes the official faculty mentor for the student. In most cases the faculty mentor and committee chairperson are the same person. The primary responsibility for integrating the information from the multiple methods and sources lies with the faculty mentor. There are, however, two events in which all of the Educational Psychology students participate: student portfolio review and annual evaluations. These events occur in unison.

¹ In this document student refers to both students within the university population as well as children and adolescents served in the field through research and service opportunities.

² <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>

Student annual review portfolio and evaluation. Each student will complete an annual review portfolio at the end of each year in the Program. See the Educational Psychology Handbook for a description of the process. Each faculty member of the Educational Psychology Doctoral Program participates in this evaluation event. This provides the opportunity to each member of the program faculty to review the work of each student and provides each student with the opportunity to receive feedback from multiple faculty members. The portfolio review occurs during May/June of each year. At the end of the annual review process, each student will receive written feedback and a face-to-face feedback session with one or two members of the Educational Psychology Faculty regarding their progress in the Educational Psychology Program to date. If needed, more than one face-to-face feedback session with a student can be requested by the Program Faculty and these meetings may occur at any time during an academic semester. In most cases, the annual review process meeting will focus on students' professional strengths and weaknesses while informing the student that his/her progress is "on-target" and at an expected level. In some cases, the Faculty may identify specific student behaviors that require strengthening and that may put the student at-risk for future advancement in the program. These behaviors (knowledge/skill and ethical/professional) may be related to performance in course work, research, and/or teaching. In most cases, if such problems exist, the Program addresses them immediately, without waiting for the Spring Semester meeting.

When specific student behaviors are evident to the extent that the Faculty or Program are concerned about (a) the student's progress; (b) the student's potential to act, willfully or not, in a manner that professionally or personally harms others (e.g., peers, students, faculty/staff, or others) or the extent to which their behavior reflects negatively on the reputation and/or integrity of the Educational Psychology Program; or (c) the student's lack of responsiveness to feedback, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The Faculty member will meet with the student in question, will discuss these concerns with the student, and will ask the student to develop a behavioral program and contract, either at that meeting or for a future meeting scheduled at his/her earliest convenience, that will address these concerns. The Faculty member will document the particulars of the meeting in writing. This document will be placed into the student's permanent program file; the student can file a response to the document for the program file if s/he wishes.
2. The behavioral contract developed by the student to address the Faculty's concerns will have an evaluative mechanism built-into the intervention plan, and the student and Faculty member will meet periodically to determine the student's progress across the stated concerns. Once agreed upon, a copy of the behavior contract should be placed into the student's program file. When the student has successfully addressed the Faculty member's concerns, this should be documented for the student's permanent program file. Students have access to the materials in their Program files with advanced notice, and may make copies of materials in the file.
3. If the student continues to experience difficulties after a reasonable period of time using the behavioral contract, the Faculty member will bring the student's situation up with the entire Program Faculty. At this time, the faculty has four basic options: (a) to evaluate the concerns and deem that enough student progress has been made such that the concerns do not constitute a problem requiring continued monitoring; (b) to affirm that the problem continues to exist, to have the Program Coordinator assume responsibility for monitoring

the student's progress (if that has not occurred before this time), to put the student on probationary status by updating the behavioral plan, and setting another date for a reevaluation; (c) to counsel the student out of the Program; or (d) to move to dismiss the student from the Program. All of these options will be determined by a majority vote of the Faculty.

4. If the Faculty recommends that a student be dismissed from the Program, the following chronology will be used:
 - a. The student will be informed personally by the Program Coordinator and at least one other representative of the Faculty of this decision and the reasons for it. At this meeting, a copy of a document specifying the reasons for dismissal will be given to the student. The original document will be signed by all participants of the meeting to attest that the meeting was held and that the reasons for the student's dismissal were discussed. This document will be filed in the student's permanent program file. The student's signature does not indicate that s/he agrees with the reasons for dismissal. Also at this meeting, the student will be notified that s/he will have the full right of due process.
 - b. After the meeting, the Program Coordinator will send a copy of the dismissal document and any other appropriate communication to the Dean of the College and the Dean of the Graduate School.
 - c. If a student wishes to exercise his/her right of due process, this will be coordinated through the Office of the Dean of the College of Education. At this point, the University's due process procedures will be followed.

The process that results in the Program Faculty's decision to dismiss the student from the Program will proceed at a speed commensurate with the severity and/or chronicity of the concerns. Due cause for dismissal includes the Faculty's assessment of the potential of student remediability. Finally, when the student's behavior (a) involves a breach of Professional Ethics or (b) results in immediate and serious potential harm to others or the Program (see conditions above), the Faculty member may choose to proceed immediately to Step 3 above and bring the problem to the immediate attention of the Program Faculty who will determine the need for a behavioral contract or other actions. This will be done in consultation with the Program Coordinator and with appropriate documentation.

The ultimate goal of an evaluation policy and procedure is to ensure that the graduates of the USF Educational Psychology Program are appropriately trained and able to demonstrate the knowledge, skill, and interpersonal relationship abilities that are required for successful, professional educational psychologists. For the most part, this is a proactive and positive process. That is, there is every expectation that every student accepted into the Educational Psychology Program will succeed and become a contributing professional within the field. There are times, however, when students have inaccurately or inappropriately chosen educational psychology as their future vocation. Further, there are times when students are not suited professionally, academically, and/or interpersonally to the field. It is in these latter cases that the Program Faculty will assume its responsibility to the field and the people and institutions whom our graduates serve, moving professionally and sensitively, yet directly, while always providing the student his/her right of due process.

Appendix

Sample Indicators for the Professional Disposition and Ethical Practices Standards

The sample indicators provided below further elaborate the overall intent of each of the identified professional dispositions and ethical practices standards. This list is not exhaustive and the identified indicators do not have equal weight in terms of students' professional disposition. In addition, these indicators are not intended to be used in isolation, but used collectively as an overall assessment of students' ability to continue enrollment in the professional degree programs offered in the College of Education. Indicators below are intended to provide guidance and serve as a starting point for discussion within units and/or programs. Indicators listed below are examples; units and/or programs are not limited to these examples and may modify indicators or include additional professional behaviors as deemed necessary.

Commitment to Collaboration

Educational psychologists must work together with their professional colleagues in schools and agencies, as well as with students, peers, colleagues, professors/staff, and the broader community to achieve common goals and solve problems. Collaboration is founded upon the intentional seeking out of the opinions, expertise, and knowledge of others, consideration of all points of view, and a willingness to compromise to reach common goals.

Indicators for Commitment to Collaboration

- Exhibits professional demeanor and behavior, appropriate to the setting.
- Displays a positive attitude and emotional maturity.
- Fosters trust among and between preK-12 students, peers, colleagues, and professors/staff by maintaining a high level of reliability.
- Has the ability to interact, work, and be with people who have characteristics different from self.
- Demonstrates deep interest in acquiring content knowledge and pedagogical expertise.
- Establishes and maintains respectful and professional collaborative relationships with others.
- Consistently demonstrates initiative, interest in, and enthusiasm for research, teaching, and learning.
- Demonstrates behaviors conducive to appropriate classroom participation and commitment to learning.
- Communicates effectively and thoughtfully through well-organized and clearly expressed ideas in spoken and written language.
- Communicates in ways appropriate to the professional context.
- Strives to establish positive interpersonal connections.
- Is able to develop rapport with students, peers, colleagues, and professors.

Continuous Professional Learning

To meet high standards of instruction and service, and to assist those served to achieve their full potential, education professionals must strive to increase their own knowledge and skills. They continuously improve their own practice through self-assessment, progress monitoring and consultation and collaboration with colleagues. They remain current with theory and practice in their field and with technological innovations.

Indicators for Continuous Professional Learning

- Commitment to lifelong learning.
- Engages responsibly in learning by making a commitment to continuous learning by consistently participating in all course sessions, required workshops, and professional activities including meetings with Program Faculty.
- Demonstrates curiosity and willingness to learn.

- Is disposed toward inquiry, problem-solving, and reflection as demonstrated in meaningful and appropriate discussions.
- Is receptive to professional feedback concerning work/behavior.
- Adjusts performance in response to professional feedback and/or suggestions from others.
- Poses probing questions and problems.
- Engages in professional inquiry and conversation.
- Effectively analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates information and data acquired through ongoing inquiry and practice.
- Is committed to continuous improvement in practice.
- Seeks appropriate support and resources.
- Exhibits the ability to create and/or implement new ideas.
- Is able to recognize difficulties or deficiencies in ones' teaching and learning.
- Demonstrates flexibility in modifying ideas.
- Initiates, suggests, contributes, and shares ideas and materials.
- Seeks understanding of complex issues in order to solve problems both independently and collaboratively.
- Commits to mastering best practices informed by sound theory.
- Seeks and participates in formal and informal professional growth opportunities.
- Participates in professional organizations.

Reflective Thinking

Education professionals engage in active analysis of information and data acquired through inquiry and practice. Reflective thinking results in careful deliberation and reasoning in making decisions and in choosing courses of action in instruction and service. Educators also critically examine the personal and social contexts in which they practice.

Indicators for Reflective Thinking

- Reflects on and learns from experience.
- Engages in ongoing inquiry.
- Seeks feedback and new information that may improve learning or instruction.
- Open-minded and willing to consider new evidence or alternative perspectives.
- Adopts an open-minded stance, recognizes there may be many ways to view a situation or event.
- Careful deliberation and reasoning when making pedagogical decisions.
- Careful consideration of the consequences of one's actions as they affect students.
- Critically examines the personal and social contexts in which he/she practices.
- Reframes events/situations in order to gain new ways to interpret a situation and discover potential solutions.
- Continually challenges underlying beliefs regarding learning and instruction.

Respect for Diversity

Education professionals treat all individuals equitably and fairly. Their interactions with students, peers, colleagues, professors/staff, and the broader community reflect sensitivity to diverse values, norms, and points of view. They engage in practices that promote opportunities for learning and development among the diverse array of students they serve.

Indicators for Respect for Diversity

- Demonstrates the ability to honor, value, and exhibit consideration and regard for oneself and others.
- Is open to considering the myriad of new attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and opinions that are encountered in the school environment.
- Exhibits an understanding of factors that contribute to diversity such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and privilege in American Society.

- Appreciates the value of diversity (individual, social, cultural, and linguistic) and is committed to providing equitable access to instruction.
- Demonstrates sensitivity to others' feelings, opinions, and cultures, and a willingness to learn from others whose perspectives differ.
- Shows compassion, respect, and empathy for students, colleagues/classmates, and professors.
- Respectfully listens to the views of others.
- Provides opportunities for all students, peers, and colleagues to learn.
- Seeks opportunities to learn from and about other's perspectives.
- Shows respect in interactions with others.
- Demonstrates awareness of one's own values and how they may impact others.
- Evaluates and reflects upon the effects of one's choices and actions on others.
- Shows respect for him or herself and others around them by choosing appropriate and respectful attire and exhibiting proper grooming.

Ethical Responsibility

Education professionals are guided by a commitment to adhere to professional codes of behavior. They hold themselves to high standards of conduct in their interactions with students, peers, colleagues, professors/staff, and the broader community.

Indicators for Ethical Responsibility

- Adheres to and upholds the university's commitment to academic honesty and personal integrity.
- Adheres to and upholds the university's Student Code of Conduct.
- Adheres to and upholds the college's Social Media Policy.
- Pursues fairness and justice in all situations with all students, peers, colleagues, and professors/staff.
- Demonstrates discretion when discussing students, peers, colleagues, professors/staff, and schools by not participating in disparaging conversations and/or works to diffuse such language.
- Understands and maintains confidentiality related to student records, personal family information, and student ability/disability in educational programming in order to protect the individual's and family's privacy, unless such disclosure serves a professionally compelling purpose or is required by law (i.e., FERPA).
- Observes all mandated federal, state, and local policies, and procedures pertinent to the teaching and research profession.
- Understands, upholds, and follows ethics, policies and legal codes of professional conduct.

Care and Advocacy for Students

Educational psychologists take an active interest in the physical, emotional, and intellectual health, well-being and growth of students served. They take appropriate steps to intervene when student health or well-being is in jeopardy, as well as support and encourage students to reach their full potential.

Indicators for Care and Advocacy for Students

- Exemplifies the belief that all students can learn.
- Promotes the physical, emotional, and intellectual health, well-being, and growth of students.
- Values students and encourages them to reach their full potential.
- Demonstrates the ability to appropriately handle situations that may be emotionally, physically, or intellectually stressful for students.
- Resolves differences or misunderstandings respectfully and reflectively.
- Exercises sound professional judgment.
- Respectfully serves as an advocate for students when necessary.
- Prepares for class, field experiences/student teaching and completes work in a timely manner.