

Professional Expectations of Student Teachers

The Teacher Education Program at Warren Wilson College values professional dispositions in our colleagues, and models and promotes these dispositions to all candidates. The faculty strives to demonstrate what it means to be reflective and innovative teachers, serving in communities with head, heart, and hands. The Warren Wilson College Teacher Education Program values these professional dispositions toward teaching and learning. Faculty and candidates should all strive to demonstrate their understanding of these dispositions through practice.

1. Attitudes toward Learning
 - a. Valuing reflective practice and innovation to meet the needs of each learner
 - b. Having an ability to reflect on and respond to constructive criticism from peers, college instructors, and host/cooperating teachers and other school colleagues and administrators
 - c. Demonstrating a willingness for continued learning, and openness to new experiences and new perspectives

2. Attitudes toward Learners
 - a. Respectful consideration of individuals
 - i. Protecting confidentiality
 - ii. Maintaining professional discretion in the College community and classrooms and in their field placement schools and classrooms
 - b. Sensitivity and respect for differences
 - i. Physical
 - ii. Cognitive
 - iii. Linguistic
 - iv. Socio-cultural
 - c. Recognition of personal experiences and biases and the impact these may have on expectations and beliefs about teaching and learning
 - d. Understanding, especially from the perspective of a classroom teacher, of how an individual's home life, sexual preferences, religious practices, and other important differences will impact his or her experiences in a classroom – and the critical need for each human being to feel he or she belongs and is accepted.

3. Professional Behavior: Teachers need to make good decisions
 - a. Making good use of free time
 - i. recognizing that teachers are role models
 - ii. making healthy life choices
 - b. Upholding standards of professional appearance in a given school setting
 - c. Practicing professional behaviors in College classes as well as field placements / school settings
 - i. Punctuality
 - ii. Dependability
 - iii. Preparation

- d. Demonstrating professional commitment through participation in on-campus, local school, and community events.

What do these dispositions mean to you as a student teacher?

Student teaching is a full-time job, and it may represent more work than you have ever encountered in your college career. Except for not appearing on the school's payroll, you are an employee. You should consider yourself a member of the professional community, and act accordingly. Take a good look at the section above on *professional behavior*.

Punctuality, Dependability, and Preparation. Be at school, in class, and on time every day! Your new colleagues have to know that they can count on you. Unexcused or overused absences and/or tardiness are unprofessional. Generally, there are three acceptable reasons for an absence from school.

- Serious Personal/ Family Problems, including a death in the family, a seriously ill spouse or child, or other serious emergencies;
- Job Interviews, which are recognized by most administrators and supervisors as important. However, be sure to make prior arrangements for your absence as a matter of professional courtesy;
- Personal health problems and serious illness. Make sure the cooperating teacher and/or administrator is advised of your absence as early as possible.

In all cases, inform your cooperating teacher and principal, prior to the absence if possible. A request for absence that is given early can be more easily accommodated. During the time when you have the **primary responsibility** for your classroom, any absence should be made up, and you are expected to leave behind substitute plans and all other important information for carrying on without you.

Professional vs. Personal Time. Personal time can be hard to find during student teaching. In joining a professional community, you take on obligations that extend well beyond the hours that students are present at your school. Some of these obligations include:

- attending all faculty meetings and in-service opportunities with your cooperating teacher;
- participating in family nights or other evening activities;
- attending or even running parent-teacher conferences;
- bus duty or hall duty or other supervisory duties that your cooperating teacher's assignment includes;
- attending the weekly student teaching seminars at Warren Wilson College.

Personal Grooming. As you will remember from observations and other activities in schools before this, it is important that you always maintain professional dress and grooming. Each school's policy is different: some schools maintain a dress code, written or not, and you will need to adapt to the new climate. If you have questions about what dress is expected, ask your cooperating teacher.

Good Professional Relationships. Use the accepted chain of command to insure good working relationships with your supervising teacher, the principal, or superintendent. The professional community has many persons in different levels of authority and you need to be respectful of their decisions and preferences. If you have any doubt about whether you need approval for an activity or responsibility, ask your college supervisor or contact the Education Office. This attention to requirements will be especially important if you want to qualify for substitute teaching or after-school employment after student teaching but before you graduate.

Professional Discretion. You may see or hear things during your assignment that you do not agree with personally, but you must refrain from broadcasting your disapproval of a specific individual or activity. It is unprofessional and a breach of ethics to make unfavorable or potentially slanderous remarks about your supervising teacher, pupils, or school to other school personnel, college classmates or to the community. Personal and professional discretion is important, especially because you are the new member of the community and have the most to lose by earning a reputation for harsh or unfounded critiques. At the same time, you will have opportunities in the student teaching seminar to vent frustrations and describe situations that are troubling or difficult. We know that you are dealing with a new range of experiences and expectations and we will want to discuss these with you at length; however, you must maintain professional judgment and behavior in all settings. It is worth remembering that teachers are held to higher expectations than many others in the community.

Controversial Issues. You should not use your captive pupil audience as a forum to express your personal views on controversial issues, such as sex education, abortion, politics, religion, etc. Your student teaching assignment is not a vehicle to sway students to your point of view.

Student NCAE membership. As part of class fees in your Curriculum Activities course, you were enrolled as a student member in the North Carolina Association of Educators. You should have already received publications and notice of professional development opportunities as a result of this membership. Also included in your SNCAE membership is a policy that affords you \$1 million in professional liability coverage. To ensure that all student teachers have liability insurance, FALL student teachers must renew their membership through the Education Department Office.