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THE BEST TEACHER YOU EVER HAD – SELF ASSESSMENT OF DISPOSITIONS BY EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

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Abstract

What words would you use to describe the best teacher you ever had? Chances are those words would focus on the dispositions that teacher demonstrated. Through a concept formation exercise participants will have the opportunity to develop a definition of the "best teacher you ever had." Why would it be important for early childhood educators to know the answer to the question?

Chances are that the characteristics of the "best teacher you ever had" do not focus on knowledge and/or skills, but instead on dispositions. Many times those include the attitudes, values and beliefs communicated by that teacher through verbal and non-verbal behavior.

In this presentation participants will self-assess their dispositions using a survey developed by National University. This self-assessment survey is required of all candidates at the beginning and end of their BA in Early Childhood Education Program. Dispositions are assessed using 21 statements that are included under one of five categories -- Scholarship, Teamwork, Active Reflection, Responsible Citizenship and Standards of Exemplary Practice (STARS).

Candidates entering the BA in Early Childhood program were required to identify one of the six California State Childhood Development Permits they hold. The researchers believed there would be a significant difference between the level of a candidate's Permit and the level of self-assessment—unacceptable (1); acceptable (2); or meets target (3)—on the survey with a total 21 being the lowest level and 63 the highest. Secondly, researchers believed that candidates' self-assessment survey scores would be significantly higher in the final program class than those in the first.

The results of this study will enable Universities to improve the quality of their programs, to assist their candidates to affirm their dispositional strengths and look for new ways to strengthen those areas that are challenges. Greater self-awareness will enable the early childhood educator to continue to make a difference in the lives of children as they strive to be the best teacher a child ever had.