

Welcome to the SCF Education Department

Preparing Exceptional Educators Through Purpose, Partnership, and Professional Growth

Welcome to the State College of Florida Education Department. We are honored to partner with you as you begin the journey toward becoming a professional educator. This handbook is designed to serve as a guide throughout your program, helping you understand expectations, access resources, and develop the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions that prepare exceptional educators to positively impact students, schools, and communities.

Preparing Exceptional Educators Begins with Becoming One

The SCF Education Department believes that becoming an educator is about far more than completing coursework or meeting graduation requirements. It is the gradual development of the knowledge, skills, professional judgment, and dispositions that enable educators to positively impact students, families, schools, and communities.

Every course, field experience, exam, conversation, reflection, and challenge contributes to your growth as a future professional. Throughout this handbook, you will notice that we communicate with you as an emerging educator rather than simply as a student. We believe adult learners thrive when expectations are clear, support is meaningful, learning is purposeful, and professional responsibility is shared.

This handbook has been designed to help you understand not only what is expected throughout your educator preparation journey, but why those expectations matter. The policies, procedures, and resources included here exist to support your success while maintaining the high standards expected of those entrusted with the education of children.

Our goal is simple:

To prepare exceptional educators who lead with integrity, teach with purpose, collaborate with others, embrace lifelong learning, and believe in the potential of every learner.

Welcome from the Department Chair

Welcome to the State College of Florida Education Department.

Whether you are beginning your first education course, preparing for your initial field experience, or approaching your final internship, you are becoming part of a professional community united by a shared purpose: preparing educators who make a meaningful difference in the lives of students, families, schools, and communities.

Choosing to become an educator is both an exciting opportunity and an important responsibility. Teaching is a profession built on trust. Every day, educators are entrusted with supporting children's learning, nurturing their potential, building meaningful relationships, and creating

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

classrooms where every learner has the opportunity to succeed. That responsibility begins long before your first day as a classroom teacher. It begins here.

At the State College of Florida, we believe becoming an exceptional educator is about far more than earning a degree or completing certification requirements. It is a process of continuous growth. Throughout your program, you will deepen your understanding of teaching and learning while developing the professional judgment, ethical decision-making, collaboration, and reflective practices that define outstanding educators.

Our faculty view themselves not simply as instructors, but as partners in your professional journey. We are committed to providing rigorous learning experiences, meaningful feedback, authentic clinical opportunities, and supportive coaching that challenge you to grow while recognizing the strengths, experiences, and perspectives you bring as an adult learner.

In return, we ask that you fully engage in the opportunities before you. Approach your coursework with curiosity, your field experiences with professionalism, your classmates with respect, and your future students with the belief that every learner is capable of success. Learning to teach is not about perfection; it is about developing the habits of reflection, resilience, integrity, and continuous improvement that will serve you throughout your career.

This handbook has been developed as more than a collection of policies and procedures. It is a practical resource that explains how our program is organized, what you can expect from us, what we will expect from you, and the many resources available to support your success. I encourage you to return to it often as your understanding of the profession continues to grow.

Thank you for choosing the teaching profession and for entrusting us with your preparation. We are honored to walk alongside you as you develop the knowledge, confidence, and professional identity needed to positively impact the lives of future generations.

I look forward to celebrating your growth throughout your journey and welcoming you into the profession as a fellow educator.

With appreciation,

Dr. Anne Marie Ristow
Department Chair, Education
State College of Florida

Education Department Mission, Vision, Values, and Philosophy

Our Mission

Our mission is to prepare high-quality professional educators who positively impact students and communities.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Through rigorous academic preparation, authentic clinical experiences, collaborative partnerships, and reflective practice, we prepare educators who possess the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to support the success of every learner.

Our Vision

Our vision is to foster educational pathways that empower students and communities to thrive.

We envision educator preparation programs that inspire innovation, cultivate leadership, strengthen partnerships, and prepare graduates who are equipped to meet the evolving needs of schools and the communities they serve.

Our Values

Collaboration

Exceptional educators recognize that meaningful learning is built through strong relationships. We value teamwork, shared responsibility, respectful dialogue, and the understanding that we accomplish more together than we ever could alone.

Well-Being

Learning flourishes when individuals feel supported, valued, and capable of success. We promote balance, resilience, empathy, and personal well-being as essential elements of professional practice.

Innovation

Education continues to evolve, and exceptional educators remain curious. We encourage creativity, thoughtful use of technology, evidence-informed decision making, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Inclusion

Every learner deserves to experience belonging. We believe diversity strengthens our learning community and are committed to creating environments where every individual is respected, valued, and empowered to contribute.

Our Philosophy

The SCF Education Department believes that exceptional educators are developed through intentional learning experiences that combine academic excellence, authentic practice, meaningful reflection, and continuous professional growth.

We recognize that our students are adult learners who bring valuable experiences, diverse perspectives, and unique strengths to the learning process. Accordingly, our programs are intentionally designed to promote active engagement, collaboration, critical thinking, and authentic application while maintaining the high standards expected of the teaching profession.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Preparing exceptional educators requires more than acquiring knowledge. It requires developing professional identity, ethical responsibility, reflective practice, and a lifelong commitment to learning. Every course, field experience, assignment, and conversation contributes to that journey.

Preparing Exceptional Educators:

Our Commitment to Students, Schools, and Community

Education has the power to transform lives, strengthen communities, and shape the future. At the State College of Florida, we recognize that preparing future educators is both a privilege and a profound responsibility.

Our commitment extends beyond helping you earn certification. We are committed to preparing educators who lead with integrity, teach with purpose, collaborate effectively, and advocate for the success of every learner.

We fulfill this commitment by:

- Designing learning experiences that connect educational theory with authentic classroom practice.
- Partnering with local school districts, early learning programs, and community organizations to provide meaningful clinical experiences.
- Supporting your growth through timely feedback, coaching, and professional mentoring.
- Maintaining rigorous academic and professional expectations that reflect the responsibilities of the teaching profession.
- Creating learning environments that value learner variability, accessibility, collaboration, and belonging.
- Continuously improving our programs through research, assessment, accreditation, and partnerships with practicing educators.

When you graduate from the SCF Education Department, our hope is that you leave not only with the qualifications to teach, but with the confidence, competence, and professional identity to make a lasting difference in the lives of your future students.

The SCF Education Way

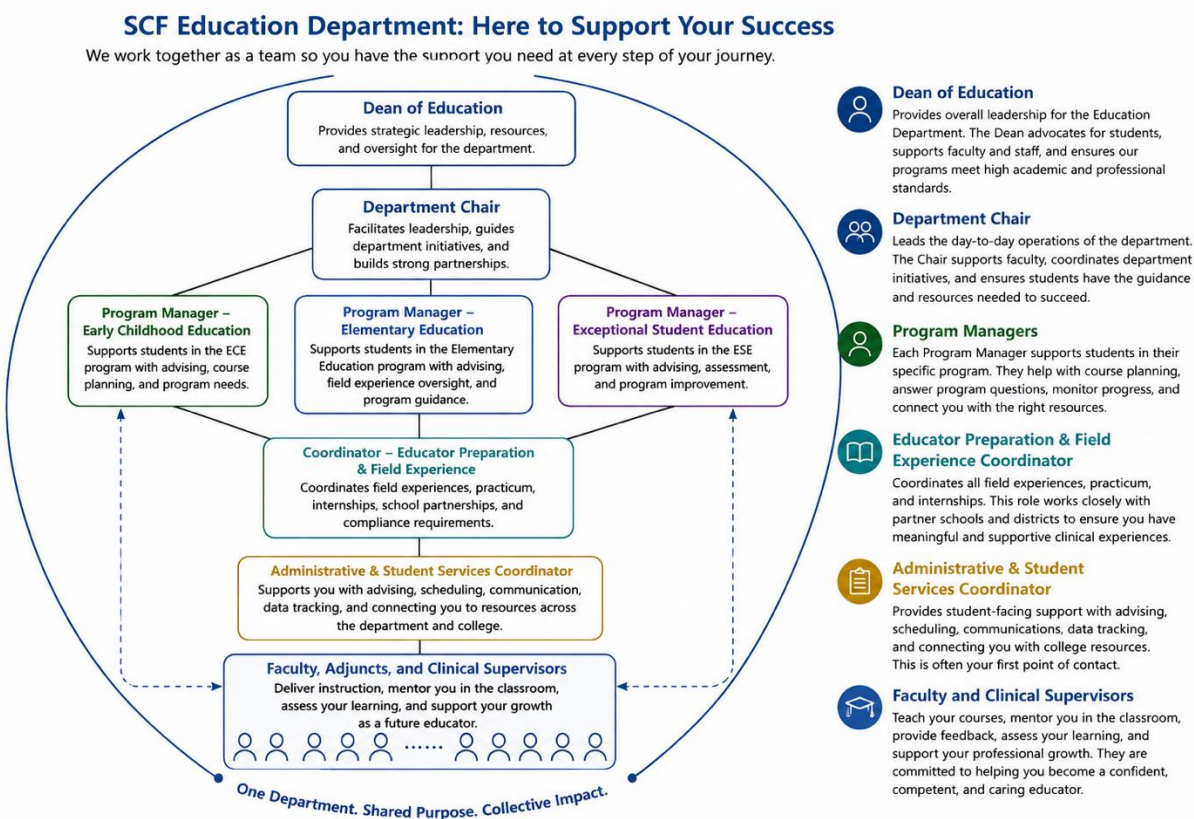
Preparing exceptional educators is a shared commitment. Every faculty member, mentor teacher, school partner, staff member, and educator candidate contributes to a culture of professionalism, collaboration, reflection, and continuous growth. Together, we prepare educators who will positively impact students, schools, and communities for generations to come.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Organizational Structure

Purpose

The SCF Education Department is organized around a collaborative leadership model designed to support student success from admission through graduation. Faculty, program leadership, coordinators, advisors, and staff work together to ensure that every educator candidate has access to the guidance, resources, and professional experiences needed for success.



You are never expected to navigate your educator preparation journey alone. Understanding who to contact, and when, helps ensure that questions are answered quickly and that you receive the support needed to continue progressing toward your professional goals.

Important Contacts and Resources

Who can help?

If you need help with...	Start here...
Program planning or course sequencing	Program Manager
Questions about coursework	Course Instructor
Field experiences or internship	Clinical Education Coordinator

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If you need help with...	Start here...
Registration or graduation	Registrar's Office
Financial aid	Financial Aid Office
Accessibility accommodations	Accessibility Services
Academic tutoring	Learning Commons
Personal well-being	CARE Team or Counseling Services
Technology or Canvas	Information Technology Help Desk
Career planning	Career Services

The SCF Education Way

Seeking support is a hallmark of effective educators, not a sign of weakness. Throughout your career, collaboration will be one of your greatest professional strengths. We encourage you to ask questions, seek guidance, and use the many resources available to support your success as you grow into the educator you aspire to become.

Our Shared Professional Standards

Read With Your Future Profession in Mind

Throughout this handbook, you will encounter ***Department Standards*** that identify the shared expectations guiding your development as an educator candidate.

These standards are not intended to function as a list of disconnected rules. Together, they describe a developmental journey from *learning responsibly*, to *practicing professionally*, to *progressing purposefully*, to *using support effectively*, and ultimately to *honoring the trust placed in educators*.

As you read, consider not only *What does this standard require?* but also:

What does this standard ask of the educator I am becoming?

You will return to these standards at the conclusion of the handbook, where you will review them and acknowledge your responsibility for understanding and meeting the expectations associated with your participation in an SCF educator preparation program.

Section II | Learning Like an Educator

How would a professional educator approach learning?

Department Standard	What This Means
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Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

2.1 Shared Ownership of Learning	Meaningful learning is a shared responsibility. Faculty create purposeful learning experiences and support; educator candidates prepare, participate, reflect, collaborate, and take ownership of continued growth.
2.2 Intentional Course Design	Courses are intentionally designed to connect professional standards, authentic practice, collaboration, reflection, feedback, accessibility, and preparation for teaching.
2.3 Professional Use of Technology	Technology is used responsibly, ethically, purposefully, and professionally while required College access and information privacy are maintained.
2.4 Presence and Engagement	Professional responsibility is demonstrated through preparation, meaningful engagement, timely communication, and active participation across learning environments.
2.5 Timely Participation and Assignment Submission	Learning experiences and assignments are completed within published timelines so feedback, collaboration, subsequent learning, and professional growth can occur as designed.
2.6 Academic Integrity	Academic, clinical, simulation-based, and professional learning are approached with honesty, originality, ethical decision-making, and professional responsibility.
2.7 Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence	AI may support learning, accessibility, and professional practice but does not replace authentic learning, cognitive engagement, or professional responsibility.
2.8 Assessment and Feedback for Growth	Assessment and feedback are tools for learning. Educator candidates actively engage with feedback and apply it to strengthen future performance.
2.9 Professional Growth Portfolio	The Professional Growth Portfolio documents professional learning, competency development, reflection, and evidence of readiness across the educator preparation journey.
2.10 Academic Progression	Progression requires successful demonstration of applicable academic, clinical, professional, dispositional, ethical, and program expectations.

Section III | Clinical Practice and Professional Experience

How do I become an educator through practice?

Department Standard	What This Means
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Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

3.1 Clinical Experiences	Clinical experiences provide essential opportunities to connect learning with authentic professional practice through observation, participation, reflection, and application.
3.2 Field Placements	Field placements are intentionally coordinated with school and community partners to provide high-quality clinical experiences aligned with program and state requirements.
3.3 Shared Responsibilities	Strong clinical preparation depends upon shared responsibility among educator candidates, faculty, mentors, supervisors, administrators, districts, and the College.
3.4 Mentor Teacher Partnerships	Mentor teachers provide modeling, guidance, coaching, and authentic professional learning while candidates bring initiative, respect, professionalism, and commitment to growth.
3.5 Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice	Professionalism is demonstrated through appearance, communication, conduct, boundaries, decision-making, technology use, and interactions within clinical environments.
3.6 Confidentiality and Professional Privacy	Confidential and personally identifiable information encountered through coursework, simulation, field experiences, clinical practice, and professional communication is protected.
3.7 Safety and Student Well-Being	Learner safety and well-being remain central to professional decision-making and all applicable safety procedures are followed.
3.8 Attendance and Professional Reliability During Clinical Experiences	Clinical participation reflects the punctuality, preparation, communication, follow-through, attendance, and reliability expected of educators.
3.9 Support and Accountability	Concerns are addressed through a graduated process designed to provide support, clarity, accountability, and opportunities for growth at the level appropriate to the concern.

Section IV | Certification and Program Progression

How do I prepare for the profession?

Department Standard	What This Means
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Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

4.1 Degree Progression and Candidate Responsibility	Candidates actively monitor and successfully complete the academic, clinical, assessment, certification, portfolio, and professional requirements appropriate to each stage of preparation.
4.2 Certification Examination Progression	Required Florida teacher certification examinations are completed according to established program progression milestones.
4.3 Graduation Requirements	Graduation confirms successful completion of applicable College, degree, educator preparation, clinical, portfolio, assessment, and certification requirements.
4.4 Final Internship Eligibility and Successful Completion	Final internship requires established eligibility before placement and successful demonstration of internship requirements before program completion.
4.5 Professional Readiness	Program completion represents demonstrated academic, clinical, certification, dispositional, portfolio, assessment, and professional readiness to enter teaching.

Section V | Support for Your Success

Who supports my journey?

Department Standard	What This Means
6.1 Student Privacy, Confidentiality, and FERPA	Student information is protected in accordance with legal, College, clinical partner, and professional responsibilities.
6.2 Ethical Practice and Professional Judgment	Professional decisions reflect ethical conduct, sound judgment, applicable expectations, and the responsibilities of the education profession.
6.3 Mandatory Reporting and Protection of Learners	Candidates understand their responsibility to report suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect appropriately rather than independently investigate.
6.4 Social Media and Digital Professionalism	Professional judgment, privacy, appropriate boundaries, and applicable expectations extend into social media and digital environments.

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6.5 Support, Accountability, and Student Appeal	The graduated process of Coaching, Professional Concern Notice, Professional Fitness Review, and Appeal provides pathways for support, accountability, and appropriate review.
6.6 Professional Concern Process	Significant or recurring concerns may require formal documentation, clarification of expectations, support, response, and demonstrated improvement.
6.7 Professional Fitness Review	Serious, significant, recurring, or unresolved concerns may require formal review of continued readiness for educator preparation and professional responsibility.
6.8 Behavioral Escalation, De-escalation, and Student Safety	Responses to behavioral escalation protect learner safety and dignity and remain within established supports, procedures, training, and professional roles.
6.9 Acknowledgement of Professional Responsibilities	Candidates are responsible for reviewing, understanding, and following applicable department, College, clinical partner, professional, legal, and ethical expectations.

Read to Understand • Return to Reflect • Sign to Acknowledge

You are not being asked to promise perfection. You are being asked to take responsibility for becoming.

How to Use This Handbook

Not every page of this handbook will apply to every stage of your program at the same time. Some sections will guide you as you begin your first education course, while others will become especially important as you prepare for field experiences, internship, certification, and graduation.

Rather than reading this handbook only when questions arise, we encourage you to return to it throughout your educator preparation journey. It has been designed as a professional resource—one that explains expectations, highlights available supports, and helps you understand how each experience contributes to becoming an exceptional educator.

As you progress through the program, you may discover that sections of this handbook take on new meaning. That is intentional. Just as learning builds over time, so too does your understanding of the profession you are entering.

Section I

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Beginning Your Professional Journey

What does it mean to become an educator?

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3. Adult Learning and Professional Responsibility
4. Professional Dispositions
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This is where we establish culture before rules.

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Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

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Certification and Program Progression

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Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

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SCF Education Department Professional Standards Acknowledgement

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SECTION I

Beginning Your Professional Journey

What does it mean to become an educator?

"Teaching is more than a career, it is a commitment to the growth, dignity, and potential of every learner."

Beginning a career in education is unlike preparing for many other professions. While coursework provides the knowledge and skills needed for effective teaching, becoming an educator also involves developing professional judgment, ethical decision-making, reflective practice, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

The State College of Florida Education Department is committed to partnering with you throughout that journey. Every course, field experience, assignment, conversation, and opportunity for reflection contributes to the professional identity you are developing. This section introduces the shared expectations, values, and habits that guide our community and prepare you for success throughout the program and beyond graduation.

1. The SCF Education Framework

Purpose

The SCF Education Framework serves as the foundation for every educator preparation program within the State College of Florida Education Department. It reflects our shared beliefs about

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

how exceptional educators are prepared and provides a common language for teaching, learning, assessment, clinical practice, and professional growth.

Rather than viewing each course as an isolated experience, the framework connects learning across your entire program so that every experience intentionally builds toward becoming a confident, reflective, and effective educator.

Why This Matters

Exceptional teaching does not happen by accident.

It develops through purposeful learning experiences that encourage curiosity, collaboration, reflection, authentic practice, and continuous improvement.

Throughout your program you will encounter these principles repeatedly because they represent the professional habits we believe every educator should develop.

Our framework is built upon six interconnected principles:

Purposeful Design

Every learning experience begins with a clear purpose aligned to professional standards and authentic classroom practice.

Active Engagement

Learning happens through participation, discussion, inquiry, collaboration, and meaningful application rather than passive observation.

Authentic Assessment

Assessment provides opportunities to demonstrate understanding, receive feedback, revise practice, and continue growing.

Professional Growth

Every experience contributes to your development as an educator and helps prepare you for future coursework, field experiences, internship, certification, and professional practice.

Inclusive Excellence

Exceptional educators recognize learner variability as a natural part of every classroom and intentionally create learning environments where every learner has opportunities to succeed.

Continuous Improvement

Reflection, feedback, evidence, and collaboration help educators strengthen their practice throughout their careers.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Engage actively in every learning experience.
- Connect new learning to previous coursework and field experiences.
- Reflect upon your growth and identify areas for continued development.
- Apply feedback to improve your knowledge and professional practice.
- Demonstrate professionalism in academic and clinical settings.
- Contribute positively to a collaborative learning community.

How We Support You

Our faculty intentionally design learning experiences that:

- connect theory with authentic classroom practice.
- provide timely, meaningful feedback.
- encourage collaboration and reflection.
- align coursework with professional standards and certification requirements.
- prepare you for success in today's schools.

Learning is viewed as a partnership. Faculty serve not only as instructors, but also as mentors and coaches who support your professional growth throughout the program.

If Challenges Occur

Learning to become an educator is challenging, and everyone experiences moments of uncertainty or difficulty.

If you encounter academic, professional, or personal challenges, we encourage you to communicate early with your instructor, Program Manager, advisor, or another member of the Education Department. Early conversations often lead to additional resources, coaching, or support that help you remain successful in the program.

When concerns involve academic integrity, professional conduct, or professional dispositions, additional coaching, documentation, or departmental processes may be necessary. These processes exist to protect both your professional growth and the learners you will ultimately serve.

Related Resources

- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Program Curriculum Maps
- Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs)
- Course Syllabi
- Canvas Course Shells

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The SCF Education Way

Exceptional educators are developed through purposeful experiences rather than isolated courses. Every assignment, discussion, lesson, field experience, and reflection contributes to the educator you are becoming. Our commitment is to provide meaningful opportunities for growth while supporting you in developing the confidence, competence, and professionalism that define exceptional educators.

2. Becoming a Professional Educator

Purpose

Choosing to become an educator is the beginning of a professional journey built on knowledge, service, integrity, and continuous learning. While earning your degree and completing certification requirements are important milestones, becoming an educator involves much more than completing academic requirements. It is about developing the professional habits, ethical judgment, and commitment to lifelong growth that enable educators to positively impact students, families, schools, and communities.

Throughout your program, you will gradually transition from thinking like a college student to thinking like an educator. Every interaction, assignment, field experience, and opportunity for reflection contributes to that transformation.

Why This Matters

Teaching is one of society's most trusted professions. Families entrust educators with their children's learning, well-being, and future opportunities. That trust requires educators who possess strong content knowledge, sound professional judgment, effective communication skills, ethical decision-making, and a genuine commitment to serving every learner.

Professionalism is not something that begins during internship or after graduation. It begins the moment you enter an educator preparation program.

The habits you develop today become the professional practices you will carry into your future classroom.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and accountability.
- Approach learning with curiosity and professionalism.
- Respect diverse perspectives and experiences.
- Accept feedback as an opportunity for growth.
- Maintain confidentiality when appropriate.
- Demonstrate reliability and follow through on commitments.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Recognize that your words, actions, and decisions contribute to your professional reputation.

How We Support You

The Education Department is committed to helping you develop professionally by providing:

- Authentic learning experiences connected to educational practice.
- Faculty mentoring and coaching.
- Meaningful clinical experiences.
- Opportunities for reflection and self-assessment.
- Constructive feedback throughout the program.
- Supportive relationships built on mutual respect and shared responsibility.

We believe every educator continues learning throughout their career, and we are honored to partner with you during the beginning of yours.

If Challenges Occur

Developing as a professional is an ongoing process. There may be times when your instructor, mentor teacher, or Program Manager identifies behaviors that require additional coaching or reflection.

Whenever possible, concerns will first be addressed through conversation, feedback, and opportunities for growth. When professional expectations are not met or concerns persist, the department may implement formal support processes, including Professional Concern Notices, remediation plans, or additional review procedures as outlined later in this handbook.

These processes are intended to promote professional growth while ensuring the safety and success of the learners and communities we serve.

Related Resources

- Professional Disposition Rubric
- Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs)
- Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in Florida
- Professional Growth Portfolio

The SCF Education Way

Exceptional educators are not defined by knowing all the answers. They are defined by their willingness to learn, reflect, adapt, and continually improve. Every challenge you encounter is an opportunity to strengthen the educator you are becoming.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

As you begin your educator preparation journey, what qualities do you hope your future students will remember about you?

3. Adult Learning and Professional Responsibility

Purpose

The SCF Education Department recognizes that educator candidates are adult learners who bring valuable experiences, responsibilities, strengths, and perspectives to the learning process. Our programs are intentionally designed to support adult learning through meaningful engagement, authentic application, collaboration, and reflection.

As an adult learner, you have both the freedom and the responsibility to take ownership of your professional growth.

Why This Matters

Learning in higher education differs from learning in elementary or secondary school. Adult learners are expected to actively engage in their own learning by managing their time, seeking support when needed, preparing for class, reflecting on feedback, and taking responsibility for their progress.

These same habits are essential for effective educators.

The responsibility you demonstrate as a learner today prepares you for the professional responsibilities you will assume as a classroom teacher tomorrow.

Your Responsibilities

You are expected to:

- Prepare for class and participate actively.
- Complete assigned work with integrity.
- Manage your time responsibly.
- Seek assistance when challenges arise.
- Communicate professionally with faculty and classmates.
- Reflect on feedback and apply it to future learning.
- Take ownership of your academic and professional development.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

How We Support You

Our faculty design learning experiences that recognize you as an adult learner by:

- Connecting coursework to authentic educational practice.
- Providing opportunities for collaboration and discussion.
- Offering timely feedback and coaching.
- Encouraging reflection and self-assessment.
- Supporting learner variability through accessible instructional design.
- Connecting you with campus resources that promote academic success and well-being.

If Challenges Occur

Life circumstances occasionally affect academic performance. If you experience personal, academic, or professional challenges, we encourage you to communicate early with your instructor or Program Manager.

Seeking assistance demonstrates professional responsibility and allows us to work together to identify appropriate resources or supports whenever possible.

Repeated disengagement, failure to communicate, or a pattern of unmet responsibilities may result in academic or professional interventions outlined elsewhere in this handbook.

Related Resources

- Learning Commons
- Accessibility Services
- CARE Team
- Faculty Office Hours
- Student Success Resources

The SCF Education Way

Professional responsibility begins with personal responsibility. Exceptional educators understand that growth happens when they actively engage, seek feedback, and take ownership of their learning.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

What habits will you intentionally develop now that will help you become the educator you aspire to be?

4. Professional Dispositions

"Professional dispositions are the habits that transform knowledge into effective practice."

Purpose

Teaching is both an intellectual and interpersonal profession. While effective educators possess strong content knowledge and instructional skills, they are equally defined by the attitudes, behaviors, and professional judgment they bring to every interaction with students, families, colleagues, and their community.

Professional dispositions reflect the habits that help educators build trust, foster positive relationships, make ethical decisions, and create learning environments where every student can thrive. These qualities develop over time through reflection, experience, coaching, and intentional practice.

Throughout your educator preparation program, professional dispositions are considered an essential component of your professional growth and are evaluated alongside your academic performance.

Why This Matters

Students often remember how an educator made them feel long after they forget a particular lesson.

Professional dispositions influence how educators:

- build positive relationships with students and families.
- collaborate with colleagues and school leaders.
- respond to challenges with professionalism.
- make ethical decisions.
- communicate respectfully.
- demonstrate reliability and accountability.

Knowledge prepares you to teach.

Professional dispositions prepare others to trust you with learners.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Because educators work with children and represent a profession grounded in public trust, developing strong professional dispositions is an expectation of every educator candidate.

Our Professional Dispositions

The SCF Education Department evaluates four professional dispositions throughout your program.

Professional Responsibility

Exceptional educators demonstrate reliability, preparedness, initiative, accountability, and a commitment to continuous learning.

Examples include:

- arriving prepared and on time.
- meeting deadlines.
- accepting responsibility for actions.
- following through on commitments.
- demonstrating initiative.

Ethical Conduct

Exceptional educators consistently demonstrate honesty, integrity, confidentiality, fairness, and ethical decision-making.

Examples include:

- completing original work.
- protecting confidential information.
- respecting academic integrity.
- making decisions that place students' well-being first.
- following professional and legal expectations.

Respect and Professional Interaction

Exceptional educators build positive relationships through empathy, collaboration, professionalism, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Examples include:

- communicating respectfully.
- working collaboratively.
- valuing learner variability.
- demonstrating cultural responsiveness.
- maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Emotional Regulation and Professional Judgment

Exceptional educators demonstrate self-awareness, resilience, sound judgment, and the ability to respond professionally in challenging situations.

Examples include:

- receiving feedback professionally.
- managing frustration appropriately.
- responding thoughtfully during difficult conversations.
- demonstrating flexibility.
- making decisions that reflect professional judgment.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to intentionally develop these dispositions throughout your program.

This includes:

- welcoming constructive feedback.
- reflecting on your professional growth.
- demonstrating professionalism across all learning environments.
- recognizing that growth is expected and supported.
- understanding that professional dispositions extend beyond the classroom into field experiences, online learning, and all interactions representing the College.

How We Support You

Developing professional dispositions is an ongoing process.

Faculty, mentor teachers, clinical supervisors, and department leadership support this growth by:

- modeling professional behaviors.
- providing regular feedback.
- facilitating opportunities for reflection.
- recognizing strengths.
- offering coaching when improvement is needed.
- connecting professional expectations to authentic educational practice.

Our goal is to help every educator candidate develop the professional habits that contribute to long-term success.

If Challenges Occur

Occasionally, concerns regarding professional dispositions may arise.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Whenever appropriate, concerns are first addressed through coaching, conversation, and opportunities for reflection and improvement.

If concerns continue or involve more significant issues, the department may initiate additional support processes such as a Professional Concern Notice, remediation plan, or Professional Fitness Review as described later in this handbook.

These processes are designed to promote growth while maintaining the professional standards expected within educator preparation and ensuring the safety and well-being of the students and schools we serve.

Related Resources

- Florida Educator Accomplished Practices
- Florida Code of Ethics of the Education Profession
- Professional Concern Process
- Professional Growth Portfolio

The SCF Education Way

Professional dispositions are not personality traits that you either possess or lack. They are professional habits developed through intentional practice, reflection, and experience. Every educator continues to grow throughout their career, and every opportunity to receive feedback is an opportunity to become a more effective educator.

Reflection

Which disposition do you believe will come most naturally to you, and which one do you think will require the greatest intentional growth?

5. Communication Expectations

"Every interaction is an opportunity to build trust, strengthen relationships, and demonstrate professionalism."

Purpose

Communication is one of the most important professional responsibilities of an educator. Every email, conversation, discussion post, meeting, classroom interaction, and digital message contributes to the relationships that support learning and professional collaboration.

Throughout your educator preparation program, you will communicate with faculty, classmates, mentor teachers, school administrators, families, and, eventually, P–12 students. Learning to

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

communicate with clarity, professionalism, empathy, and integrity is an essential part of becoming an educator.

Professional communication is not simply about exchanging information, it is also about building relationships, solving problems collaboratively, and fostering trust.

Why This Matters

Exceptional educators understand that communication shapes every aspect of the learning environment.

The way educators communicate influences:

- the trust students place in them.
- relationships with families.
- collaboration among colleagues.
- professional credibility.
- conflict resolution.
- student engagement.
- school culture.

Communication also reflects professionalism. Long before others observe your instructional skills, they notice how you listen, respond, write, collaborate, and conduct yourself.

The habits you develop now will become the communication practices you carry into your future classroom and professional career.

How the SCF Education Program Develops Professional Communication

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

FIGURE 1

The SCF Communication Framework

Building Professional Relationships Through Purposeful Preparation



Professional communication is not developed through a single course or assignment. Throughout your educator preparation journey, the SCF Education Program intentionally creates opportunities for you to strengthen the communication skills needed to build meaningful relationships with learners, families, colleagues, and yourself.

Every class discussion, faculty conversation, field experience, collaborative project, coaching session, and reflective practice contributes to your development as a professional communicator. Together, these experiences prepare you to communicate with confidence, empathy, integrity, and professionalism across the many relationships that define effective teaching.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Communication as a Professional Educator

Professional communication extends beyond speaking and writing. It reflects how educators think, listen, collaborate, and respond in a variety of professional settings.

Throughout your program, you will develop communication skills across five important areas.

Communicating with Yourself

Professional growth begins with reflection.

Exceptional educators regularly examine their own thinking, welcome feedback, recognize areas for growth, and celebrate progress. Reflection is an essential form of professional communication because it helps educators continually refine their practice.

Professional communication with yourself includes:

- reflecting honestly on your learning.
- accepting feedback with openness.
- setting professional goals.
- recognizing both strengths and opportunities for growth.

Communicating with Learners

Whether working with classmates during your preparation program or with children during field experiences, educators communicate in ways that promote dignity, encouragement, inclusion, and respect.

Professional communication with learners is:

- respectful.
- encouraging.
- patient.
- culturally responsive.
- age-appropriate.
- focused on learning and growth.

Exceptional educators recognize that every interaction contributes to a learner's sense of belonging and confidence.

Communicating with Colleagues

Education is a collaborative profession.

Throughout your program you will work alongside faculty, mentor teachers, clinical supervisors, classmates, school staff, and educational leaders. Professional communication strengthens these partnerships by fostering respect, collaboration, and shared problem-solving.

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Professional communication with colleagues includes:

- listening actively.
- contributing respectfully.
- valuing diverse perspectives.
- participating constructively in discussions.
- communicating disagreements professionally.
- honoring commitments and following through.

Communicating with Families

Families are essential partners in every learner's success.

While your opportunities to communicate directly with families during educator preparation may be limited, your coursework and field experiences will help you develop the professionalism expected when those opportunities arise.

Professional communication with families demonstrates:

- empathy.
- respect.
- confidentiality.
- cultural responsiveness.
- professionalism.
- a shared commitment to student success.

Communicating in Digital Spaces

Today's educators communicate through a variety of digital platforms.

Professional expectations extend to:

- SCF email.
- Canvas.
- Microsoft Teams.
- discussion boards.
- video conferencing.
- shared documents.
- social media.
- future district communication systems.

Digital communication should reflect the same professionalism expected during face-to-face interactions.

Remember:

Digital communication often becomes a permanent record of your professionalism.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Check your SCF email and Canvas announcements regularly. Suggested: beginning, middle and end of the week.
- Respond to faculty and school partners professionally and within a reasonable timeframe. Strive for 24 – 48 business hours.
- Use respectful, inclusive, and professional language in all forms of communication.
- Participate thoughtfully in discussions, group work, and collaborative learning experiences. “Discuss,” rather than post only on one day or due dates.
- Protect confidential information shared during coursework and clinical experiences.
- Communicate concerns or questions promptly rather than allowing misunderstandings to grow.
- Represent yourself, the College, and the teaching profession professionally in both in-person and digital environments.

Professional communication also includes active listening. Listening to understand, asking thoughtful questions, and considering multiple perspectives are essential skills for every educator.

How We Support You

The Education Department intentionally creates opportunities for you to strengthen your communication skills throughout your program.

Faculty support your growth by:

- modeling professional communication.
- providing constructive feedback.
- facilitating respectful discussions.
- encouraging collaboration.
- creating opportunities to practice written, verbal, and digital communication.
- coaching you through difficult conversations when appropriate.

Learning to communicate professionally is an ongoing process, and every interaction provides another opportunity to grow.

If Challenges Occur

Learning to communicate professionally takes practice, and misunderstandings occasionally occur.

When concerns arise, faculty and department leadership will typically begin by addressing them through conversation, coaching, and feedback. These discussions are intended to help you strengthen your communication skills and better understand professional expectations.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Repeated patterns of unprofessional communication, including disrespectful interactions, inappropriate digital communication, hostile or discriminatory language, failure to respond to important communications, breaches of confidentiality, or communication that undermines the learning environment, may result in additional documentation or formal departmental processes, including a Professional Concern Notice.

Because communication directly affects relationships with learners, families, colleagues, and school partners, developing strong communication skills is considered an essential component of educator preparation.

Related Resources

- Canvas Communication Tools
- Microsoft Teams
- SCF Student Email
- Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs)
- Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in Florida

The SCF Education Way

Exceptional educators understand that communication is more than speaking, it is listening with empathy, responding with professionalism, and building relationships grounded in trust and respect. Every conversation, email, discussion, and interaction provides an opportunity to model the kind of educator you are becoming.

Reflection

Think about an educator, coach, mentor, or colleague whose communication made a lasting impact on you. *What specific qualities made you feel respected, supported, or inspired, and how can you intentionally cultivate those same qualities in your own professional communication?*

6. Professional Conduct

"Professional conduct is demonstrated through everyday decisions that build trust, reflect integrity, and honor the responsibility of educating others."

Purpose

Professional conduct is the foundation upon which trust in the teaching profession is built. Every educator is entrusted with responsibilities that extend beyond instruction to include ethical decision-making, respectful relationships, sound professional judgment, and a commitment to the well-being of every learner.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

As an educator candidate, your professional conduct begins long before you become the teacher of record. Every interaction: with classmates, faculty, mentor teachers, school personnel, families, and P–12 students; contributes to your development as a professional educator and reflects your readiness to enter the profession.

Professional conduct is not simply about following rules. It is about consistently demonstrating the values and behaviors that inspire confidence, foster collaboration, and protect the trust placed in educators.

Why This Matters

Educators hold positions of significant responsibility and influence. Families, schools, and communities expect educators to demonstrate integrity, professionalism, and sound judgment in every aspect of their work.

Professional conduct shapes:

- the trust others place in you.
- your effectiveness as an educator.
- your relationships with students and families.
- your credibility among colleagues.
- your readiness for clinical experiences and employment.
- the reputation of the teaching profession.

Your professional reputation begins the moment you enter an educator preparation program and continues to develop throughout your career.

The Foundations of Professional Conduct

Professional conduct is demonstrated through the choices educators make every day.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

FIGURE 2

The SCF Professional Decision-Making Framework

Leading with Values. Thinking Professionally. Acting with Purpose.



SUPPORTED EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Through coursework, clinical experiences, coaching, feedback, and reflective practice, the SCF Education Department partners with you to develop the professional judgment and character of an exceptional educator.



ONE DEPARTMENT. SHARED PURPOSE. COLLECTIVE IMPACT.
Preparing Exceptional Educators.



The SCF Education Department encourages educator candidates to think about professional conduct through six interconnected commitments.

Commitment to Integrity

Exceptional educators are honest, ethical, and accountable for their actions.

Integrity includes:

- completing original work.
- acknowledging mistakes.
- honoring commitments.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- demonstrating academic honesty.
- acting consistently with professional values.

Commitment to Respect

Exceptional educators recognize the dignity and worth of every individual.

Respect includes:

- valuing diverse perspectives.
- creating welcoming learning environments.
- communicating professionally.
- treating others with fairness and courtesy.
- fostering belonging.

Commitment to Responsibility

Professional educators recognize that reliability and accountability build trust.

Responsibility includes:

- following through on commitments.
- meeting deadlines.
- preparing for learning experiences.
- fulfilling clinical expectations.
- using professional judgment.

Commitment to Ethical Decision-Making

Professional educators frequently encounter situations requiring thoughtful judgment.

Ethical decision-making involves:

- considering how decisions affect others.
- protecting confidentiality.
- following professional standards.
- seeking guidance when uncertain.
- placing student well-being at the center of decision-making.

Commitment to Professional Boundaries

Healthy professional relationships require appropriate boundaries.

Educators maintain professional boundaries by:

- interacting appropriately with students.
- respecting confidentiality.
- maintaining appropriate relationships in both physical and digital environments.
- recognizing the responsibilities associated with positions of trust.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Commitment to Representing the Profession

Every educator candidate represents:

- themselves.
- the State College of Florida.
- their educator preparation program.
- the teaching profession.

Professional conduct reflects positively on each of these communities.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Demonstrate honesty and integrity in all academic and professional settings.
- Treat every individual with dignity, courtesy, and respect.
- Follow College, department, district, and school expectations during coursework and clinical experiences.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding information learned through field experiences.
- Demonstrate sound judgment in face-to-face and digital interactions.
- Accept responsibility for your actions and decisions.
- Seek clarification whenever you are uncertain about professional expectations.

Professional conduct extends to every environment in which you represent the Education Department, including classrooms, field experiences, virtual learning environments, community events, and professional conferences.

How We Support You

Professional conduct develops through experience, reflection, coaching, and authentic practice.

Throughout your program, faculty, mentor teachers, clinical supervisors, and department leadership support your professional growth by:

- modeling ethical professional behavior.
- discussing authentic professional dilemmas.
- providing timely coaching and constructive feedback.
- encouraging reflection and professional dialogue.
- helping you connect ethical principles to everyday educational practice.

We recognize that developing professional judgment is a lifelong process, and we are committed to supporting your growth every step of the way.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

If Challenges Occur

Most concerns regarding professional conduct are addressed through coaching, conversation, and opportunities for reflection. These initial conversations are intended to promote learning and reinforce the professional expectations of the teaching profession.

However, behaviors that compromise the safety, well-being, dignity, or trust of others, or that significantly conflict with the ethical standards of the profession, may require formal departmental action.

Depending on the nature and severity of the concern, the department may implement a Professional Concern Notice, Professional Fitness Review, behavioral intervention, removal from a clinical placement, or other actions described later in this handbook. In situations involving district or school partners, additional actions may also be required in accordance with district policies and partnership agreements.

These processes exist not as punishment, but to uphold the integrity of the profession, protect learners, and support the development of competent, ethical educators.

Related Resources

- Florida Code of Ethics of the Education Profession
- Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs)
- Professional Disposition Rubric
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Professional Concern Process
- Professional Fitness Review
- Clinical Partnership Expectations

The SCF Education Way

Professional conduct is demonstrated in the everyday choices that often go unnoticed: how we respond to feedback, honor our commitments, support our colleagues, protect confidentiality, and place learners' needs at the center of our decisions. These small moments collectively shape the trust others place in us and the educators we become.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about a time when someone demonstrated exceptional professionalism during a difficult situation. *What specific actions earned your respect, and how might you demonstrate those same qualities when faced with challenges in your own career?*

7. Professional Appearance

"Professional appearance reflects more than what you wear, it communicates your respect for learners, colleagues, families, and the profession itself."

Purpose

Professional educators understand that appearance is one aspect of professional presence. Together with communication, preparation, demeanor, and interactions with others, it contributes to the confidence and trust that students, families, colleagues, and school communities place in educators.

Throughout your educator preparation program, you will participate in college classrooms, clinical experiences, school partnerships, professional meetings, conferences, and community events. Each of these settings presents opportunities to represent yourself, the State College of Florida, and the teaching profession with professionalism and pride.

Professional appearance is not about conformity or personal style. It is about demonstrating sound professional judgment by recognizing that different professional settings may require different expectations.

Why This Matters

Before students experience an educator's instruction, they experience the educator.

Professional presence communicates messages about:

- preparedness.
- professionalism.
- credibility.
- respect.
- approachability.
- confidence.
- attention to detail.

These first impressions influence relationships with learners, families, mentor teachers, administrators, and colleagues long before a lesson begins.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Professional educators understand that appearance should never distract from learning. Instead, it should reinforce confidence, respect, and trust.

Professional Presence

Professional appearance is one component of professional presence.



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Exceptional educators intentionally cultivate a presence that communicates confidence, professionalism, and respect through multiple dimensions. Professional presence is not about looking like an educator, it is about consistently demonstrating the knowledge, judgment, confidence, and character of one.

Appearance

Dress appropriately for the professional setting while honoring district expectations and the responsibilities of working with children and families.

Professional appearance should be:

- neat and well maintained.
- appropriate for instructional activities.
- safe for classroom environments.
- respectful of the educational setting.
- consistent with school or district expectations during clinical experiences.

Preparation

Professionalism is demonstrated through readiness.

Prepared educators arrive:

- on time.
- organized.
- prepared with required materials.
- ready to participate.
- ready to contribute positively to the learning environment.

Demeanor

Professional presence includes how educators carry themselves.

This includes:

- welcoming others.
- maintaining positive body language.
- demonstrating confidence with humility.
- remaining calm during challenges.
- showing patience and empathy.

Professional Judgment

Exceptional educators recognize that professional expectations may vary depending on the environment.

Educators exercise judgment by considering:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- the age of learners.
- classroom activities.
- district policies.
- school culture.
- safety.
- community expectations.
- professional responsibilities.

Professional judgment allows educators to make thoughtful decisions rather than relying solely on rules.

Digital Presence

Professional presence extends beyond face-to-face interactions.

Educator candidates should demonstrate professionalism when participating in:

- virtual classes.
- video conferences.
- discussion boards.
- social media.
- digital collaboration.
- professional networking.

Digital spaces represent the educator just as much as physical classrooms.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Present yourself professionally in academic and clinical settings.
- Follow appearance expectations established by partner schools and districts during field experiences and internships.
- Wear required identification when appropriate.
- Maintain personal hygiene and grooming consistent with professional expectations.
- Demonstrate professionalism through punctuality, preparedness, and respectful interactions.
- Recognize that your professional presence reflects upon yourself, the Education Department, and the teaching profession.

Professional appearance is ultimately an exercise in professional judgment and respect for the learning community you serve.

How We Support You

The Education Department recognizes that professional expectations develop through experience, observation, and coaching.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Faculty, mentor teachers, and clinical supervisors support your growth by:

- modeling professional expectations.
- discussing workplace norms.
- providing guidance before field experiences.
- offering constructive feedback.
- helping you navigate different professional settings.
- encouraging authentic professional identity rather than rigid conformity.

Our goal is not to define your personal style but to help you develop the professional judgment needed to represent yourself confidently across a variety of educational environments.

If Challenges Occur

Occasionally, an educator candidate's appearance or professional presence may not align with the expectations of a particular learning environment or clinical placement.

Whenever appropriate, concerns will first be addressed through respectful conversation, clarification of expectations, and opportunities for adjustment.

Because school districts and partner organizations maintain their own professional standards, educator candidates are expected to comply with site-specific expectations during field experiences and internships. Repeated concerns or failure to meet professional expectations may affect participation in clinical experiences or result in additional departmental support processes described later in this handbook.

These conversations are intended to support your professional growth while ensuring that educator candidates represent themselves, the College, and the profession with professionalism.

Related Resources

- District and School Dress Expectations
- Clinical Experience Handbook
- Professional Disposition Rubric
- Student Code of Conduct
- Professional Concern Process

The SCF Education Way

Professional appearance is not about meeting a dress code, it is about communicating respect. Every educator develops a unique professional identity, but all exceptional educators share a commitment to presenting themselves in ways that foster confidence, trust, and positive relationships. Professional presence is demonstrated through your appearance, your preparation, your demeanor, and the way you make others feel valued.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about an educator whose presence immediately inspired confidence and trust. *What was it about that person's appearance, demeanor, preparation, or interactions that made such a lasting impression? How do you hope your own professional presence will make others feel?*

8. Building Your Professional Identity

"Professional identity is not discovered, it is developed through intentional learning, meaningful relationships, reflective practice, and everyday choices."

Purpose

Professional identity is the evolving understanding of who you are as an educator and how you choose to serve learners, families, schools, and your community. It reflects the values you embrace, the decisions you make, the relationships you build, and the habits you develop throughout your educator preparation journey.

Professional identity is not formed through a single course or clinical experience. Rather, it develops gradually as you connect knowledge with practice, receive feedback, reflect on your experiences, and grow in confidence and competence.

Throughout your time in the SCF Education Program, every learning experience contributes to the educator you are becoming.

Why This Matters

Every educator brings unique experiences, strengths, perspectives, and aspirations to the profession. Your professional identity reflects not only what you know, but how you apply that knowledge in service of others.

Educators with a strong professional identity are more likely to:

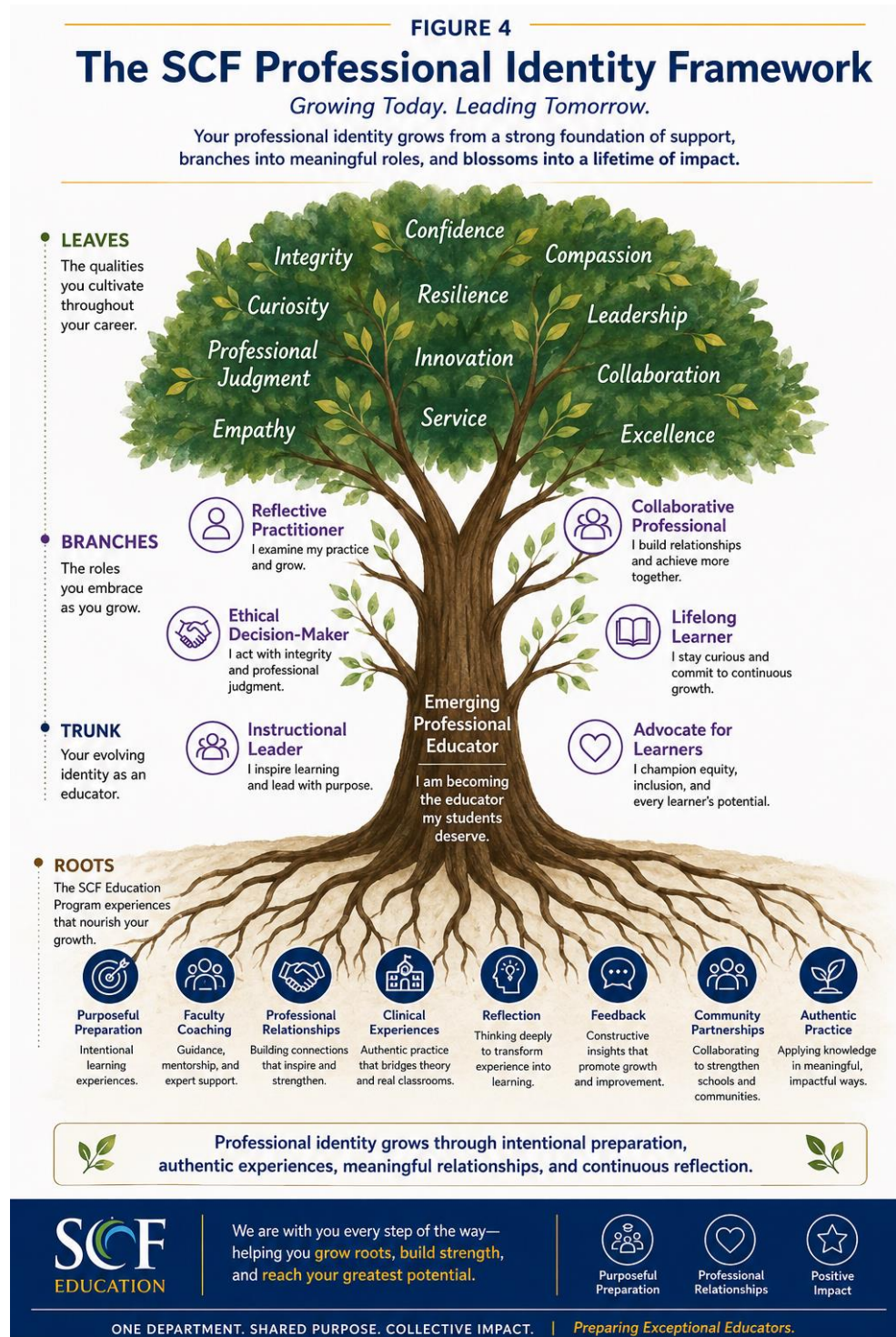
- approach challenges with confidence and resilience.
- embrace feedback as an opportunity for growth.
- collaborate effectively with colleagues.
- advocate for every learner.
- demonstrate ethical leadership.
- remain committed to lifelong learning.

Developing your professional identity helps you move beyond simply completing assignments toward becoming an educator whose actions consistently reflect the values of the profession.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The Journey of Becoming

Every exceptional educator was once exactly where you are today: choosing to learn, choosing to grow, and choosing to make a difference.



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Professional identity develops through intentional experiences that build upon one another throughout your program.

Becoming Reflective

Exceptional educators continually examine their practice, celebrate growth, and identify opportunities for improvement.

Reflection transforms experience into learning.

Becoming Collaborative

Teaching is not an individual profession.

Exceptional educators learn alongside colleagues, mentor teachers, families, and students by sharing ideas, asking questions, and working together to improve learning.

Becoming Adaptable

Education continues to evolve.

Exceptional educators remain curious, embrace innovation, respond thoughtfully to challenges, and continually refine their practice based on evidence, feedback, and learner needs.

Becoming an Advocate

Exceptional educators believe in the potential of every learner.

They use their knowledge, voice, and professional influence to create learning environments where every student feels valued, challenged, and supported.

Becoming a Lifelong Learner

Graduation is not the conclusion of learning.

It marks the beginning of a career dedicated to continuous professional growth, reflection, and improvement.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to intentionally cultivate your professional identity by:

- engaging fully in learning opportunities.
- reflecting on your experiences.
- seeking and applying feedback.
- demonstrating professionalism across academic and clinical settings.
- contributing positively to your learning community.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- documenting your growth throughout the program.
- recognizing that becoming an educator is an ongoing journey rather than a destination.

How We Support You

The SCF Education Department is committed to helping you build a strong professional identity by intentionally designing experiences that connect learning, reflection, and authentic practice.

Throughout your program, you will be supported through:

- rigorous and meaningful coursework.
- authentic field and clinical experiences.
- faculty coaching and mentorship.
- collaborative learning communities.
- constructive feedback.
- reflective practice.
- the Professional Growth Portfolio.
- partnerships with schools and community organizations.

Our goal is not simply to prepare you to graduate. Our goal is to prepare you to lead, serve, and continue growing throughout your career as an educator.

If Challenges Occur

Professional identity develops through both successes and challenges.

There may be times when academic performance, professional dispositions, communication, or professional conduct require additional attention or support. These moments should not be viewed as barriers to becoming an educator but as opportunities for reflection, coaching, and continued growth.

When concerns arise, the Education Department is committed to partnering with you through constructive feedback, individualized support, and clearly defined professional processes designed to help you continue progressing toward your goals.

At the same time, educator preparation carries a responsibility to ensure that graduates are prepared to uphold the ethical, professional, and instructional responsibilities of the profession. In circumstances where significant concerns persist despite support and intervention, additional departmental review may be necessary.

Related Resources

- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Professional Disposition Rubric
- Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs)
- Clinical Experience Handbook
- Professional Concern Process

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Career Services
- Professional Organizations

The SCF Education Way

Exceptional educators are not defined by a single lesson, observation, or semester. They are shaped through countless moments of learning, reflection, service, collaboration, and perseverance. Every experience within the SCF Education Program is intentionally designed to help you become the educator your future students deserve.

Reflection

Imagine yourself five years from now as an educator. *Beyond your classroom accomplishments, what qualities, values, and impact do you hope students, families, and colleagues will remember most about you?*

Section I Conclusion

Looking Ahead

As you review this first section of the handbook, you have explored what it means to begin thinking, learning, communicating, and acting as a professional educator. You have also been introduced to the habits, relationships, and values that form the foundation of your professional identity.

Becoming an educator is not defined by a single course, assignment, or field experience. It is a journey of continuous growth, one shaped by curiosity, reflection, collaboration, integrity, and an unwavering belief in the potential of every learner. Every experience in the SCF Education Program has been intentionally designed to help you build that identity and prepare you for the responsibilities of the profession.

As you move into the next section, the focus shifts from ***who you are becoming*** to how you will learn. You will explore the academic experiences, expectations, and support systems that guide your progress through the program and help you connect educational theory with authentic classroom practice.

Remember that every part of this handbook is connected by a single idea:

The SCF Education Department is not simply preparing you to earn a degree. We are partnering with you to become the educator your future students and our community deserve.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Section II

Learning Like an Educator

How would a professional educator approach learning?

"Exceptional educators never stop being exceptional learners."

Learning to teach requires more than acquiring knowledge. It requires curiosity, reflection, collaboration, perseverance, and a willingness to continually improve. Throughout the SCF Education Program, every course, assignment, field experience, discussion, and assessment has been intentionally designed to help you develop not only what you know, but how you think, solve problems, and grow as a professional educator.

Unlike many academic programs, educator preparation mirrors the profession itself. The habits you develop as a teacher candidate: preparing thoughtfully, participating actively, communicating professionally, meeting responsibilities, reflecting on feedback, and continuously improving; are the very same habits expected of successful educators.

Learning within the SCF Education Department is therefore a ***shared responsibility***. Faculty intentionally design meaningful learning experiences that challenge and support your growth. In turn, educator candidates actively engage in those experiences through preparation, participation, reflection, and professional responsibility.

This section explains how learning is intentionally designed throughout the program, the academic expectations that support your success, and the professional habits that will prepare you to thrive throughout your career as an educator.

9. Learning as an Adult Learner

"Exceptional educators remain exceptional learners throughout their careers."

Purpose

The SCF Education Department recognizes that educator candidates are adult learners who bring valuable experiences, perspectives, responsibilities, and aspirations to the learning process. Unlike traditional models of education that emphasize the passive acquisition of knowledge, adult learning is grounded in active engagement, reflection, collaboration, and authentic application.

Throughout your educator preparation journey, you will be encouraged to ask questions, explore ideas, apply new learning, reflect on your experiences, and connect theory to professional practice. Learning is not something that happens only in classrooms, it occurs through meaningful conversations, clinical experiences, collaboration with others, and continuous reflection.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

As an adult learner, you play an active role in shaping your own growth as a future educator.

Why This Matters

The habits you develop as a learner today become the habits you model as an educator tomorrow.

Professional educators are expected to be curious, reflective, adaptable, and committed to continuous improvement. They seek feedback, collaborate with colleagues, remain open to new ideas, and continually refine their practice to better serve their students.

Developing these habits begins now.

The SCF Education Program has been intentionally designed to help you experience learning in ways that mirror effective teaching. Rather than simply studying educational theory, you will experience many of the same instructional practices that research identifies as effective for learners of all ages.

As you progress through the program, you will begin to recognize that every course, assignment, discussion, and field experience has been intentionally designed to help you become not only a more knowledgeable educator, but also a more thoughtful learner.



Learning flourishes when purposeful teaching and active engagement come together through a shared commitment to growth.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 2.1

Shared Ownership of Learning

The Education Department believes that meaningful learning is a shared responsibility.

Faculty members are responsible for designing purposeful learning experiences, providing meaningful feedback, fostering accessible and inclusive learning environments, and supporting educator candidates throughout their professional growth.

Educator candidates are responsible for actively engaging in those learning experiences by preparing thoughtfully, participating fully, reflecting honestly, collaborating respectfully, and taking ownership of their continued development.

Learning is strongest when both faculty and educator candidates actively contribute to the partnership.

Why This Matters in Schools

The most effective educators never stop learning.

Professional educators participate in professional development, collaborate with colleagues, analyze student learning, reflect on their instructional decisions, and continually refine their practice throughout their careers.

By taking ownership of your learning today, you begin developing the habits that will support your students tomorrow.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Prepare for learning by completing assigned readings, activities, and pre-class work.
- Participate actively in discussions, collaborative learning experiences, and professional dialogue.
- Reflect on your learning and identify opportunities for continued growth.
- Welcome constructive feedback as an essential part of professional development.
- Apply new learning across courses and clinical experiences.
- Seek support when questions or challenges arise.
- Demonstrate curiosity, initiative, and professionalism throughout your educator preparation journey.

Learning is not measured solely by completed assignments, but by your willingness to engage fully in the learning process.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

How We Support You

The SCF Education Department intentionally designs learning experiences that recognize the strengths and needs of adult learners.

Throughout your program, faculty will support your growth by:

- connecting learning to authentic classroom practice.
- designing engaging and meaningful learning experiences.
- providing timely, constructive feedback.
- encouraging collaboration and professional dialogue.
- creating accessible learning environments that recognize learner variability.
- fostering opportunities for reflection and continuous improvement.
- mentoring and coaching you throughout your professional journey.

We recognize that every educator candidate follows a unique path. While your experiences and perspectives may differ, our commitment remains the same: to challenge, support, and prepare you for success as an exceptional educator.

If Challenges Occur

Learning is not always linear. There may be times when personal responsibilities, academic challenges, or unexpected life events affect your progress.

When challenges arise, we encourage you to communicate proactively with your instructor or Program Manager. Early communication often creates opportunities to identify resources, develop strategies, and support your continued growth.

At the same time, becoming an educator requires developing the professional habits of responsibility, communication, and perseverance. Repeated patterns of disengagement, failure to communicate, or limited participation may affect learning and may require additional support or intervention as outlined elsewhere in this handbook.

Our goal is always to partner with you in overcoming challenges while maintaining the high expectations of the teaching profession.

Related Resources

- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Faculty Office Hours
- Accessibility Services
- CARE Team
- Canvas Student Resources
- Student Success Center

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The SCF Education Way

Exceptional educators understand that learning is not something to complete, it is something to continually pursue. Curiosity, reflection, collaboration, and resilience are habits that strengthen over time, and every learning experience is an opportunity to become a more effective educator.

Professional Tip

Own your learning before you lead someone else's.

The habits you develop as an educator candidate: preparing thoughtfully, asking questions, reflecting on feedback, and seeking continuous improvement; will become the habits your future students observe and emulate.

Reflection

Think about the most meaningful learning experience you have had as an adult. *What made it meaningful? How did your own engagement contribute to that experience, and how might those same conditions influence the learners you will one day teach?*

10. Course Design

"Exceptional educators intentionally design learning experiences that help every learner succeed. Throughout this program, you will experience that same intentional design firsthand."

Purpose

Every course within the SCF Education Department has been intentionally designed to prepare you for the realities of today's classrooms and tomorrow's schools. Rather than viewing coursework as a collection of isolated assignments, we design learning experiences that help you connect educational theory with authentic practice, develop professional judgment, and continually strengthen your ability to support every learner.

As an educator candidate, you are not only learning about effective teaching, you are experiencing it.

The instructional practices, learning activities, assessments, and feedback you encounter throughout the program model many of the same evidence-informed practices you will one day use with your own students.

Why This Matters

Exceptional teaching begins with intentional design.

Every meaningful learning experience starts with a clear purpose, thoughtful planning, active engagement, opportunities for practice, constructive feedback, and reflection.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

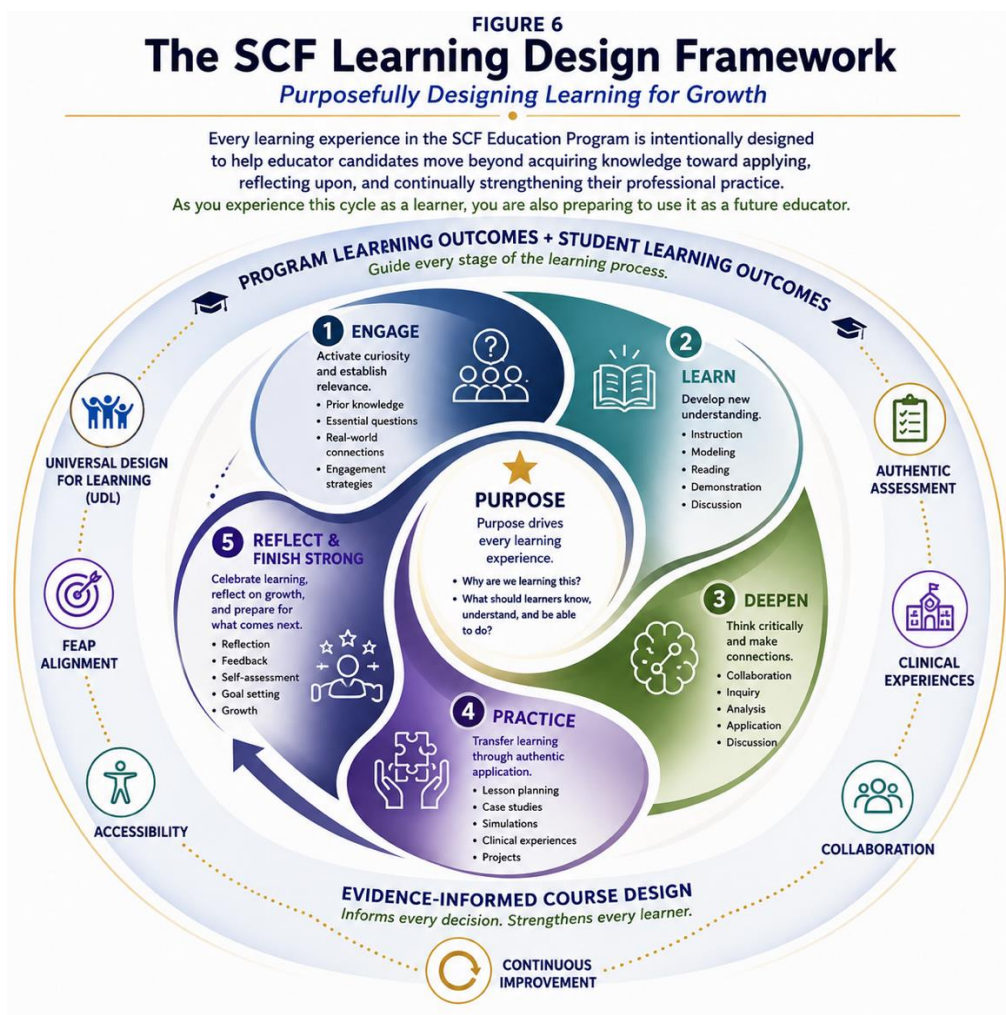
Throughout the SCF Education Program, courses are intentionally designed to help you:

- Connect theory with authentic classroom practice.
- Develop confidence through meaningful application.
- Strengthen critical thinking and instructional decision-making.
- Collaborate with peers and professionals.
- Experience instructional strategies from the learner's perspective.
- Prepare for increasingly complex clinical experiences.
- Build toward successful entry into the teaching profession.

Rather than asking, *"What assignment do I have to complete?"* we encourage you to ask:

"What is this learning experience preparing me to do as a future educator?"

That question reflects the mindset of a professional learner.



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Every course in the SCF Education Department follows a shared philosophy of intentional learning design. While individual instructors bring their own expertise, teaching style, and creativity to each course, learning experiences are intentionally developed through a common instructional cycle that supports active engagement, meaningful learning, authentic application, and continuous growth. As you progress through the program, you'll begin to recognize this cycle in every course and eventually use it to design learning for your own students.

The SCF Course Design Framework

Learning experiences throughout the Education Program are intentionally designed around several guiding principles.

Purposeful Learning

Every course begins with clearly defined learning outcomes aligned to professional standards, certification expectations, and authentic educational practice.

You should always understand *why* you are learning something, not simply *what* you are learning.

Active Engagement

Learning is most meaningful when educator candidates actively participate through discussion, inquiry, collaboration, problem-solving, and authentic application.

Rather than passively receiving information, you will frequently engage with ideas, practice instructional strategies, and learn alongside your peers.

Authentic Application

Future educators learn best by applying knowledge in realistic educational contexts.

Throughout the program you will encounter:

- lesson design
- case studies
- simulations
- classroom observations
- field experiences
- collaborative problem-solving
- reflective practice

These experiences help bridge the gap between theory and professional practice.

Feedback for Growth

Feedback is an essential part of learning.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Assignments are intentionally designed to provide opportunities for meaningful feedback that strengthens future learning rather than simply evaluating past performance.

Learning continues after an assignment is submitted.

Reflection

Reflection transforms experience into professional growth.

Throughout the program you will regularly examine your learning, consider new perspectives, connect coursework to practice, and identify opportunities for continued development.

Reflection helps educator candidates become thoughtful decision-makers rather than simply completing academic tasks.

Progression

Each course builds upon previous learning while preparing you for future coursework, clinical experiences, internship, certification, and professional practice.

Learning throughout the program is intentionally sequenced.
Today's learning prepares you for tomorrow's responsibilities.

Department Standard 2.2

Intentional Course Design

The SCF Education Department is committed to designing learning experiences that reflect evidence-informed instructional practices and prepare educator candidates for the complexities of professional teaching.

Courses across the program intentionally:

- align learning outcomes with professional standards.
- connect theory with authentic educational practice.
- incorporate collaboration, reflection, and active engagement.
- provide meaningful opportunities for feedback and revision.
- recognize learner variability through accessible instructional design.
- prepare educator candidates for success in clinical experiences and professional practice.

Although individual instructors bring their own expertise, teaching styles, and course activities, every course reflects the department's shared commitment to intentional learning design.

Why This Matters in Schools

Effective teaching begins long before students enter the classroom.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Exceptional educators intentionally design lessons that align learning goals, instructional strategies, assessment, accessibility, and student engagement.

By experiencing intentionally designed courses throughout your educator preparation program, you are developing a deeper understanding of how purposeful instructional design supports meaningful learning for every student.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- engage fully in intentionally designed learning experiences.
- approach assignments as opportunities for professional growth.
- actively participate in discussions and collaborative learning.
- connect coursework across courses and field experiences.
- reflect on how instructional strategies influence your own learning.
- recognize the purpose behind learning activities rather than focusing solely on completion or grades.

Whenever possible, ask yourself:

"How might I adapt this learning experience for my future students?"

How We Support You

Faculty intentionally design courses that:

- connect learning to authentic educational practice.
- model evidence-informed teaching strategies.
- incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.
- provide timely feedback and opportunities for reflection.
- foster inclusive learning communities.
- challenge educator candidates while providing meaningful support.
- prepare students for professional practice through progressively complex learning experiences.

Our goal is to help you experience effective teaching while learning to become an effective teacher.

If Challenges Occur

Learning experiences occasionally feel unfamiliar, challenging, or different from those encountered in other college programs. This is intentional.

Educator preparation emphasizes authentic application, collaboration, reflective practice, and professional problem-solving because these experiences mirror the realities of teaching.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

If you are uncertain about the purpose of a learning activity or assignment, we encourage you to ask questions and engage in conversation with your instructor. Understanding the purpose behind your learning often strengthens both engagement and success.

When challenges arise, faculty are committed to partnering with you through coaching, feedback, and meaningful support while maintaining the academic rigor necessary to prepare exceptional educators.

Related Resources

- Course Syllabi
- Canvas Course Shells
- Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs)
- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Universal Design for Learning Resources
- Clinical Experience Handbook

The SCF Education Way

Exceptional educators design learning with intention. Throughout your educator preparation journey, every course is thoughtfully crafted to model the same evidence-informed practices, meaningful relationships, and learner-centered experiences that you will one day create for your own students. As you learn, pay attention not only to ***what*** you are learning, but also to ***how*** you are learning and consider how those experiences are shaping the educator you are becoming.

Professional Tip

Study the design, not just the content.

As you move through your courses, notice how your instructors organize learning, ask questions, facilitate discussions, provide feedback, and support different learners. Every course offers a window into the craft of teaching. The more intentionally you observe these design decisions, the more prepared you will be to make thoughtful instructional decisions in your own classroom.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about a learning experience in one of your courses that made you feel engaged, challenged, or inspired. *What specific design choices contributed to that experience, and how might you adapt those ideas for your own future students?*

11. Technology and Innovative Learning Environments

"Technology is most powerful when it strengthens learning, expands access, and supports meaningful human relationships."

Purpose

Technology is an integral part of teaching, learning, collaboration, and professional practice. Throughout the SCF Education Program, digital tools are intentionally used to support meaningful learning experiences, enhance communication, improve accessibility, and prepare educator candidates for the technology-rich environments found in today's schools.

Canvas serves as the primary learning management system for the Education Department, providing access to course materials, assignments, feedback, grades, announcements, and learning resources. Alongside Canvas, educator candidates will engage with a variety of digital tools that support collaboration, reflection, instructional design, and professional growth.

Learning to use technology effectively is no longer an optional skill, it is an essential component of becoming an exceptional educator.

Why This Matters

Today's educators teach in environments where technology supports communication, instructional design, assessment, collaboration, accessibility, and family engagement.

Effective educators understand that technology should never replace meaningful teaching or professional judgment. Instead, it should enhance learning, remove barriers, foster collaboration, and create opportunities for every learner to succeed.

Throughout your preparation program, you will experience technology as a learner while simultaneously developing the digital competencies expected of professional educators.

As you engage with technology, consider not only *how* you are using it, but *why* it has been selected to support learning.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Technology as a Professional Learning Tool

Throughout the SCF Education Program, technology supports learning in several interconnected ways.

Learning

Canvas organizes learning experiences, provides access to instructional resources, and supports your progression through each course.

Technology helps you:

- access learning materials.
- complete assignments.
- review feedback.
- monitor your progress.
- revisit learning resources.

Collaboration

Professional educators rarely work in isolation.

Digital tools such as Microsoft Teams, shared documents, discussion boards, and collaborative platforms allow educator candidates to learn alongside faculty and peers while developing the collaboration skills expected within today's schools.

Communication

Technology strengthens communication between educator candidates, faculty, mentor teachers, and classmates.

Professional communication through digital platforms should always reflect the same courtesy, professionalism, and respect expected in face-to-face interactions.

Accessibility

The Education Department intentionally incorporates accessible instructional practices and technologies that recognize learner variability and promote equitable access to learning.

Throughout your program, you will experience many accessibility practices: including captioned media, accessible documents, flexible learning supports, and multiple ways to engage with course content; that model the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

As a future educator, you are encouraged to notice these design decisions and consider how they support diverse learners.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Professional Growth

Technology also supports your long-term development as an educator through digital portfolios, professional organizations, instructional planning tools, research databases, certification resources, and opportunities for continued learning.

Learning to organize, curate, and responsibly use digital resources will benefit you throughout your career.

Simulation-Based Learning

The SCF Education Department intentionally integrates simulation-based learning experiences throughout educator preparation to provide opportunities for practice, reflection, coaching, and professional growth before working with P–12 students in authentic classroom settings.

Using the Simulation Lab and, for example, Mursion simulations, educator candidates engage in realistic instructional scenarios that strengthen instructional decision-making, communication, classroom interactions, and professional confidence.

Simulation experiences provide opportunities to:

- practice instructional strategies in a supportive environment.
- receive immediate coaching and feedback.
- reflect on instructional decisions.
- develop confidence before clinical experiences.
- strengthen professional judgment through repeated practice.

Simulation is not designed to replace clinical experiences. Rather, it complements authentic field experiences by providing opportunities to intentionally practice complex teaching skills before applying them in real classrooms.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 2.3

Professional Use of Technology

The SCF Education Department is committed to preparing educator candidates who use technology responsibly, ethically, and purposefully.

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Access Canvas and SCF email regularly.
- Monitor course announcements and communications.
- Submit assignments using designated digital platforms.
- Maintain organized digital files and learning resources.
- Demonstrate professional digital citizenship in all online interactions.
- Protect confidential information encountered during coursework and clinical experiences.
- Use technology in ways that support authentic learning and professional growth.
- Engage professionally in technology-enhanced learning experiences, including Canvas, collaborative technologies, the Simulation Lab, and Mursion simulations, as required throughout the program.

Technology should enhance learning, strengthen collaboration, and support professional practice, not distract from it.

Why This Matters in Schools

Technology is woven into nearly every aspect of today's educational environments.

Educators routinely use digital tools to plan instruction, communicate with families, analyze student learning, collaborate with colleagues, provide accommodations, and support individualized instruction.

Developing thoughtful technology habits now prepares you to confidently navigate the evolving digital landscape of education while always keeping learners at the center of your decisions.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Check Canvas and your SCF email consistently.
- Review course announcements and instructor communications promptly.
- Maintain reliable access to required technology whenever possible.
- Use digital tools professionally and respectfully.
- Organize digital files, coursework, and professional resources.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Practice responsible digital citizenship in all online interactions.
- Seek assistance promptly if technology challenges interfere with learning.

Technology is an important tool, but your engagement, preparation, and professional judgment remain the most important contributors to your success.

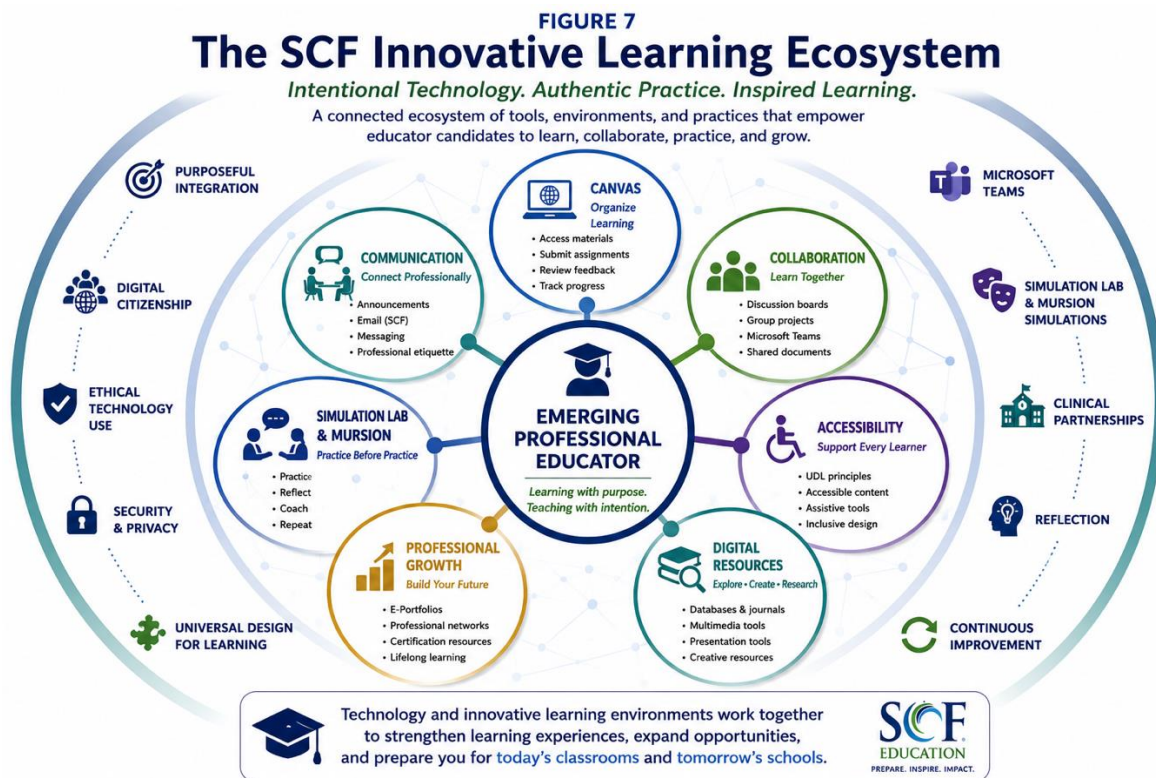
Throughout the program, technology is never introduced simply because it is available. Each digital tool, learning platform, and simulation experience is intentionally selected to strengthen your learning, support authentic practice, and prepare you for the realities of today's educational environments.

How We Support You

The Education Department intentionally integrates technology into your learning experiences to prepare you for professional practice.

Faculty support your development by:

- designing organized and accessible Canvas courses.
- modeling effective educational technology practices.
- incorporating digital collaboration tools.
- providing technology-enhanced learning experiences.
- connecting technology to authentic classroom practice.
- helping you develop confidence using instructional technologies you'll encounter in schools.



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Technology should always serve learning, not become a barrier to it.

If Challenges Occur

Technology occasionally presents challenges, and we recognize that unexpected issues may arise.

Educator candidates are encouraged to communicate promptly with their instructor if technology difficulties affect coursework or participation. Early communication allows opportunities to identify solutions, access available support resources, and minimize disruptions to learning.

Repeated failure to engage with required learning technologies, monitor course communications, or use digital platforms responsibly may affect participation in coursework and may require additional support or intervention.

The Education Department encourages educator candidates to approach technology with flexibility, curiosity, and a willingness to learn, qualities that will continue serving you throughout your professional career.

Related Resources

- Canvas Student Guide
- Microsoft Teams
- SCF Information Technology Help Desk
- Learning Commons
- Accessibility Services
- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Artificial Intelligence Guidelines (more to come)

The SCF Education Way

Technology is not the destination, it is a bridge that connects people, ideas, and opportunities for learning. Exceptional educators thoughtfully select and use technology to strengthen relationships, expand access, foster creativity, and support every learner. Throughout your educator preparation journey, technology is one of many tools that helps you learn, collaborate, and grow into the educator your future students deserve.

Professional Tip

Learn technology with two perspectives.

As an educator candidate, ask yourself not only, *"How do I use this tool successfully?"* but also, *"Why did my instructor choose this tool, and how might it support learning in my future classroom?"* Every technology experience in the program is an opportunity to strengthen both your digital confidence and your instructional decision-making.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about a technology tool that has made your own learning more engaging, accessible, or meaningful. *What made it effective? How could you intentionally use technology to create that same experience for your future students?*

12. Presence, Engagement, and Professional Responsibility

"Professional educators do more than attend; they contribute, collaborate, and engage in learning with purpose."

Purpose

Learning is an active process that extends far beyond simply being present. Throughout the SCF Education Program, meaningful learning occurs through preparation, participation, collaboration, reflection, and authentic application.

While the College does not require traditional attendance tracking, educator preparation depends upon active engagement in learning experiences that build the knowledge, skills, and professional habits expected of future educators.

Presence is demonstrated not only by where you are, but by how you contribute to the learning community.

Why This Matters

Exceptional educators understand that learning is relational.

Ideas develop through *discussion*. Understanding deepens through *collaboration*. Confidence grows through *practice*. Professional judgment strengthens through *reflection* and *feedback*.

Many of the most valuable learning experiences in educator preparation including class discussions, simulations, collaborative problem-solving, peer feedback, and clinical experiences, depend upon active participation and cannot be fully recreated after the learning opportunity has passed.

Professional educators are expected to be fully engaged in the work of teaching, collaborating, learning, and serving others. Developing those habits begins now.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Participation and Engagement

Professional participation and engagement are demonstrated through intentional actions that contribute to your own learning and to the learning of others.

Participation and Engagement Look Like...	Participation and Engagement Do Not Look Like...
Preparing for learning by completing assigned readings, activities, and pre-class work.	Arriving unprepared or relying on others to provide information that was expected before class.
Arriving on time and ready to learn.	Frequently arriving late, leaving early, or disrupting the learning environment.
Asking thoughtful questions and engaging in meaningful discussion.	Remaining disengaged or participating only when required.
Listening actively and respectfully to classmates, faculty, and guest speakers.	Distracting yourself or others through unrelated conversations, devices, or multitasking.
Contributing to collaborative learning experiences and supporting peers.	Allowing others to carry the responsibility for group learning or collaborative work.
Engaging fully in Simulation Lab experiences, Mursion simulations, field experiences, and clinical learning.	Treating simulations, field experiences, or collaborative activities as optional or less important than graded assignments.
Reviewing feedback, reflecting on your learning, and applying it to future work.	Viewing assignments as complete once they are submitted without considering feedback for future growth.
Communicating proactively when challenges arise that may affect participation or assignment completion.	Waiting until after deadlines or missed learning experiences to communicate about challenges.
Demonstrating professionalism in face-to-face, online, hybrid, and technology-enhanced learning environments.	Engaging in behaviors that diminish your own learning or the learning of others.
Approaching every learning experience as an opportunity to grow as an educator.	Viewing coursework as tasks to complete rather than opportunities to strengthen your professional practice.

Professional Insight

Participation and Engagement are not measured by how often you speak, it is measured by how intentionally you engage with your learning and contribute to the growth of others.

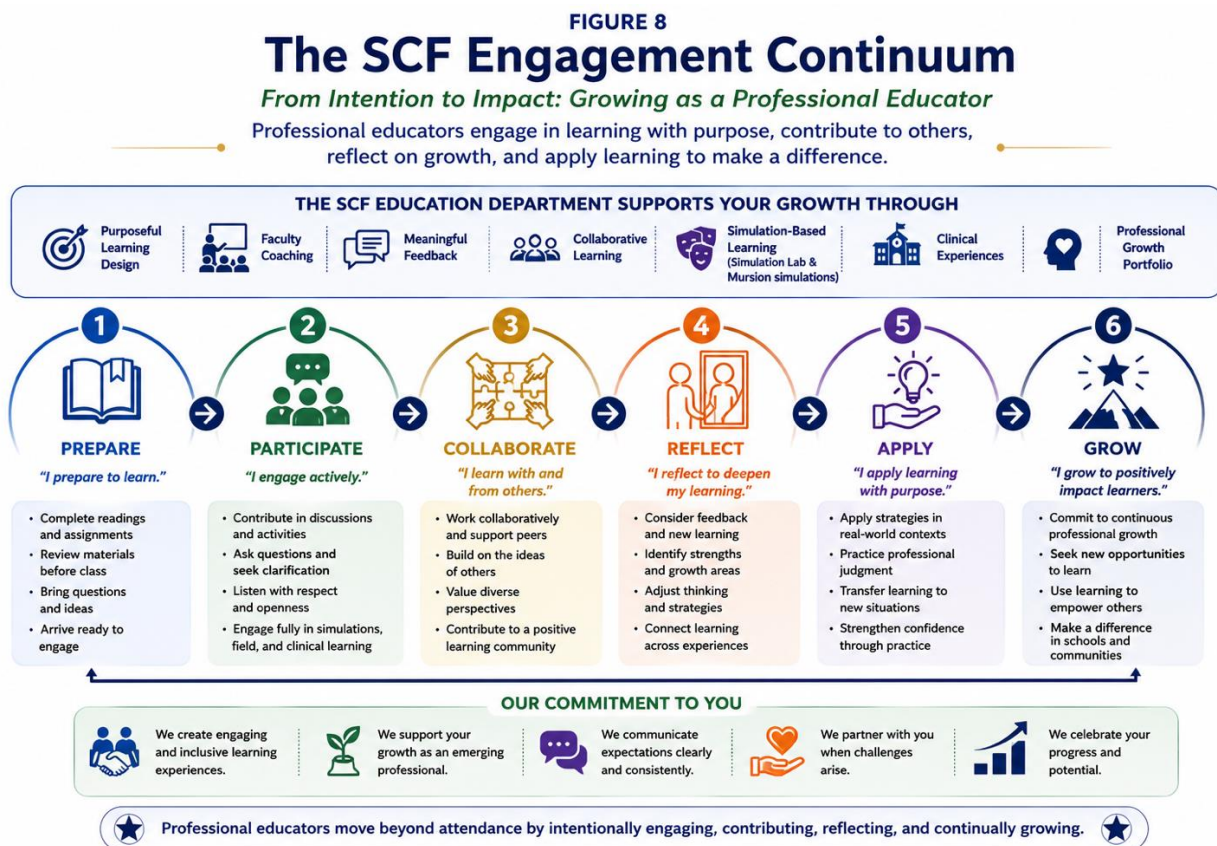
Every educator candidate participates differently. Some learners contribute by asking insightful questions, others by facilitating thoughtful discussions, making meaningful connections, supporting classmates, engaging deeply in reflection, or applying learning in authentic ways. Exceptional educators recognize that meaningful participation is defined by purposeful engagement rather than personality or communication style.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The SCF Education Department Supports Your Growth Through

- Purposeful Learning Design
- Faculty Coaching
- Meaningful Feedback
- Collaborative Learning
- Simulation-Based Learning
- Clinical Experiences
- Reflection
- Professional Growth Portfolio

Professional educators move beyond attendance by intentionally engaging, contributing, reflecting, and continually growing.



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 2.4

Presence and Engagement

The SCF Education Department expects educator candidates to demonstrate professional responsibility through consistent preparation, meaningful engagement, timely communication, and active participation in all learning experiences.

Professional responsibility includes engagement in face-to-face, online, hybrid, simulation-based, field, and clinical learning environments.

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Arrive on time and prepared for all scheduled learning experiences.
- Complete assigned readings, learning activities, and required preparation before class.
- Participate actively and professionally in discussions, collaborative activities, simulations, and instructional experiences.
- Contribute respectfully to the learning of peers through thoughtful dialogue and collaboration.
- Remain engaged throughout scheduled learning experiences unless excused by the instructor.
- Communicate promptly with instructors regarding circumstances that significantly affect participation.
- Monitor Canvas, SCF email, and other required communication platforms on a regular basis.
- Demonstrate professionalism during all virtual learning experiences by minimizing distractions and engaging appropriately.

Professional engagement is evaluated through demonstrated participation and contribution to learning rather than physical presence alone.

Department Expectation

Because educator preparation emphasizes collaborative learning, discussion, simulation, reflection, and authentic practice, some instructional experiences cannot be replicated outside of the scheduled learning environment.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Class discussions
- Peer collaboration
- Presentations
- Simulation Lab experiences
- Mursion simulations
- Guest speakers
- Field experiences

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- Clinical activities

Faculty will communicate course-specific expectations regarding participation within the course syllabus.

Why This Matters

Professional educators consistently demonstrate reliability, preparation, collaboration, and engagement. These habits begin during educator preparation and continue throughout a professional career.

Every learning experience is an opportunity to strengthen the professional behaviors expected of educators.

Department Standard 2.5

Timely Participation and Assignment Submission

The SCF Education Department expects educator candidates to complete learning experiences and submit assignments within published timelines.

Timely participation supports meaningful learning, timely feedback, collaborative learning, and professional growth.

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Submit assignments by published deadlines.
- Complete required learning experiences according to the course schedule.
- Review instructor feedback and apply it to future learning.
- Communicate with instructors before assignment deadlines whenever circumstances significantly affect timely completion.
- Recognize that some learning experiences cannot be recreated after the scheduled instructional opportunity.

Department Expectation

Individual instructors will clearly communicate assignment requirements, due dates, and course-specific late submission procedures within the course syllabus.

Because assignments vary in purpose, instructors may establish different expectations for:

- discussions
- collaborative work
- presentations
- simulations
- field experiences
- clinical activities
- major assessments

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- ongoing practice assignments

Whenever flexibility is appropriate, instructor decisions should remain consistent with departmental standards and the learning outcomes of the course.

Late Submission Guidance

The Education Department recognizes that unexpected circumstances occasionally occur. Educator candidates experiencing circumstances that affect timely submission are expected to communicate proactively with their instructor before the assignment deadline whenever possible.

Unless otherwise specified in the course syllabus, assignments submitted after the published deadline will receive a 10% point deduction for each calendar day they are late, up to one week.

Because feedback is an essential component of professional growth, faculty will continue to provide meaningful feedback on late submissions. This reflects the department's commitment to ensuring that every learning experience contributes to your continued development as an educator, even when full credit is no longer available.

Educator candidates should also recognize that many assignments are intentionally sequenced to prepare them for subsequent learning experiences, collaborative activities, simulations, field experiences, or clinical practice. Submitting work on time ensures that instructor feedback can be applied when it is most meaningful and supports both your own learning and the collective learning of the class.

Learning experiences that rely upon active participation, including discussions, presentations, Simulation Lab experiences, Mursion simulations, peer collaboration, and clinical experiences, may have limited or no opportunities for late completion because the instructional experience cannot be authentically recreated.

Why This Matters

Professional educators work within timelines that directly affect students, colleagues, families, and school communities.

Professional responsibility includes preparing lessons before instruction, meeting legal and district deadlines, responding to communication in a timely manner, and contributing reliably to collaborative work.

Developing habits of timeliness during educator preparation strengthens the professional behaviors expected throughout an educator's career.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Prepare for every learning experience.
- Engage actively and professionally in class, online, and during clinical experiences.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Complete learning activities within established timelines.
- Communicate early when circumstances affect your participation.
- Review and apply instructor feedback.
- Recognize that your participation contributes to the learning of others as well as your own.

Your engagement strengthens the entire learning community.

How We Support You

Faculty intentionally design learning experiences that encourage active participation and meaningful engagement.

Throughout the program, faculty support your success by:

- creating engaging and interactive learning environments.
- providing meaningful feedback.
- facilitating discussion and collaboration.
- incorporating authentic practice through simulations and clinical experiences.
- communicating expectations clearly.
- partnering with you when unexpected challenges arise.

Our goal is to create learning experiences that encourage participation because they are meaningful, not simply because they are required.

If Challenges Occur

We recognize that unexpected life events, illness, family responsibilities, and other circumstances may occasionally interrupt your participation.

When challenges arise, proactive communication is essential. Contacting your instructor as early as possible allows opportunities to discuss available support, clarify expectations, and identify appropriate next steps.

At the same time, educator preparation requires developing the professional habits of reliability, communication, and responsibility. Repeated patterns of limited engagement, failure to communicate, or missed learning experiences may reduce opportunities for meaningful feedback and authentic practice and may require additional departmental support processes described later in this handbook.

Whenever possible, our approach is to partner with you in identifying solutions while maintaining the professional expectations of the program.

Related Resources

- Course Syllabi
- Canvas Course Shells
- Microsoft Teams

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Professional Growth Portfolio
- CARE Team
- Professional Concern Process

The SCF Education Way

Presence is more than attendance. It is the intentional choice to prepare, participate, collaborate, reflect, and contribute to a community of learners. Exceptional educators understand that every meaningful learning experience shapes not only what they know but who they are becoming.

Professional Tip

Communicate early.

Professional educators don't wait until challenges become barriers. Whether you're managing coursework, clinical experiences, or personal responsibilities, timely communication demonstrates responsibility, builds trust, and allows others to support your success.

Reflection

Think about a time when your active participation made a learning experience more meaningful: for yourself or for someone else. *What did you contribute, and how does that experience influence the kind of educator you hope to become?*

Professional Responsibility in Action

Throughout this handbook, the Education Department has introduced several Department Standards that define the expectations of every educator candidate. Although each standard focuses on a different aspect of your professional journey, they are connected by one common principle:

Integrity.

Academic integrity is not simply about avoiding misconduct. It is demonstrated through the everyday choices you make as a learner, collaborator, and emerging professional educator.

Department Standard	Academic Integrity in Action
2.1 Shared Ownership of Learning	Taking responsibility for your own learning rather than relying on the work or thinking of others.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard	Academic Integrity in Action
2.2 Intentional Course Design	Engaging authentically with learning experiences that have been intentionally designed to prepare you for professional practice.
2.3 Professional Use of Technology and Innovative Learning Environments	Using Canvas, digital resources, the Simulation Lab, Mursion simulations, and educational technologies responsibly, ethically, and in ways that support authentic learning.
2.4 Presence, Engagement, and Professional Responsibility	Participating honestly, preparing thoughtfully, contributing meaningfully, and representing your own learning during every educational experience.
2.5 Timely Participation and Assignment Submission	Completing work within established timelines while recognizing that authentic learning and meaningful feedback occur through active participation—not shortcuts.

Professional Reflection

Academic integrity is demonstrated long before an assignment is submitted.

It is reflected in how you prepare, participate, collaborate, communicate, use technology, seek feedback, and take ownership of your own learning.

Integrity is not a single decision.

It is a professional habit.

13. Academic Integrity

"Integrity is demonstrated when your work honestly reflects your learning, your effort, and your professional growth."

Purpose

Academic integrity is foundational to educator preparation because the teaching profession is built upon trust. Students, families, colleagues, schools, and communities rely on educators to demonstrate honesty, ethical decision-making, accountability, and professional responsibility in every aspect of their work.

Throughout the SCF Education Program, academic integrity extends beyond completing original assignments. It reflects your commitment to authentic learning, professional ethics, and the responsibility of becoming an educator who is worthy of the trust others place in the profession.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Integrity is not measured only when someone is watching. It is demonstrated through the choices you make every day as an emerging professional educator.

Why This Matters

Every assignment, discussion, lesson plan, assessment, reflection, field experience, and simulation provides an opportunity to strengthen the knowledge and professional judgment you will eventually use to support P–12 learners.

When learning is replaced by shortcuts, the opportunity for growth is diminished.

Educator preparation is unique because your learning today directly influences the students you will teach tomorrow.

Submitting work that does not authentically represent your own learning prevents faculty from accurately assessing your progress, providing meaningful feedback, and preparing you for the responsibilities of professional practice.

Integrity protects both your learning and the future learners you will one day serve.

Department Standard 2.6

Academic Integrity

Educator candidates are expected to demonstrate honesty, originality, ethical decision-making, and professional responsibility throughout all academic, clinical, simulation-based, and professional learning experiences.

Academic integrity includes:

- Completing and submitting your own original work unless collaboration is specifically authorized.
- Accurately acknowledging the ideas, words, data, images, and intellectual work of others.
- Following instructor expectations regarding collaboration and technology use.
- Using artificial intelligence and digital tools only in accordance with departmental and course expectations.
- Representing your own knowledge, skills, and professional growth honestly.

Academic dishonesty including plagiarism, fabrication, unauthorized collaboration, falsification, misrepresentation, or other violations of academic integrity, is inconsistent with the ethical responsibilities of the teaching profession.

Department Expectation

Integrity applies to every aspect of educator preparation, including:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- coursework
- discussions
- examinations
- presentations
- lesson planning
- reflections
- Professional Growth Portfolio artifacts
- Simulation Lab experiences
- Mursion simulations
- field experiences
- clinical practice
- professional communications

Educator candidates are expected to demonstrate the same ethical standards in every learning environment.

Why This Matters in the Profession

The teaching profession depends upon trust.

Professional educators are entrusted with assessing student learning, protecting confidential information, communicating honestly with families, documenting student progress accurately, and making ethical decisions that affect the lives of children.

Academic integrity during educator preparation develops the ethical habits that become the foundation of professional integrity throughout an educator's career.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.



Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to demonstrate academic integrity in every aspect of your educator preparation journey. Integrity is reflected not only in the work you submit, but also in how you learn, collaborate, communicate, and represent yourself as a future professional educator.

Specifically, educator candidates are expected to:

- Complete and submit original work that accurately represents their own learning and professional growth.
- Properly acknowledge and cite the ideas, words, images, data, and intellectual contributions of others using instructor-approved citation practices.
- Follow instructor expectations regarding collaboration, peer support, and independent work.
- Use technology, including artificial intelligence, responsibly and transparently in accordance with departmental and course expectations.
- Protect the confidentiality of information encountered during coursework, simulation-based learning, field experiences, and clinical practice.
- Seek clarification whenever they are uncertain about appropriate academic or professional practices.
- Accept responsibility for mistakes and work collaboratively with faculty to resolve concerns honestly and professionally.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Integrity is demonstrated through the choices you make every day. Each decision contributes to your development as a trusted professional educator.

How We Support You

The Education Department is committed to creating a learning environment where integrity is understood, modeled, and strengthened throughout the educator preparation program.

Faculty support your professional development by:

- Clearly communicating expectations for academic integrity and ethical conduct.
- Designing authentic learning experiences that encourage original thinking and professional reflection.
- Teaching appropriate research, citation, and documentation practices.
- Providing guidance regarding the responsible use of technology and artificial intelligence.
- Offering meaningful feedback that supports continuous improvement.
- Creating opportunities to learn from mistakes while maintaining the professional standards of the program.

We recognize that professional judgment develops over time. Questions about academic integrity are welcomed, and we encourage educator candidates to seek clarification before submitting work whenever uncertainty exists.

Our goal is not simply to prevent misconduct, it is to cultivate ethical educators who consistently demonstrate honesty, accountability, and professional responsibility.

If Challenges Occur

The Education Department approaches concerns regarding academic integrity with both professionalism and due process. When concerns arise, faculty will first seek to understand the circumstances, review available evidence, and communicate with the educator candidate regarding the concern.

Depending upon the nature, severity, frequency, and impact of the concern, responses may include one or more of the following:

- Educational coaching or clarification of academic expectations.
- Revision or resubmission opportunities when appropriate to the learning objectives.
- Academic consequences as outlined in the course syllabus and College policies.
- Documentation of the concern within the Education Department.
- Referral through departmental or College academic integrity processes.
- Review through the Professional Concern or Professional Fitness processes when patterns of behavior raise concerns regarding professional readiness.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Academic integrity concerns involving field experiences, the Simulation Lab, Mursion simulations, or clinical placements may also affect an educator candidate's eligibility to participate in those learning environments when professional trust has been compromised.

The Education Department believes that accountability and growth can coexist. While integrity violations are taken seriously, our commitment remains to help educator candidates understand expectations, restore trust whenever possible, and continue developing the ethical habits expected of the teaching profession.

Related Resources

- SCF Student Code of Conduct
- SCF Academic Integrity Policy
- Education Department Professional Concern Process
- Professional Fitness Review Process
- Professional Disposition Rubric
- Chapter 14: Artificial Intelligence
- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Library and Research Services

The SCF Education Way

Integrity is not measured by the absence of mistakes, it is measured by the courage to learn authentically, accept responsibility, and continually grow. Every assignment, discussion, lesson plan, reflection, simulation, and clinical experience provides an opportunity to strengthen the knowledge, judgment, and character expected of a professional educator.

Exceptional educators understand that integrity is demonstrated long before they become teachers of record. It is reflected in the daily choices to prepare honestly, contribute authentically, acknowledge the work of others, communicate transparently, and approach every learning experience with professionalism. By choosing integrity today, you are building the trust your future students, families, colleagues, and communities will one day place in you.

Professional Tip

Ask before you assume.

If you are uncertain whether collaboration is permitted, whether a source should be cited, or whether a technology tool, including artificial intelligence, is appropriate for a particular assignment, ask your instructor before submitting your work. Seeking clarification demonstrates professionalism and sound judgment.

Professional educators recognize that asking thoughtful questions is a sign of responsibility, not weakness.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about a time when choosing the more difficult path helped you grow more than taking the easier one. *How did that experience shape your character, your confidence, or your understanding of responsibility?* As a future educator, *how will your commitment to integrity influence the trust others place in you?*

14. Artificial Intelligence and Professional Judgment

"Artificial intelligence should strengthen learning, not replace the thinking, reflection, creativity, and professional judgment that define exceptional educators."

Purpose

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming education, the workplace, and society. As future educators, you will encounter AI-powered tools that support instructional planning, communication, accessibility, assessment, creativity, and professional productivity. Understanding how to use these tools thoughtfully and ethically has become an important aspect of professional practice.

The SCF Education Department embraces emerging technologies that expand access, reduce unnecessary barriers to learning, and support innovation. At the same time, we recognize that becoming an educator requires developing the critical thinking, instructional decision-making, reflection, and professional judgment that cannot be delegated to technology.

Throughout the program, AI is viewed as a tool that supports learning, not a substitute for learning.

Why This Matters

Exceptional educators continually make thoughtful decisions about the tools they use and the purposes those tools serve.

Technology should never determine instruction. Instead, educators determine when technology strengthens learning, when it creates barriers, and when it should not be used at all.

Artificial intelligence presents extraordinary opportunities to increase accessibility, improve efficiency, and support learning. However, it also presents ethical responsibilities. When AI replaces the cognitive work required for learning, educator candidates miss opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and professional judgment they will one day rely upon to support their own students.

Throughout the SCF Education Program, you will be encouraged to ask not only:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

"Can AI do this?"

but more importantly,

"Should AI be used in this learning experience, and if so, how can it strengthen, not replace, learning?"

Professional judgment begins with that question.

Artificial Intelligence as a Learning Tool

Artificial intelligence has tremendous potential to support learning when used intentionally and ethically.

Throughout the Education Program, AI may be used to:

- organize ideas and information.
- support brainstorming and creative exploration.
- improve accessibility through translation, text-to-speech, captioning, or language supports.
- strengthen writing through grammar and clarity suggestions.
- summarize information for review after meaningful engagement with course materials.
- generate practice questions or study supports.
- explore multiple perspectives on educational topics.

These examples illustrate how AI can remove barriers, improve access, and strengthen learning while preserving the educator candidate's responsibility for critical thinking and professional decision-making.

Cognitive Responsibility

Learning requires productive cognitive effort.

Developing into an exceptional educator means analyzing information, solving problems, making instructional decisions, reflecting on experiences, and constructing new understanding. These are essential professional competencies that cannot be outsourced.

Artificial intelligence should reduce unnecessary barriers to learning.

It should never reduce meaningful learning.

Whenever you use AI, ask yourself:

- Am I still doing the thinking?
- Am I strengthening my understanding?
- Does this represent my own learning?
- Could I explain and defend this work independently?

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- Would I feel comfortable discussing how I used AI with my instructor or a future employer?

If the answer to these questions is "no," the technology may be replacing rather than supporting your learning.

Department Standard 2.7

Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

The SCF Education Department recognizes artificial intelligence as an emerging educational technology that can strengthen learning, accessibility, and professional practice when used responsibly.

Educator candidates are expected to use AI ethically, transparently, and in ways that preserve authentic learning and professional integrity.

Artificial intelligence may support learning.

It may not substitute for learning.

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Use AI in ways that align with course expectations and departmental standards.
- Maintain ownership of all submitted work and professional decisions.
- Evaluate AI-generated information critically for accuracy, bias, and appropriateness.
- Acknowledge AI use when required by the instructor or course expectations.
- Protect confidential information and never upload protected student, school, or clinical information into AI systems.
- Demonstrate professional judgment when deciding whether AI is appropriate for a learning task.

Department Expectation

Each Education course includes an “Acceptable” and “Unacceptable” *Use of Artificial Intelligence* section within the course syllabus.

Because learning experiences differ across courses, expectations regarding AI may vary by assignment. Educator candidates are responsible for reviewing and following the expectations established for each course.

When uncertainty exists, ask your instructor before using AI to support your work.

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Artificial Intelligence, Equity, and Accessibility

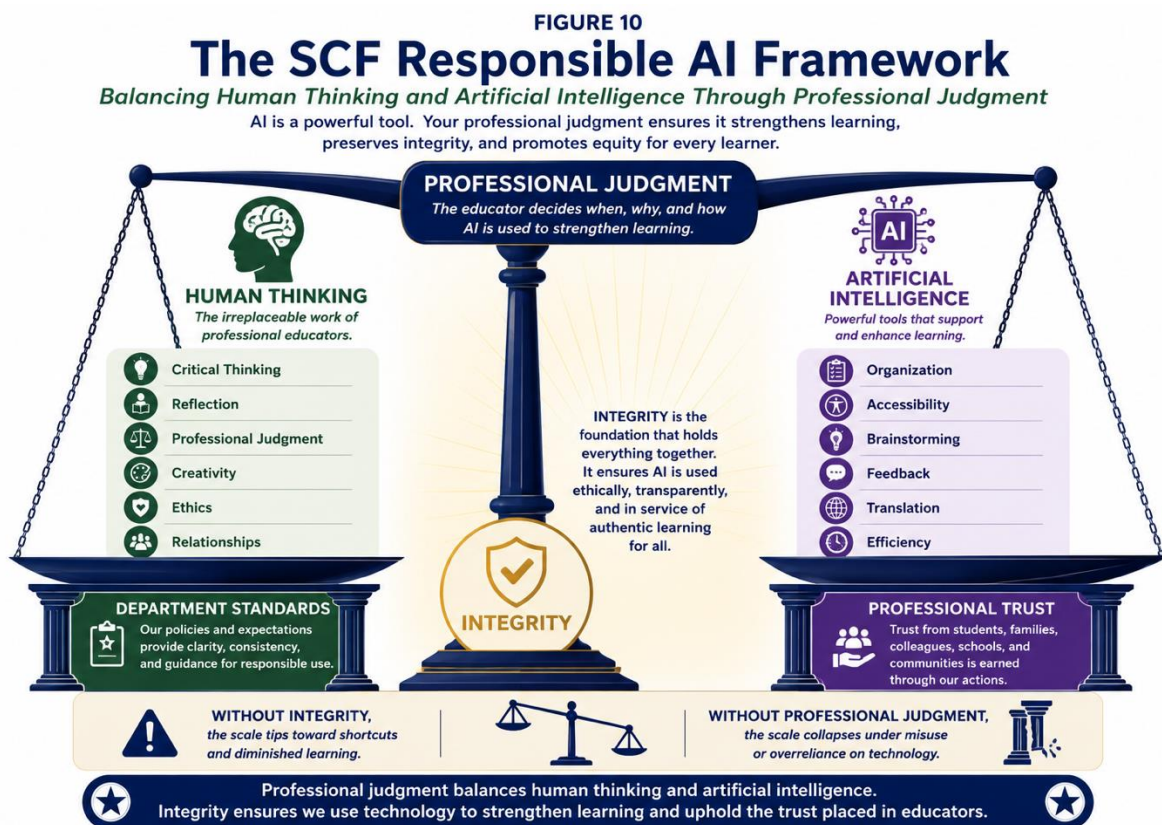
The SCF Education Department is committed to ensuring that technology supports equitable access to learning.

Artificial intelligence offers tremendous opportunities to increase accessibility by assisting with language translation, reading support, organization, communication, and other learning needs. These tools can reduce barriers and expand opportunities for participation when used thoughtfully.

At the same time, we recognize that access to technology is not always equal. Some AI tools require paid subscriptions or advanced features that may not be available to every educator candidate or every future classroom.

For this reason, the Education Department is committed to designing learning experiences that do not advantage or disadvantage students based upon access to premium AI tools.

Our goal is to prepare educators who understand how to use emerging technologies responsibly while ensuring that learning remains equitable, inclusive, and accessible for every learner.



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Artificial Intelligence Supports Learning When It...

Supports Learning	Undermines Learning
Brainstorms ideas before writing begins.	Generates assignments that are submitted as your own work.
Supports organization and planning.	Replaces your thinking or professional judgment.
Explains concepts to strengthen understanding.	Prevents you from engaging deeply with course content.
Improves accessibility through translation, captioning, reading, or language supports.	Creates an unfair academic advantage through unauthorized use.
Helps revise grammar or clarity while preserving your original ideas.	Produces reflections, lesson plans, analyses, or discussions that should represent your own learning.
Encourages exploration and curiosity.	Becomes a shortcut rather than a support for learning.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Use artificial intelligence in ways that strengthen, not replace, your learning.
- Follow the AI expectations outlined in each course syllabus.
- Demonstrate honesty and transparency regarding AI use.
- Critically evaluate AI-generated information rather than accepting it without question.
- Protect confidential information during all AI interactions.
- Continue developing the critical thinking, creativity, reflection, and instructional decision-making expected of professional educators.
- Seek clarification whenever you are uncertain whether AI is appropriate for a particular learning activity.

Ultimately, you, not artificial intelligence, are responsible for the quality, accuracy, and integrity of your work.

How We Support You

The Education Department recognizes that artificial intelligence will continue to evolve throughout your career.

Our responsibility is not only to establish expectations but also to prepare you to become thoughtful users of emerging technologies.

Faculty support your development by:

- modeling ethical and transparent AI use.
- discussing both the opportunities and limitations of AI.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- designing authentic learning experiences that prioritize professional thinking.
- providing assignment-specific guidance regarding acceptable AI use.
- emphasizing accessibility, equity, and responsible innovation.
- encouraging ongoing reflection as technologies continue to evolve.

Our goal is to graduate educators who are confident using technology without becoming dependent upon it.

If Challenges Occur

Improper or unauthorized use of artificial intelligence may constitute a violation of the Education Department's Academic Integrity Standard and the College's Academic Integrity Policy.

Concerns regarding AI use will be reviewed within the context of course expectations, instructor guidance, and the nature of the assignment. Depending upon the circumstances, responses may include educational coaching, opportunities for reflection or revision, academic consequences, or referral through departmental or College processes.

Because AI expectations vary across assignments, educator candidates are encouraged to ask questions before submitting work whenever uncertainty exists.

The Education Department is committed to helping educator candidates learn to use emerging technologies responsibly while maintaining the professional integrity expected of future educators.

Related Resources

- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Course Syllabus: Acceptable and Unacceptable Uses of Artificial Intelligence
- SCF Academic Integrity Policy
- Canvas Student Resources
- Universal Design for Learning Resources
- Professional Growth Portfolio

The SCF Education Way

Technology will continue to change throughout your career.

The qualities that define exceptional educators: integrity, curiosity, empathy, critical thinking, professional judgment, and meaningful relationships; remain timeless.

Artificial intelligence is one of many tools available to educators. Like every instructional tool, its value depends not on what the technology can do, but on the wisdom, ethics, and intentionality of the educator using it.

Our goal is not to prepare graduates who simply know how to use artificial intelligence.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Our goal is to prepare educators who know when, why, and whether artificial intelligence should be used to strengthen learning while preserving the uniquely human work of teaching.

Professional Tip

Lead with your thinking, not the technology.

Before using AI, complete your own initial thinking whenever possible. Clarify your ideas, identify what you know, and determine where you genuinely need support. Use AI to extend your learning, not to replace the intellectual work that helps you grow as an educator.

Reflection

Artificial intelligence will continue to evolve throughout your career, but your professional judgment will always remain your most important educational tool. Reflect on how you hope to use AI as a future educator. *What principles will guide your decisions so that technology enhances learning, promotes equity, and preserves the authentic human relationships at the heart of teaching?*

15. Assessment and Feedback

"Assessment measures learning. Feedback develops it."

Purpose

Assessment is more than assigning grades, it is the process of gathering evidence of learning, providing meaningful feedback, and supporting continuous professional growth. Throughout the SCF Education Program, assessment is intentionally designed to help educator candidates monitor their progress, strengthen professional competencies, and prepare for the responsibilities of teaching.

Feedback is one of the most valuable learning tools available. It provides insight into your strengths, identifies opportunities for continued growth, and helps connect one learning experience to the next.

Why This Matters

Professional educators use assessment every day to understand student learning and make informed instructional decisions. Before you can effectively assess others, you must learn how to reflect on your own learning.

Throughout the Education Program, assessment is designed to answer three questions:

- What am I learning?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- How do I know I'm making progress?
- What should I improve next?

Grades provide a snapshot of performance.

Feedback supports continuous growth.

Department Standard 2.8

Assessment and Feedback for Growth

The SCF Education Department is committed to using assessment as a tool for learning and professional growth.

Faculty provide meaningful feedback designed to strengthen future performance, while educator candidates are expected to actively engage with that feedback as part of their professional development.

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Complete assessments honestly and independently unless collaboration is authorized.
- Review instructor feedback thoughtfully.
- Apply feedback to future coursework and professional practice.
- Monitor their academic progress throughout the semester.
- Seek clarification whenever feedback is not fully understood.

Assessment is intended to support learning, not simply evaluate it.

Department Expectation

Feedback may be provided through:

- Rubrics
- Written comments
- Canvas annotations
- Audio or video feedback
- Conferences
- Peer review
- Simulation debriefing
- Clinical coaching

Educator candidates are expected to review all forms of feedback.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Why This Matters in the Profession

Professional educators continuously use assessment to improve instruction. The same reflective habits you develop now will guide your future decisions as you assess and support your own students.

Your Responsibilities

- Complete assessments with honesty and professionalism.
- Review feedback before beginning future assignments.
- Monitor your academic progress regularly through Canvas.
- Seek clarification when needed.
- View assessment as an opportunity for growth rather than judgment.

How We Support You

Faculty intentionally design assessments that:

- align with learning outcomes.
- reflect authentic professional practice.
- provide meaningful feedback.
- encourage reflection and revision.
- support competency development.

If Challenges Occur

If assessment results indicate that additional support is needed, faculty will work with you to identify resources, strategies, and opportunities for continued growth whenever appropriate.

Related Resources

- Canvas Gradebook
- Course Rubrics
- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Faculty Office Hours
- Learning Commons

The SCF Education Way

Assessment tells you where you are.

Feedback helps you decide where to grow next.

Exceptional educators value both.

Professional Tip

Don't wait until the end of the semester to read feedback.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The most valuable feedback is the feedback that changes your next assignment.

Reflection

How has feedback changed your thinking or improved your learning during this program?

16. Professional Growth Portfolio

"Your portfolio tells the story of who you are becoming as an educator."

Purpose

The Professional Growth Portfolio serves as a living record of your development throughout the SCF Education Program. Rather than functioning as a collection of assignments, the portfolio documents your growth, reflection, competencies, and readiness for professional practice.

Each artifact represents more than completed coursework—it represents evidence of your journey toward becoming an exceptional educator.

Why This Matters

Professional educators continually document their learning, reflect on their practice, and demonstrate professional growth.

Your Professional Growth Portfolio allows you to:

- Document competency development.
- Connect coursework across the program.
- Prepare for internship and employment.
- Reflect on your evolving professional identity.
- Celebrate your accomplishments.

Department Standard 2.9 Professional Growth Portfolio

Every educator candidate is expected to maintain a Professional Growth Portfolio throughout the Education Program.

The portfolio should accurately document professional learning, competency development, reflection, and evidence of readiness for professional practice.

Department Expectation

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Portfolio artifacts may include:

- Signature assignments
- Lesson plans
- Assessments
- Clinical reflections
- Simulation experiences
- Professional goals
- FEAP evidence
- Feedback reflections
- Professional accomplishments

Faculty will identify required portfolio artifacts throughout the program.

Why This Matters in the Profession

Professional educators continually collect evidence of growth, reflect upon their practice, and demonstrate ongoing professional learning throughout their careers.

Your Responsibilities

- Maintain your portfolio regularly.
- Upload required artifacts.
- Reflect meaningfully on your growth.
- Organize materials professionally.
- Review and update your portfolio each semester.

How We Support You

Faculty intentionally connect coursework to portfolio development and provide guidance regarding artifact selection, reflection, and organization.

If Challenges Occur

Students experiencing difficulty maintaining their portfolio should communicate with faculty promptly so support can be provided before required checkpoints.

Related Resources

- Professional Growth Portfolio Guide
- FEAP Framework
- Canvas
- Career Services

The SCF Education Way

Your portfolio is more than evidence of what you've completed.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

It is evidence of who you are becoming.

Professional Tip

Don't wait until graduation.

Build your portfolio a little at a time.

Your future self will thank you.

Reflection

Looking across your portfolio, *what patterns of growth do you notice about yourself as an educator?*

17. Academic Progression

"Every milestone prepares you for the next stage of becoming an educator."

Purpose

Educator preparation is intentionally sequenced. Each course, field experience, assessment, portfolio artifact, and professional expectation builds upon previous learning while preparing you for future responsibilities.

Academic progression represents more than completing requirements, it reflects your continued readiness to assume increasing responsibility as an educator.

Why This Matters

Professional competence develops over time.

Throughout the SCF Education Program, each milestone prepares you for increasingly authentic educational experiences.

Progression reflects growth in:

- knowledge.
- instructional practice.
- professional dispositions.
- communication.
- reflection.
- leadership.
- readiness for certification.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 2.10

Academic Progression

Educator candidates are expected to successfully meet academic, clinical, and professional expectations required for progression throughout the Education Program.

Progression decisions consider multiple measures, including academic performance (minimum GPA of 2.5, no course grades below a C), professional dispositions, clinical readiness, ethical conduct, and successful completion of program requirements.

Department Expectation

Progression includes successful completion of:

- Required coursework
- Clinical experiences
- Professional Growth Portfolio checkpoints
- Certification examinations
- Professional dispositions
- Department requirements
- College graduation requirements

Why This Matters

Teaching is a profession built upon demonstrated competence and public trust.

Every progression milestone represents increased readiness to assume responsibility for the learning and well-being of students.

Your Responsibilities

- Monitor your academic progress.
- Meet progression requirements.
- Seek advising regularly.
- Communicate proactively when challenges arise.
- Take ownership of your professional development.

How We Support You

The Education Department provides advising, mentoring, faculty coaching, progression monitoring, and individualized support throughout your educator preparation journey.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

If Challenges Occur

When progression concerns arise, faculty and program leadership will partner with educator candidates to identify supports, clarify expectations, and develop appropriate plans whenever possible while maintaining program standards.

Related Resources

- Academic Advising
- Program Manager
- Certification Information
- Clinical Experience Handbook
- Professional Growth Portfolio

The SCF Education Way

Progression is not simply moving from one semester to the next.

It is becoming increasingly prepared to serve learners with confidence, competence, and compassion.

Professional Tip

Meet with your Program Manager before you think you need to.

Proactive advising keeps small questions from becoming larger obstacles.

Reflection

Looking back across this section of the handbook, *how has your understanding of learning changed since beginning the Education Program? What habits will you intentionally carry forward into your future classroom?*

Section II Conclusion

Looking Ahead

The first section of this handbook introduced *who you are becoming* as an educator. This section explored *how professional educators learn* through purposeful design, meaningful engagement, ethical decision-making, thoughtful use of technology, continuous feedback, and intentional reflection.

As you continue through the program, your learning will increasingly move beyond the college classroom and into authentic educational settings. The next section focuses on applying what you

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

have learned through field experiences, simulation-based learning, clinical practice, and partnerships with schools.

Exceptional educators never stop learning because every learner deserves an educator who continues to grow.

Section III

Clinical Practice and Professional Experience

How do I become an educator through practice?

"Teaching is learned through study, strengthened through reflection, and refined through authentic practice alongside experienced educators."

Section Introduction

Clinical experiences are where learning comes to life.

Throughout the SCF Education Program, you have explored educational theory, examined evidence-informed instructional practices, reflected on your own learning, and developed the professional habits expected of future educators. Clinical practice provides the opportunity to bring those experiences together in authentic educational settings.

Clinical experiences are much more than required hours or program milestones. They are opportunities to observe, participate, practice, receive coaching, and gradually assume increasing responsibility as you develop confidence and professional competence.

You will learn from mentor teachers, school leaders, faculty, clinical supervisors, classmates, families, and, most importantly, the students you serve.

Every interaction becomes part of your preparation.

Every classroom becomes part of your education.

Every reflection strengthens your professional judgment.

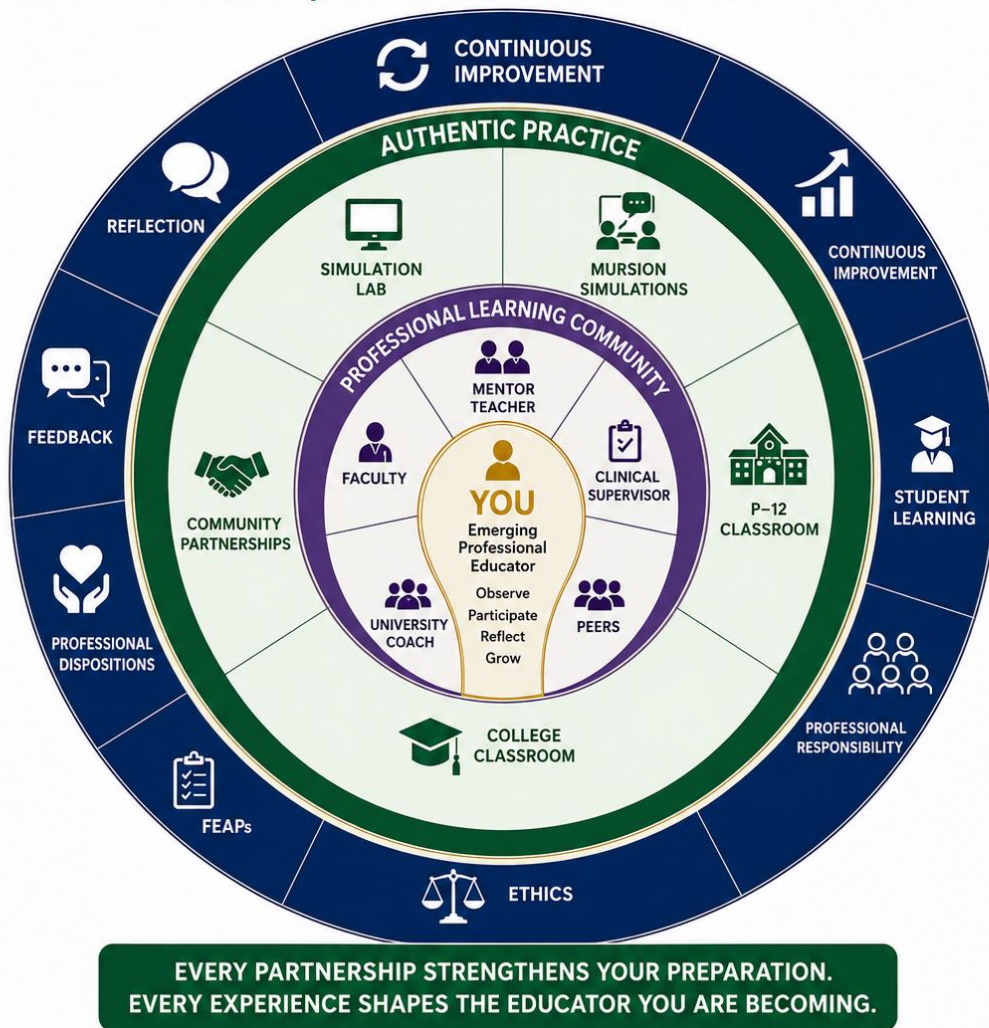
Throughout this section, you'll explore the expectations, responsibilities, partnerships, and professional standards that guide your clinical experiences. You'll also discover how the Education Department, mentor teachers, and school partners work together to support your continued growth as an emerging professional educator.

Clinical practice is where learning becomes teaching.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

FIGURE 14 THE SCF CLINICAL PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Partnerships in Practice. Growth for a Lifetime.



18. Clinical Experiences

Learning in authentic settings. Growing as a professional.

Purpose

Clinical experiences provide intentional opportunities for educator candidates to observe, participate, practice, and assume increasing responsibility in real educational settings. These experiences connect the knowledge and skills you develop in coursework with the daily complexities and rewards of teaching.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Why This Matters

Professional educators are prepared through intentional clinical practice. These experiences strengthen instructional decision-making, classroom management, communication, collaboration, reflection, and responsiveness to diverse learners. Each experience prepares you for the responsibilities of student teaching, certification, and a career of impact.

Department Standard 3.1

Clinical Experiences

Clinical experiences are an essential component of the SCF Education Programs. Educator candidates are expected to actively participate in, reflect upon, and learn from all clinical opportunities. These experiences are completed in partnership with schools, mentors, faculty, and program leaders.

Expectations

- Engage fully in assigned clinical activities.
- Follow directions and policies provided by faculty, mentors, and school partners.
- Reflect meaningfully on experiences.
- Demonstrate professional dispositions at all times.
- Use feedback to strengthen instructional practices.

Your Responsibilities

- Complete all General Knowledge Test (GKT) sections no later than the end of the first semester.
- Complete all Florida Teacher Certification Exams (FTCEs) no later than the end of the semester prior to your final internship.
- Be prepared.
- Be professional.
- Be reflective.
- Communicate proactively.
- Seek feedback.
- Take initiative.
- Represent the SCF Education Department with integrity and your future profession with pride.

How We Support You

Faculty, program leaders, and mentor teachers provide:

- Guidance

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Coaching
- Evidence-based feedback.

You are never alone in the process.

If Challenges Occur

If concerns arise, communicate early. The Education Department will work with you to identify supports, strengthen skills, and navigate next steps.

Related Resources

- Clinical Experience Documents
- Program Manager
- Mentor Teacher
- Canvas
- Professional Growth Portfolio
- College Tutoring and Testing Center (GKT and FTCE Information)

The SCF Education Way

Clinical Experiences are more than requirements, they are opportunities to practice the heart and habits of an exceptional educator. Approach each experience with curiosity, humility, and purpose.

Professional Tip

Come prepared, be present, and always look for ways to contribute and learn. Every moment matters.

Reflect

What do you hope to learn about teaching, learners, and yourself through your clinical experiences? How will you grow from each opportunity?

Portfolio Connection

Clinical experiences provide rich opportunities to collect evidence of professional growth. Consider which observations, reflections, lesson plans, feedback, and experiences could become meaningful artifacts within your Professional Growth Portfolio.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

19. Field Placements

"Field placements provide authentic opportunities to learn alongside experienced educators, connect theory to practice, and develop the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of future teachers."

Purpose

Field placements are an essential component of educator preparation. They provide opportunities to observe effective teaching, participate in authentic classroom experiences, practice instructional strategies, and develop professional confidence under the guidance of experienced educators.

Each placement is intentionally selected to help educator candidates build progressively deeper understanding of learners, classrooms, schools, and the teaching profession. As you move through the program, your responsibilities will increase as your knowledge, skills, and professional judgment continue to develop.

Field placements are educational experiences, not employment, and are designed to support your growth while meeting program, College, district, and state educator preparation requirements.

Why This Matters

Exceptional educators cannot be prepared through coursework alone.

Learning to teach requires opportunities to observe experienced professionals, interact with diverse learners, receive coaching, reflect on practice, and gradually assume greater instructional responsibility.

Every field placement provides opportunities to:

- Connect educational theory to authentic classroom practice.
- Observe effective instructional strategies.
- Develop professional relationships with mentor teachers and school personnel.
- Strengthen communication and collaboration skills.
- Apply coursework within real educational settings.
- Reflect on your own professional growth.
- Prepare for internship, certification, and your future teaching career.

Each placement builds upon previous learning while preparing you for increasingly complex clinical experiences.

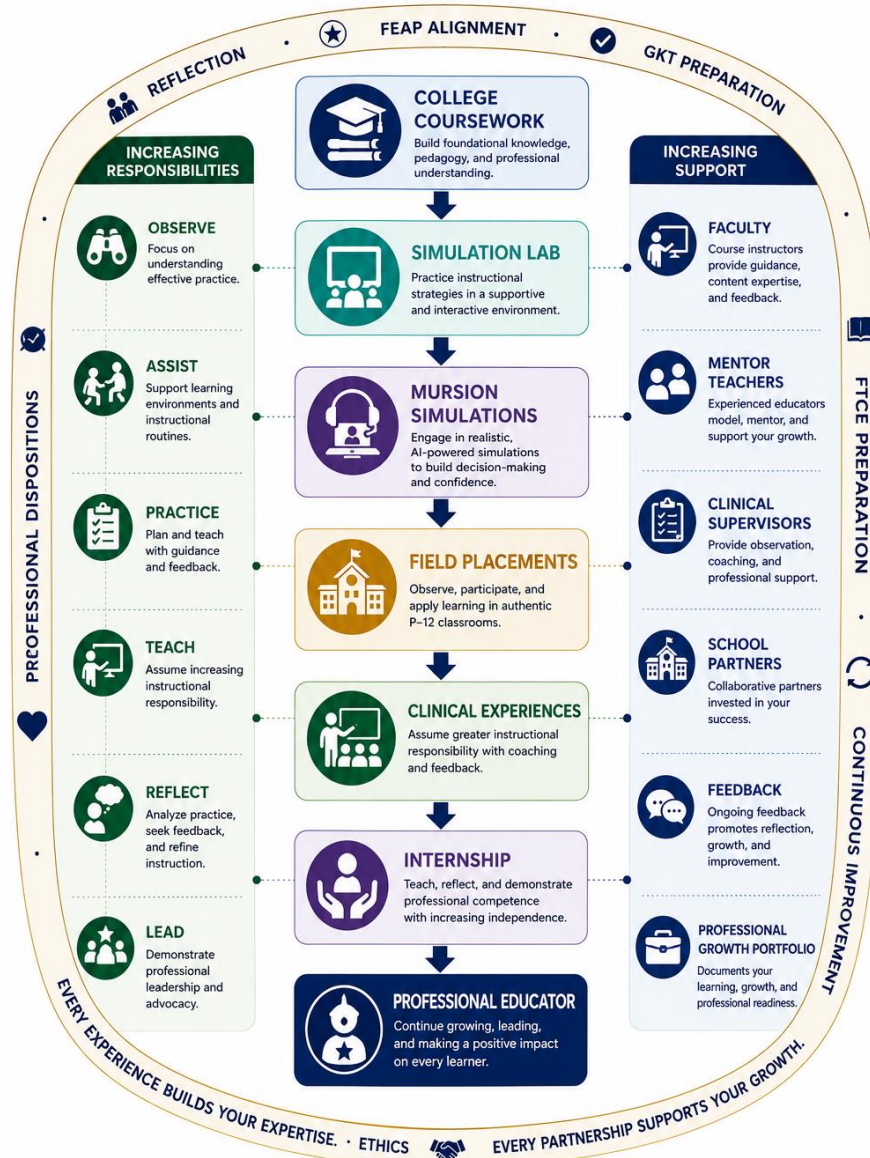
Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

FIGURE 15

THE SCF CLINICAL PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK

From Learning to Leading: A Pathway to Professional Educator

Clinical practice is a progressive journey of increasing responsibility with consistent support and intentional reflection.



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 3.2

Field Placements

The SCF Education Department coordinates field placements through partnerships with local school districts and educational organizations to ensure educator candidates experience high-quality clinical learning environments aligned with program outcomes and state requirements.

Field placement locations are determined by the Education Department in collaboration with school partners. Placements are based upon program requirements, school availability, mentor teacher qualifications, district partnerships, transportation considerations, and the educational needs of the educator candidate.

Because placements require extensive coordination among multiple partners, educator candidates may not independently arrange or change field placements.

Department Expectations

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Accept assigned field placements as part of the educator preparation program.
- Complete all required district onboarding requirements, background screenings, and documentation before beginning placement.
- Arrange reliable transportation to and from placement sites.
- Follow the schedules established by the assigned school, mentor teacher, and course instructor.
- Communicate promptly regarding concerns that may affect participation.
- Demonstrate professionalism throughout every placement experience.
- Complete all required observation hours, instructional activities, reflections, and assignments.

Failure to complete required placement expectations may delay progression within the program.

GKT & FTCE Connection

Field experiences provide meaningful opportunities to apply the knowledge, instructional practices, and professional decision-making that support success on the General Knowledge Test (GKT) and the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations (FTCE).

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

As you observe classrooms, analyze instructional decisions, and participate in authentic teaching experiences, you strengthen the knowledge, skills, and professional competencies assessed through Florida's teacher certification examinations.

Because successful completion of these assessments is an important milestone in educator preparation, the Education Department has established the following progression expectations:

- The General Knowledge Test (GKT) must be successfully completed no later than the conclusion of your first semester in the program.
- All required Florida Teacher Certification Examinations (FTCE) must be successfully completed no later than the end of the semester immediately preceding your final internship.
- Internship placements cannot be confirmed until all required certification examination requirements have been successfully completed.

These milestones are intentionally sequenced to ensure that educator candidates enter their internship prepared to focus on instructional practice, professional growth, and successful completion of their clinical experience rather than outstanding certification requirements.

Successful completion of certification examinations is not simply a program expectation, it is an important step toward becoming a certified professional educator in the State of Florida.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Complete all required placement documentation by published deadlines.
- Communicate professionally with your mentor teacher, faculty, and school personnel.
- Arrive prepared, on time, and appropriately dressed.
- Demonstrate initiative while respecting the guidance of your mentor teacher.
- Maintain confidentiality and professional ethics at all times.
- Reflect on each clinical experience and apply feedback to future practice (Portfolio).
- Represent both yourself and the SCF Education Department with professionalism and integrity.

Remember that every interaction contributes to your professional reputation.

How We Support You

Field placements are collaborative partnerships among the Education Department, school districts, mentor teachers, faculty, and educator candidates.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Throughout your placement, support is provided through:

- Program Managers
- The Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Course faculty
- Clinical supervisors
- Mentor teachers
- School administrators
- Ongoing coaching and feedback

Our goal is to create authentic learning experiences that challenge, support, and prepare you for professional practice.

If Challenges Occur

Occasionally, circumstances arise that affect a field placement, including scheduling conflicts, changes within school sites, district needs, transportation challenges, or concerns related to professional expectations.

When challenges occur, educator candidates should communicate promptly with the course instructor and the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator. Early communication allows the department to collaborate with school partners, identify appropriate solutions, and support successful completion of placement requirements whenever possible.

Because field placements involve partnerships among multiple organizations, changes cannot be guaranteed and are made only through the Education Department.

Related Resources

- Clinical Experience Handouts
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Program Manager
- Mentor Teacher
- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Florida Department of Education Certification Information
- District Placement Requirements

Portfolio Connection

The **Professional Growth Portfolio** is more than a collection of coursework, it is a **required component of Florida's educator preparation process** and serves as documented evidence of

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

your professional learning, competency development, and readiness to enter the teaching profession.

Throughout every semester of the SCF Education Program, you will intentionally contribute artifacts that demonstrate your growth as an emerging educator. These artifacts may include coursework, lesson plans, reflections, feedback, clinical experiences, simulation-based learning, assessments, and evidence aligned with the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs).

During your final internship, you will not be creating a portfolio from the beginning. Instead, you will build upon the professional evidence collected throughout your entire program, using those artifacts to demonstrate your growth, reflection, and readiness for professional practice.

For this reason, maintaining your portfolio each semester is an essential professional responsibility. Waiting until the internship semester to begin collecting artifacts often results in missing evidence that cannot be recreated after the learning experience has passed and may delay successful completion of program requirements.

Your portfolio tells the story of your development as an educator. Building it intentionally throughout the program ensures that, by the time you begin your internship, you are prepared to demonstrate not only what you have learned, but also how you have grown.

Program Milestone

The Professional Growth Portfolio is a graduation requirement for Florida educator preparation programs.

Educator candidates who do not maintain and successfully complete required portfolio components may experience delays in internship completion, program completion, graduation, or recommendation for teacher certification.

Building your portfolio throughout the program is the best way to ensure that your final internship becomes an opportunity to demonstrate your professional growth—not to recreate it.

The SCF Education Way

Every classroom you enter becomes part of your preparation. Every mentor teacher becomes part of your professional story. Every learner you encounter deepens your understanding of why teaching is both a tremendous responsibility and an extraordinary privilege.

Field placements are not simply hours to complete, they are opportunities to practice observation, professionalism, reflection, and instructional decision-making within authentic

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

educational communities. Approach every placement with curiosity, humility, initiative, and gratitude. The habits you develop during these experiences will shape the educator you become.

Professional Tip

Treat every field placement as your first professional interview.

Schools notice educator candidates who are dependable, prepared, reflective, collaborative, and eager to learn. The professional relationships you build during field experiences often become valuable references, mentors, and future employment connections.

Reflection

As you prepare for or complete your field placement, consider this question:

How can I move beyond observing what effective educators do to understanding why they make those instructional decisions? How will those observations influence the educator I am becoming?

20. Shared Responsibilities

"Exceptional educator preparation is built through partnership. Every participant contributes to the success of every clinical experience."

Purpose

Clinical practice is a collaborative partnership among educator candidates, faculty, mentor teachers, school administrators, district partners, and the SCF Education Department. Each person contributes unique expertise, perspectives, and responsibilities that support your development as a professional educator.

Shared responsibility means that no one completes this journey alone. As an educator candidate, you are an active participant in your own preparation, while faculty and school partners provide guidance, coaching, feedback, and opportunities for continued growth.

Understanding each person's role helps create successful clinical experiences built upon communication, professionalism, mutual respect, and shared expectations.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Why This Matters

Teaching has never been an individual profession.

Exceptional educators collaborate with colleagues, families, specialists, administrators, and community partners to support student success. Your clinical experiences provide opportunities to begin developing these collaborative habits long before you become a classroom teacher.

Successful partnerships are built upon trust, communication, accountability, and shared commitment to learning.

When each partner fulfills their responsibilities, educator candidates receive meaningful coaching, schools benefit from engaged future educators, and ultimately, students experience stronger learning opportunities.

Department Standard 3.3

Shared Responsibilities

The SCF Education Department believes that educator preparation is strengthened through collaborative partnerships among educator candidates, faculty, mentor teachers, clinical supervisors, school administrators, district partners, and the College.

All participants share responsibility for maintaining professional learning environments that support ethical practice, effective communication, continuous improvement, and successful educator preparation.

Department Expectations

The Education Department Will...

- Coordinate high-quality clinical placements in partnership with school districts and educational organizations.
- Provide clear expectations, resources, and guidance throughout clinical experiences.
- Communicate with school partners regarding program requirements and candidate support.
- Monitor educator candidate progress and provide coaching when appropriate.
- Support mentor teachers and clinical supervisors in their important role within educator preparation.
- Foster partnerships that strengthen both educator preparation and the communities we serve.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Faculty and Clinical Supervisors Will...

- Connect coursework to authentic classroom practice.
- Provide timely coaching, feedback, and professional guidance.
- Observe, support, and evaluate educator candidate growth.
- Maintain communication with mentor teachers and school partners.
- Encourage reflective practice and continuous professional improvement.

Mentor Teachers Will...

- Model effective instructional practice and professional responsibilities.
- Welcome educator candidates as members of the school community.
- Provide opportunities for observation, participation, and increasing instructional responsibility.
- Offer constructive feedback and professional mentoring.
- Support the development of professional confidence and instructional decision-making.

(This chapter intentionally introduces the mentor teacher role. Chapter 21 will explore that partnership in greater depth.)

Educator Candidates Will...

- Take ownership of their professional learning.
- Communicate proactively and professionally.
- Arrive prepared, engaged, and ready to contribute.
- Seek feedback and apply it to future practice.
- Demonstrate professionalism, integrity, and respect in every interaction.
- Represent the SCF Education Department positively within partner schools and communities.

Partnership in Action

Successful clinical experiences are built when every partner understands both **their own responsibilities** and **the contributions of others**.

Partnership is demonstrated when:

- Communication is timely, respectful, and solution-oriented.
- Questions are asked early rather than after challenges have grown.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Feedback is viewed as an opportunity for growth.
- Professional differences are addressed respectfully.
- Everyone remains focused on what best supports educator preparation and student learning.

Professional partnerships are strengthened through trust, and trust is built through consistent actions over time.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you play an active role in the success of every clinical experience.

You are expected to:

- Build positive professional relationships with mentor teachers, faculty, and school personnel.
- Take initiative while respecting the guidance of experienced educators.
- Ask questions and seek clarification when appropriate.
- Accept feedback with professionalism and reflect on opportunities for growth.
- Communicate concerns promptly through appropriate channels.
- Honor commitments and follow through on responsibilities.
- Contribute positively to the school community and learning environment.

Partnership is strengthened when everyone contributes with professionalism and respect.

How We Support You

The Education Department is committed to supporting educator candidates throughout every stage of clinical preparation.

Support includes:

- Program Managers
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Faculty
- Clinical Supervisors
- Mentor Teachers
- School Administrators
- District Partners
- Ongoing coaching and reflection

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Our commitment is to provide the guidance, resources, and relationships that help you develop confidence while gradually assuming greater professional responsibility.

If Challenges Occur

Partnerships occasionally encounter challenges, and addressing them professionally is an important part of educator preparation.

When concerns arise, educator candidates should communicate promptly with their mentor teacher, faculty member, or the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator, following the communication pathways established by the Education Department.

Whenever possible, concerns should be addressed through respectful dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and shared commitment to successful clinical experiences.

The Education Department is committed to working collaboratively with educator candidates and school partners to identify solutions while maintaining professional expectations and preserving strong district partnerships.

Related Resources

- Clinical Experience Handbook
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Program Manager
- Mentor Teacher
- Clinical Supervisor
- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Communication Expectations (Subsection 5)

Portfolio Connection

Professional growth is demonstrated not only through instructional artifacts but also through evidence of collaboration, communication, reflection, and professional partnership.

As you participate in clinical experiences, consider documenting:

- Mentor teacher feedback
- Collaborative planning experiences
- Professional reflections
- Communication growth

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Evidence of teamwork and leadership
- FEAP-aligned examples of collaboration

These experiences provide important evidence of your development as a collaborative professional educator.

The SCF Education Way

Exceptional educators are never prepared in isolation.

Every faculty member, mentor teacher, clinical supervisor, administrator, school partner, and educator candidate contributes to a shared mission of preparing teachers who positively impact students, schools, and communities.

As an educator candidate, you are not simply receiving support, you are becoming an active member of a professional learning community. The relationships you build, the feedback you receive, and the partnerships you develop during your clinical experiences will shape your practice long after graduation.

At SCF, we believe that educator preparation is strongest when everyone shares both the responsibility and the privilege of developing exceptional educators.

Professional Tip

Think like a colleague, not a guest.

Approach every interaction with curiosity, humility, professionalism, and a willingness to contribute. While you are still learning, you are also becoming a valued member of the professional learning community.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Reflect on the partnerships that have most influenced your growth so far.

- *What qualities made those relationships meaningful?*
- *As you continue your clinical experiences, how will you contribute to creating positive, collaborative partnerships with your mentor teacher, faculty, school personnel, classmates, and the students you serve?*



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

21. Mentor Teachers

"Every exceptional educator can identify someone who believed in them, challenged them, and helped them grow. During your clinical experiences, your mentor teacher becomes one of those people."

Purpose

Mentor teachers play an essential role in educator preparation by opening their classrooms, sharing their professional expertise, modeling effective instructional practice, and supporting the growth of future educators.

Through observation, collaboration, coaching, and reflection, mentor teachers help educator candidates connect university coursework with the realities of teaching and learning. Their guidance provides invaluable insight into the instructional decision-making, relationships, and professional responsibilities that define effective educators.

The mentor teacher relationship is one of partnership, trust, and continuous learning. While mentor teachers guide and support your development, you remain responsible for actively engaging in your own professional growth.

Why This Matters

Teaching is a profession learned through both study and experience.

While coursework provides the theoretical foundation, mentor teachers help bring that learning to life by modeling how experienced educators respond to the complexities, joys, and challenges of authentic classroom practice.

Mentor teachers demonstrate that effective teaching is about much more than delivering lessons. They model:

- Building meaningful relationships with learners.
- Creating inclusive learning environments.
- Making instructional decisions based on student needs.
- Collaborating with colleagues and families.
- Reflecting on practice and pursuing continuous improvement.
- Responding professionally to both successes and challenges.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

By observing these practices and engaging in thoughtful conversations, you begin developing the professional judgment that cannot be learned from textbooks alone.

Department Standard 3.4

Mentor Teacher Partnerships

The SCF Education Department values mentor teachers as essential partners in educator preparation. Mentor teachers provide professional guidance, instructional modeling, coaching, and authentic learning opportunities that support the development of educator candidates throughout their clinical experiences.

Educator candidates are expected to approach the mentor teacher relationship with professionalism, initiative, respect, and a commitment to continuous learning.

Department Expectations

Mentor Teachers Will...

- Welcome educator candidates into the classroom as developing professionals.
- Model effective instructional practices and professional responsibilities.
- Provide opportunities for observation, participation, co-teaching, and instructional practice, as appropriate.
- Offer timely, constructive feedback that promotes reflection and professional growth.
- Share professional insights regarding instructional planning, classroom management, assessment, collaboration, and communication.
- Support educator candidates in developing confidence while maintaining high expectations.

Educator Candidates Will...

- Arrive prepared, engaged, and ready to learn.
- Respect the mentor teacher's classroom routines, expectations, and professional responsibilities.
- Demonstrate initiative while recognizing that instructional decisions remain under the guidance of the mentor teacher.
- Seek feedback with curiosity and professionalism.
- Reflect upon coaching and apply feedback to future practice.
- Express appreciation for the mentor teacher's time, expertise, and commitment to educator preparation.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Mentoring is most effective when both partners communicate openly, respectfully, and professionally.

Learning Through Observation

Observation is an active learning process.

Rather than simply watching classroom instruction, educator candidates are encouraged to notice and reflect upon:

- How the teacher builds relationships with students.
- How instructional decisions are made.
- How classroom routines support learning.
- How assessment informs instruction.
- How the teacher responds to unexpected situations.
- How learners with diverse strengths and needs are supported.
- How professional communication occurs throughout the school day.

The goal is not to imitate every instructional decision but to understand the professional thinking behind those decisions.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Prepare for each clinical experience.
- Demonstrate professionalism in appearance, communication, and conduct.
- Participate actively while respecting classroom expectations.
- Ask thoughtful questions at appropriate times.
- Seek opportunities to contribute to student learning.
- Accept coaching with professionalism and a growth mindset.
- Maintain confidentiality and professional ethics at all times.
- Reflect on your experiences and apply what you learn to future practice.

Your willingness to learn, listen, reflect, and grow is one of the greatest ways you can honor your mentor teacher's investment in your development.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

How We Support You

The Education Department works closely with mentor teachers to create meaningful clinical experiences that support your growth as an educator.

Throughout your placement, support is provided through:

- Mentor teachers
- Faculty
- Clinical supervisors
- Program Managers
- The Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Ongoing communication between the College and school partners

Together, these partnerships provide guidance, coaching, and encouragement throughout your clinical preparation.

If Challenges Occur

Professional relationships occasionally encounter challenges. When questions or concerns arise, educator candidates are expected to communicate respectfully and follow established communication pathways.

Whenever possible:

1. Discuss concerns professionally with your mentor teacher.
2. If additional support is needed, communicate with your course instructor or clinical supervisor.
3. Contact the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator when guidance regarding placement or partnership is needed.

The Education Department is committed to working collaboratively with educator candidates and mentor teachers to resolve concerns while maintaining positive school partnerships and supporting successful clinical experiences.

Related Resources

- Clinical Experience Handbook
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Clinical Supervisor

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Program Manager
- Professional Growth Portfolio
- Communication Expectations (Subsection 5)
- Shared Responsibilities (Subsection 20)

Portfolio Connection

Mentor teachers provide some of the most valuable evidence of your professional growth.

Consider documenting:

- Mentor teacher feedback and coaching.
- Reflections on instructional observations.
- Co-planning and co-teaching experiences.
- Evidence of growth following feedback.
- FEAP-aligned examples of instructional practice.
- Professional goals developed through mentoring conversations.

During your final internship, these reflections become powerful evidence of how your instructional practice has evolved throughout the program.

The SCF Education Way

Mentor teachers do more than supervise clinical experiences, they invest in the future of the teaching profession.

Every observation, conversation, lesson, question, and piece of feedback represents an opportunity to learn from an experienced educator who has chosen to help prepare the next generation of teachers.

Approach every mentoring relationship with humility, curiosity, professionalism, and gratitude. Listen carefully, ask thoughtful questions, reflect honestly, and remember that growth often begins with feedback that challenges your thinking.

The strongest mentor relationships are built not upon perfection, but upon trust, openness, and a shared commitment to helping every learner succeed.

Professional Tip

Observe beyond the lesson.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Some of the most valuable learning happens before students arrive, during transitions, in conversations with colleagues, while communicating with families, and during moments that never appear in a lesson plan. Pay attention to the decisions your mentor teacher makes throughout the day, not just while teaching.

Reflection

Think about a teacher who positively influenced your own educational journey.

- *What qualities made that educator memorable?*
- *As you learn alongside your mentor teacher, which professional habits, instructional practices, or ways of building relationships do you hope to intentionally develop as part of your own professional identity?*



22. Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice

"Professional conduct is demonstrated not through isolated actions, but through the consistent habits that build trust, confidence, and respect."

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Purpose

Professional conduct is the foundation of every successful clinical experience. During field experiences and internship, educator candidates represent themselves, the SCF Education Department, the College, and the teaching profession. Every interaction contributes to the trust placed in you by students, families, mentor teachers, school personnel, and community partners.

Professional conduct extends beyond following rules. It reflects sound judgment, ethical decision-making, respect for others, and a commitment to serving learners with professionalism and integrity.

Why This Matters

Schools invite educator candidates into learning environments because they trust the Education Department to prepare future educators who demonstrate professionalism, responsibility, and ethical conduct.

Professional conduct strengthens partnerships, protects learners, and creates positive learning environments where everyone can thrive.

The habits you develop during clinical experiences become the habits you carry into your professional career.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

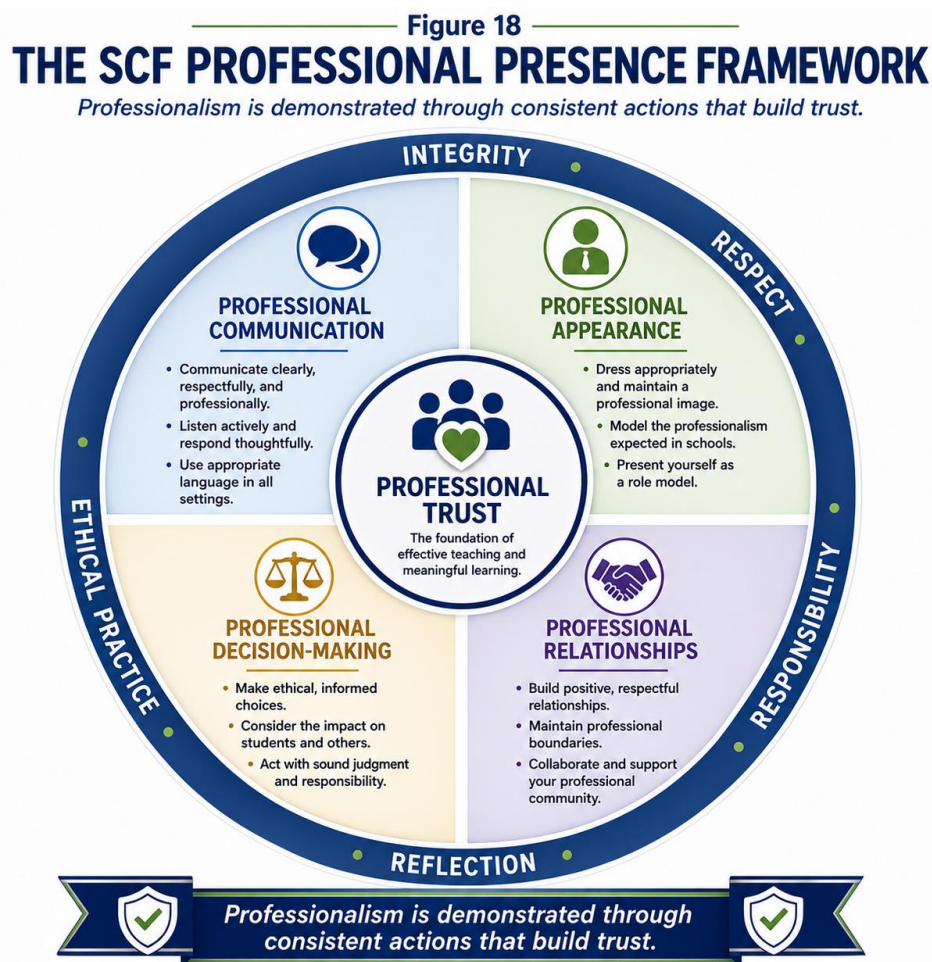
Department Standard 3.5

Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Demonstrate professionalism in appearance, communication, and conduct.
- Follow all College, district, school, and classroom expectations.
- Respect school policies, schedules, and procedures.
- Use professional language in all written, verbal, and electronic communication.
- Demonstrate initiative while respecting the guidance of mentor teachers and school personnel.
- Maintain professional boundaries with students, families, and colleagues.
- Use technology responsibly and only for educational purposes during clinical experiences.
- Model ethical behavior both on campus and within partner schools.

Professional conduct is expected in person, online, and in all school-related communications.



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are responsible for approaching every clinical experience as a professional learning opportunity and demonstrating the habits expected of members of the teaching profession.

You are expected to:

- Arrive prepared, engaged, and ready to contribute to the learning environment.
- Communicate respectfully and professionally with students, families, mentor teachers, faculty, administrators, and school personnel.
- Follow the policies, procedures, schedules, and expectations of your assigned school or clinical setting.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries in person, online, and through electronic communication.
- Demonstrate initiative while respecting the expertise, responsibilities, and instructional authority of your mentor teacher and other school professionals.
- Use technology and personal devices appropriately and only in ways consistent with school, district, College, and clinical expectations.
- Respond to feedback with reflection, professionalism, and a willingness to grow.
- Ask questions when expectations are unclear rather than making assumptions.
- Recognize that your actions during clinical practice represent not only you, but also the SCF Education Department and the teaching profession.

Professionalism is not something you demonstrate only when you are being observed. It is reflected in the choices you make consistently, including the moments when no one appears to be watching.

How We Support You

Professional practice develops over time. You are not expected to enter your first clinical experience already knowing how to navigate every professional situation.

The SCF Education Department intentionally provides opportunities to *learn, practice, receive feedback, reflect, and grow* throughout your educator preparation journey.

Support may come from:

- Mentor teachers who model professional practice within authentic school environments.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Faculty who help you connect coursework and professional expectations to what you experience in schools.
- Clinical supervisors who provide observation, coaching, and feedback.
- The Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator who supports clinical partnerships, placement expectations, and communication with school and district partners.
- Program Managers who help you understand program expectations and professional progression.
- School administrators and other educational professionals who provide additional perspectives on professional practice.

You are encouraged to seek guidance early when you encounter a situation you are unsure how to navigate. Asking a thoughtful professional question is itself an important demonstration of sound judgment.

If Challenges Occur

Becoming a professional educator involves growth, and there may be times when your actions do not fully align with clinical, departmental, or professional expectations.

When concerns arise, the Education Department's first goal, whenever appropriate, is to help you understand the concern, reflect upon its impact, and identify what successful professional practice should look like moving forward.

Most concerns can be addressed through conversation, coaching, feedback, and reflection.

When a concern is more serious, involves student safety or ethical responsibilities, or continues after coaching has occurred, additional documentation or review may be necessary. Concerns related to professional conduct may be addressed through the SCF Education Department Support and Accountability Process described in Chapter 26.

The level of response is determined by the nature and severity of the concern. The department's responsibility is both to support your professional growth and to protect P–12 learners, school partnerships, the integrity of the educator preparation program, and the standards of the teaching profession.

Growth and accountability work together. Learning from professional challenges includes accepting responsibility, responding to feedback, and demonstrating meaningful change through future actions.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Related Resources

- Chapter 4: Professional Dispositions
- Chapter 5: Communication Expectations
- Chapter 7: Professional Appearance
- Chapter 12: Professional Responsibility
- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 14: Artificial Intelligence and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 20: Shared Responsibilities
- Chapter 21: Mentor Teachers
- Chapter 23: Confidentiality
- Chapter 24: Safety
- Chapter 25: Attendance During Clinical Experiences
- Chapter 26: Support and Accountability During Clinical Practice
- Professional Growth Portfolio
- SCF Student Code of Conduct
- Applicable school and district policies and procedures

Portfolio Connection

Professional conduct is part of the evidence of who you are becoming, not simply what you are completing.

Your Professional Growth Portfolio provides an opportunity to demonstrate how your professional identity develops across clinical experiences. Evidence might include mentor or supervisor feedback, reflections following clinical experiences, professional goals, examples of collaboration, or documentation demonstrating growth in areas connected to the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs) and professional dispositions.

Especially valuable is evidence that demonstrates a growth story:

- **What did I notice?** →
- **What feedback did I receive?** →
- **What did I change?** →
- **What does my practice demonstrate now?**

By the time you enter final internship, your portfolio should allow you to look across experiences from prior semesters and identify how your communication, professional judgment, collaboration, reliability, and professional presence have developed over time.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Professional growth is not demonstrated by never needing feedback. It is demonstrated by what you **do with feedback once you receive it.**

The SCF Education Way

Professionalism is how trust becomes visible.

It is demonstrated when you arrive prepared, honor commitments, communicate respectfully, protect professional boundaries, respond thoughtfully to feedback, and make decisions that place learners at the center of your practice.

At SCF, we recognize that you are still becoming the educator you will ultimately be. Clinical practice provides a supported space to learn from experienced professionals, test your developing judgment, reflect on your choices, and strengthen your professional identity.

At the same time, entering a school means entering a community that has entrusted you with something significant: *its learners.*

That trust deserves your best professional effort every day.

You do not have to know everything yet.

You do need to be prepared to learn, communicate, reflect, take responsibility, and grow.

That is professional practice.

That is becoming an educator.

Professional Tip

When you are unsure, think beyond the moment.

Before making a decision during clinical practice, ask yourself:

How might this choice affect the student, my mentor teacher, the school community, and the trust others place in me as an emerging educator?

Professional judgment often begins by considering the impact of our choices on others.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about the educator you want students, families, and colleagues to experience when you enter your own classroom.

What three professional qualities do you want others to consistently associate with you?

Now consider your current clinical practice:

What actions are you already taking that demonstrate those qualities, and what is one professional habit you can intentionally strengthen during your next clinical experience?

The goal is not simply to *describe* yourself as professional. It is to ensure that your everyday actions allow others to experience you that way.

23. Confidentiality

"Professional educators are entrusted with information that must be protected with integrity, discretion, and respect."

Purpose

Confidentiality is one of the most important responsibilities entrusted to professional educators. During clinical experiences, educator candidates may encounter information about students, families, educators, classrooms, and schools that is private, sensitive, or legally protected.

Maintaining confidentiality means more than keeping information secret. It means understanding what information you have access to, why you have access to it, who has a legitimate educational need to know it, and how your professional decisions protect the dignity and privacy of others.

As an educator candidate, you are beginning to assume the same ethical responsibilities that professional educators carry. Protecting confidential information is an essential part of earning and maintaining professional trust.

Why This Matters

Schools welcome educator candidates into spaces that families and communities trust to protect their children.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

During clinical experiences, you may encounter student assessment results, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), behavior information, academic performance, family circumstances, disability-related information, conversations among professionals, student work, photographs, digital records, or other information that would not otherwise be available to you.

Access does not equal permission to share.

Information you encounter through your professional role should be used only for appropriate educational purposes and handled according to applicable College, school, district, state, and federal requirements, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Professional educators understand that protecting privacy is also about protecting dignity.

Protect dignity first.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Figure 19

THE CIRCLE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Professional trust is built when we protect the information entrusted to us with integrity, discretion, and respect.



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 3.6

Confidentiality and Professional Privacy

Educator candidates are expected to protect confidential and personally identifiable information encountered through coursework, simulation-based learning, field experiences, clinical practice, and professional communication.

This responsibility extends to information communicated:

- Verbally
- In writing
- Through photographs, video, or audio
- Through email or messaging platforms
- Within Canvas or other digital systems
- Through social media
- Through artificial intelligence platforms or other emerging technologies
- Within the Professional Growth Portfolio
- During informal conversations outside the clinical environment

Confidentiality expectations continue beyond the conclusion of an individual course, field experience, or clinical placement.

Confidentiality in Practice

Knowing that information is confidential is only the beginning. Professional judgment determines how you protect it.

Student Information and Records

Student records, assessment information, grades, IEPs, evaluation reports, behavior information, family circumstances, and other personally identifiable educational information should be accessed or discussed only when appropriate to your assigned professional responsibilities.

Do not copy, photograph, download, retain, or share student records unless specifically authorized as part of an approved educational activity.

Professional Conversations

Schools are collaborative environments, and educators routinely discuss student learning as part of their professional responsibilities.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Those conversations belong in appropriate professional spaces with individuals who have an educational need to know.

Hallways, restaurants, social gatherings, text conversations with friends, social media, and other public or informal settings are not appropriate places to discuss identifiable information about students, families, colleagues, or school situations.

Photography, Video, and Social Media

A meaningful clinical experience does not automatically become something you may photograph, record, post, or share.

Educator candidates must follow all school and district requirements regarding photographs, video, audio recordings, student work, and social media.

Never assume that because something occurred in your presence, you have permission to document or share it.

Digital Information

Digital confidentiality deserves the same level of professional care as paper records and face-to-face conversations.

Protect passwords and login credentials, use approved systems, secure devices appropriately, and follow school and district expectations for storing, accessing, transmitting, and disposing of digital information.

AI and Confidentiality

Artificial intelligence creates an additional professional responsibility.

As discussed in Chapter 14, AI may be used as a learning and professional tool only when its use aligns with course, departmental, and clinical expectations.

Personally identifiable or confidential information about students, families, educators, schools, or clinical situations should never be entered into an AI platform unless the platform and use have been specifically authorized through applicable College, district, or school procedures.

Removing a student's name does not automatically make information appropriate to share. A combination of details may still make a student, family, teacher, or school identifiable.

Before using AI with information originating from a clinical experience, ask:

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Do I have the authority to share this information with this system?

If you are uncertain, do not enter the information. Ask first.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Protect the privacy and dignity of every learner and family.
- Follow FERPA and applicable College, district, school, and clinical confidentiality expectations.
- Access student information only when it is appropriate to your assigned responsibilities.
- Discuss student information only with authorized professionals for legitimate educational purposes.
- Protect paper and digital records from unauthorized access.
- Remove identifying information from coursework and reflections when required.
- Follow all requirements related to photography, recording, student work, and social media.
- Never use confidential clinical information as casual conversation or storytelling.
- Exercise particular care when using AI and other digital technologies.
- Ask for guidance before sharing information whenever confidentiality is uncertain.
- Report concerns through the appropriate professional channel rather than attempting to investigate or resolve sensitive matters independently.

A helpful professional principle is simple:

Having access to information does not make it yours to share.

How We Support You

Confidentiality involves professional judgment, and some situations are less obvious than others.

The Education Department, mentor teachers, clinical supervisors, and school partners help you develop that judgment through:

- Clinical orientation and preparation.
- Guidance regarding FERPA and professional privacy.
- School and district-specific expectations.
- Modeling of appropriate professional communication.
- Discussions of ethical dilemmas and authentic clinical situations.

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- Guidance regarding technology, AI, photography, and digital communication.
- Feedback when questions or concerns arise.

You are encouraged to ask questions ***before*** sharing, posting, uploading, photographing, recording, or using information when you are uncertain about what is permitted.

Knowing when to seek guidance is part of professional competence.

If Challenges Occur

If you realize that confidential information may have been viewed, shared, posted, transmitted, or handled inappropriately, communicate the concern immediately through the appropriate professional channel.

Do not attempt to conceal the mistake, delete evidence without guidance, contact affected individuals independently, or resolve the situation on your own.

Prompt communication allows the mentor teacher, school, district, faculty member, or Education Department to determine the appropriate response and protect those involved.

Depending upon the nature and severity of the concern, a confidentiality issue may be addressed through coaching, additional professional learning, documentation, or the *SCF Education Department Support and Accountability Process* described in Chapter 26.

Serious breaches of confidentiality may have implications for continued clinical participation because protecting students and families is a fundamental professional responsibility.

Our goal remains growth whenever possible, while recognizing that the department and its school partners have an obligation to protect students, families, schools, and professional trust.

Related Resources

- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 14: Artificial Intelligence and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 20: Shared Responsibilities
- Chapter 21: Mentor Teachers
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 24: Safety
- Chapter 26: Support and Accountability During Clinical Practice
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Applicable district and school confidentiality policies

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Professional Growth Portfolio requirements

Portfolio Connection

Your Professional Growth Portfolio is designed to document your development as an educator. It should never become a repository for confidential student information.

Clinical artifacts can provide powerful evidence of your learning, but they must be prepared in ways that protect students, families, schools, and colleagues.

Before including a clinical artifact, reflection, photograph, student work sample, assessment, lesson document, or other evidence in your portfolio, determine whether it contains information that could identify an individual.

When required, remove or appropriately de-identify:

- Student names
- Identification numbers
- Contact information
- Photographs or identifying images
- School-specific information
- Family information
- Other details that could reasonably identify an individual

When uncertain about whether an artifact is appropriate for your portfolio, ask your instructor or clinical supervisor before including it.

Your portfolio should provide evidence of *your professional growth*, not evidence about an individual student.

The SCF Education Way

Professional educators protect trust by protecting people.

Students and families allow educators into deeply personal parts of their lives because education depends upon relationships. With that access comes responsibility.

Confidentiality is therefore more than a legal requirement or school rule. It is an expression of respect.

We protect a student's information because we respect the student.

We protect a family's privacy because we respect the family.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

We exercise discretion with colleagues because we respect professional relationships.

And when we are uncertain, we seek guidance because we respect the responsibility entrusted to us.

The strongest educators understand that professional trust can take years to build and only moments to compromise.

At SCF, protecting confidentiality is one of the ways we demonstrate that we are worthy of that trust.

Professional Tip

Pause before you share.

Before discussing, photographing, posting, uploading, emailing, recording, or entering information into a digital or AI platform, ask:

Who needs this information, for what educational purpose, and do I have permission to share it in this way?

If you cannot confidently answer those questions, **do not share it yet. Ask first.**

Reflection

During clinical practice, you will sometimes learn things about students or families because your professional role gives you access to information that others do not have.

Consider this question:

How does having access to someone's information change your responsibility to that person?

Then think about your future classroom:

What habits will you establish to ensure that students and families experience you as an educator who protects their privacy, preserves their dignity, and can be trusted with their stories?

Professional confidentiality is ultimately not about what you know.

It is about what you choose to do with what you know.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

24. Safety

"Every educator shares responsibility for creating learning environments where students feel physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe."

Purpose

Safety is a shared professional responsibility and a foundational condition for learning.

During clinical experiences, educator candidates enter established school communities with policies, procedures, and systems designed to protect students, employees, families, and visitors. Your responsibility is to learn those expectations, follow them consistently, and exercise sound professional judgment within the scope of your role.

Safety, however, extends beyond emergency procedures and physical environments. Professional educators help create spaces where learners feel emotionally secure, respected, included, and able to participate without fear of humiliation, discrimination, or unnecessary risk.

As an educator candidate, you are learning to see safety not simply as something you respond to when a concern occurs, but as something you help create through your everyday decisions.

Why This Matters

Students learn best when they feel safe enough to take intellectual risks, ask questions, make mistakes, build relationships, and participate fully in their learning community.

Schools establish safety procedures because educators are entrusted with the well-being of children and young people. During clinical practice, you become part of that system of shared responsibility.

This requires more than knowing where to go during an emergency drill. It means developing the awareness and professional judgment to recognize when something may affect a learner's well-being, understanding the boundaries of your role, and knowing when and how to seek assistance.

A developing educator does not need to have every answer.

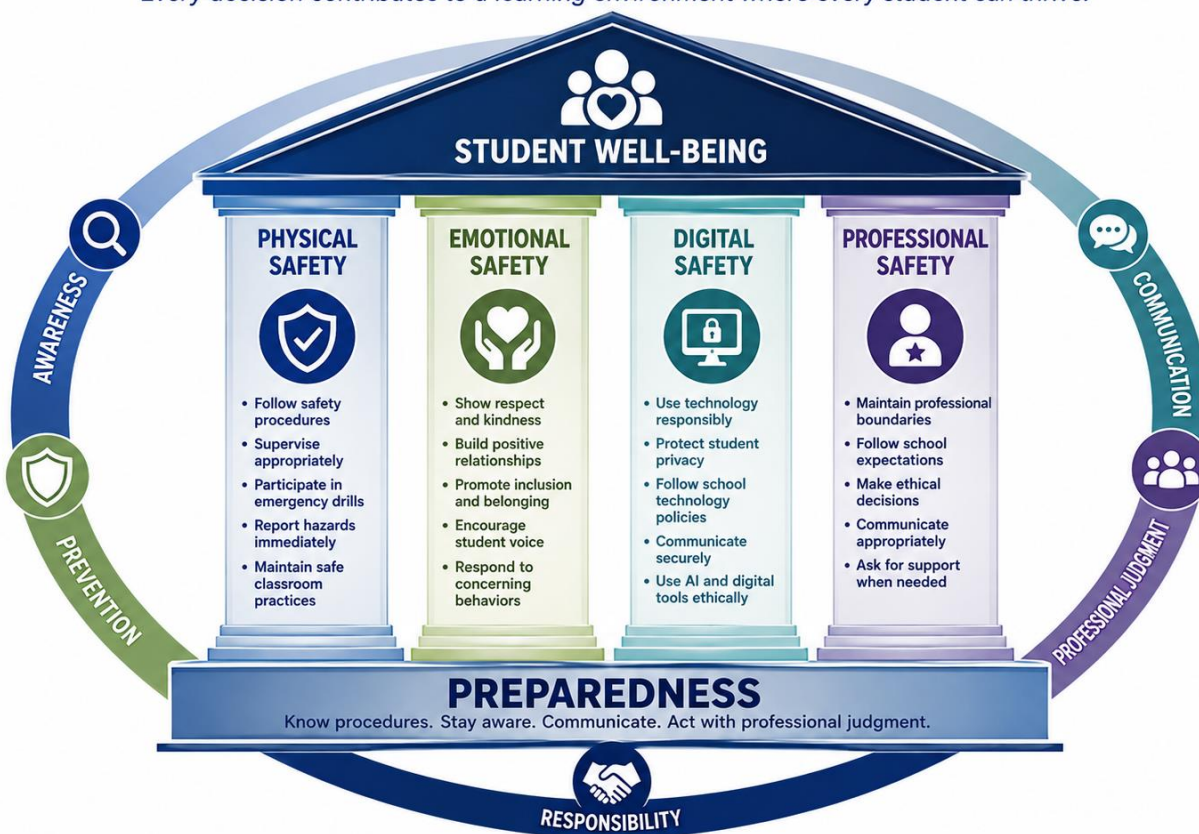
A developing educator does need to know when a situation requires action, communication, or support.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Figure 20

SAFE EDUCATORS. SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.

Every decision contributes to a learning environment where every student can thrive.



Every decision contributes to a learning environment where every student can thrive.

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Department Standard 3.7

Safety and Student Well-Being

Educator candidates are expected to follow all College, district, school, classroom, and clinical safety procedures throughout field and clinical experiences.

Candidates are expected to:

- Learn and follow school-specific safety and emergency procedures.
- Participate appropriately in emergency drills and safety protocols.
- Follow visitor, identification, check-in, and check-out procedures.
- Maintain appropriate supervision within the responsibilities assigned by the mentor teacher or supervising professional.
- Maintain professional boundaries with students.
- Use technology and digital systems responsibly.
- Report observed or suspected safety concerns promptly through established school procedures.
- Follow applicable mandatory reporting expectations and immediately seek guidance from the appropriate school professional when a situation may require reporting.
- Never attempt to independently investigate a safety, abuse, neglect, threat, or other serious concern.
- Follow all school procedures involving transportation, medication, student release, visitors, and other areas of student safety.
- Respond to emergencies by following the directions and established procedures of the school or district.

Educator candidates should never assume responsibilities beyond the scope of their assigned clinical role.

When you are uncertain about your responsibility in a situation, immediately seek guidance from your mentor teacher, supervising educator, administrator, or other designated school professional.

Understanding Safety as a Professional Responsibility

Safety is multidimensional. Professional educators consider how their decisions influence the whole learner and the learning community.

Physical Safety

Physical safety includes following classroom, school, and district procedures intended to protect students and adults.

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This includes appropriate supervision, emergency procedures, safe use of classroom materials and spaces, visitor procedures, and awareness of potential hazards.

During clinical practice, follow the procedures of the school rather than assuming that procedures from another school or previous experience apply.

Emotional and Psychological Safety

Learners should experience classrooms as places where they are respected, valued, and able to participate authentically.

Educator candidates contribute to emotional safety through:

- Respectful language and interactions.
- Inclusive instructional practices.
- Appropriate responses to mistakes.
- Awareness of student dignity.
- Positive relationships.
- Consistent and equitable expectations.
- Responsiveness to bullying, harassment, exclusion, or other concerning behavior through appropriate school procedures.

How students **experience** the learning environment matters.

Digital Safety

Digital tools expand opportunities for learning while introducing additional responsibilities.

Educator candidates should follow school and district requirements regarding:

- Student accounts and information.
- Digital communication.
- Photographs and recordings.
- Online learning environments.
- Social media.
- Artificial intelligence.
- Passwords and login credentials.
- Approved instructional technology.

Digital convenience never overrides student privacy, professional boundaries, or school safety procedures.

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Professional Safety

Professional boundaries protect both students and educators.

Interactions with students should remain appropriate to your educational role and consistent with school, district, College, and professional expectations.

This includes boundaries involving communication, physical interactions, transportation, social media, personal information, gifts, meetings with students, and relationships outside established educational contexts.

When you are uncertain whether an interaction is appropriate, **seek guidance before proceeding.**

Mandatory Reporting and Professional Responsibility

Educators hold important responsibilities for protecting children and vulnerable learners.

During clinical experiences, you may observe, hear, or become aware of information that raises concerns about a student's safety or well-being.

When this occurs, do not dismiss the concern, promise secrecy, conduct your own investigation, confront individuals involved, or attempt to determine whether the concern is "serious enough" on your own.

Instead, follow applicable reporting requirements and the procedures communicated by your clinical site and SCF.

Because reporting responsibilities are significant, educator candidates should seek immediate guidance from the appropriate school or College professional whenever they are uncertain about how to respond.

Professional responsibility sometimes means recognizing:

This situation requires someone else to know.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Learn the safety procedures of every clinical site.

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- Follow established procedures even when they differ from those of another school or previous placement.
- Know who to contact when assistance is needed.
- Remain attentive to your surroundings and student needs.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Follow supervision expectations.
- Protect student privacy and digital information.
- Communicate concerns promptly.
- Participate responsibly in drills and emergency procedures.
- Seek guidance when a situation exceeds your knowledge, authority, or assigned responsibilities.
- Place student well-being at the center of professional decision-making.

Professional judgment does not mean handling every situation independently.

Sometimes the strongest demonstration of professional judgment is knowing when to ask for help.

How We Support You

Safety is a shared responsibility. You are not expected to navigate unfamiliar or serious situations alone.

Support may come from:

- Your mentor teacher.
- School administrators and designated school personnel.
- Your clinical supervisor.
- Course faculty.
- The Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- Program Managers.
- District and school safety procedures.
- Clinical orientation and preparation.

School-specific procedures will vary. For this reason, educator candidates are expected to learn the expectations of each clinical site rather than relying solely on general program knowledge.

The Education Department supports you in developing the professional judgment to recognize concerns, identify your role, follow established procedures, and communicate appropriately.

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If Challenges Occur

Concerns involving student safety require timely action.

If you observe or become aware of a situation that may affect the safety or well-being of a student or school community, follow the site's established procedures and communicate immediately with the appropriate professional.

If the concern involves your own actions or professional judgment, communicate openly with your mentor teacher, clinical supervisor, faculty member, or the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.

Do not attempt to conceal a mistake or resolve a significant safety concern independently.

Depending upon the nature and severity of the concern, responses may include clarification, coaching, additional preparation, documentation, or review through the SCF Education Department Support and Accountability Process described in Chapter 26.

Because the well-being of P–12 learners is paramount, serious safety concerns may require immediate action and may not begin with Level 1 Coaching. Concerns are addressed at the level appropriate to their severity.

That distinction is important: **our commitment to growth remains strong, while our responsibility to protect learners remains non-negotiable.**

Related Resources

- Chapter 14: Artificial Intelligence and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 20: Shared Responsibilities
- Chapter 21: Mentor Teachers
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 23: Confidentiality
- Chapter 25: Attendance During Clinical Experiences
- Chapter 26: Support and Accountability During Clinical Practice
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Applicable district and school emergency and safety procedures
- Applicable mandatory reporting requirements

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Portfolio Connection

Safety is an important dimension of professional judgment and can provide meaningful opportunities for reflection within your Professional Growth Portfolio.

Appropriate portfolio reflections might examine:

- How classroom routines supported physical or emotional safety.
- How a mentor teacher established an inclusive learning environment.
- How safety influenced an instructional or classroom-management decision.
- How your understanding of professional boundaries developed.
- How feedback strengthened your awareness or professional judgment.
- How you contributed to an environment in which learners felt respected and supported.

As always, reflections and artifacts must protect student confidentiality.

The goal is not to document sensitive incidents. It is to demonstrate what you learned about creating and maintaining safe learning environments.

The SCF Education Way

Safety is not a procedure we follow only when something goes wrong. It is a condition we intentionally create every day.

It is created when learners know they will be treated with dignity.

It is strengthened when classrooms are inclusive and predictable.

It is protected when educators maintain appropriate boundaries.

It is sustained when professionals notice concerns, communicate responsibly, and follow established procedures.

And it depends upon educators who understand that asking for assistance is not an absence of professional judgment, it is often evidence of it.

As an emerging educator, you are learning to look beyond the lesson itself and consider the environment in which that lesson occurs.

Because before students can fully engage, explore, take risks, and grow, they must first experience something fundamental:

They must know that they are safe to learn.

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Professional Tip

Learn the procedures before you need them.

At the beginning of every clinical placement, identify:

- *Where do I go?*
- *Who do I contact?*
- *What am I responsible for?*
- *What should I do if I am unsure?*

Knowing these answers before an unexpected situation occurs allows you to respond with greater confidence and professionalism.

Reflection

Think beyond emergency drills and physical security.

What does a learner need to experience in order to feel truly safe enough to learn?

Consider physical, emotional, digital, and professional safety.

Then reflect on your developing practice:

What is one action you can intentionally take during your next clinical experience to contribute to a learning environment where every student feels respected, protected, included, and able to participate fully?

Ultimately, safe learning environments are not created by a single policy, procedure, or person.

They are created through the collective decisions educators make every day.

25. Attendance During Clinical Experiences

"Reliability is one of the first professional qualities others notice, and one of the most important."

Purpose

Clinical experiences depend upon professional presence, preparation, and reliability.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Unlike traditional coursework, clinical learning occurs within active educational environments where students, mentor teachers, school personnel, and other professionals may be expecting your participation. When you commit to a clinical experience, your presence becomes part of a larger professional community.

For this reason, attendance during clinical practice is not simply about accumulating required hours. It is about demonstrating the dependability, communication, and follow-through expected of professional educators.

As an educator candidate, you are learning to move from attending as a student to showing up as a professional.

Why This Matters

Schools operate through relationships and shared responsibilities.

When an educator is absent, arrives late, leaves unexpectedly, or does not communicate appropriately, the impact extends beyond that individual. Plans may need to change. Responsibilities may shift. Students may experience disruption. Mentor teachers and school personnel may need to adjust their work.

The same is true during clinical preparation.

Your mentor teacher may have intentionally planned an instructional opportunity for you. Students may expect your participation. A clinical supervisor may have scheduled an observation. A collaborative lesson may depend upon your preparation.

Professional reliability communicates: You can count on me.

That trust is built through consistent actions over time.

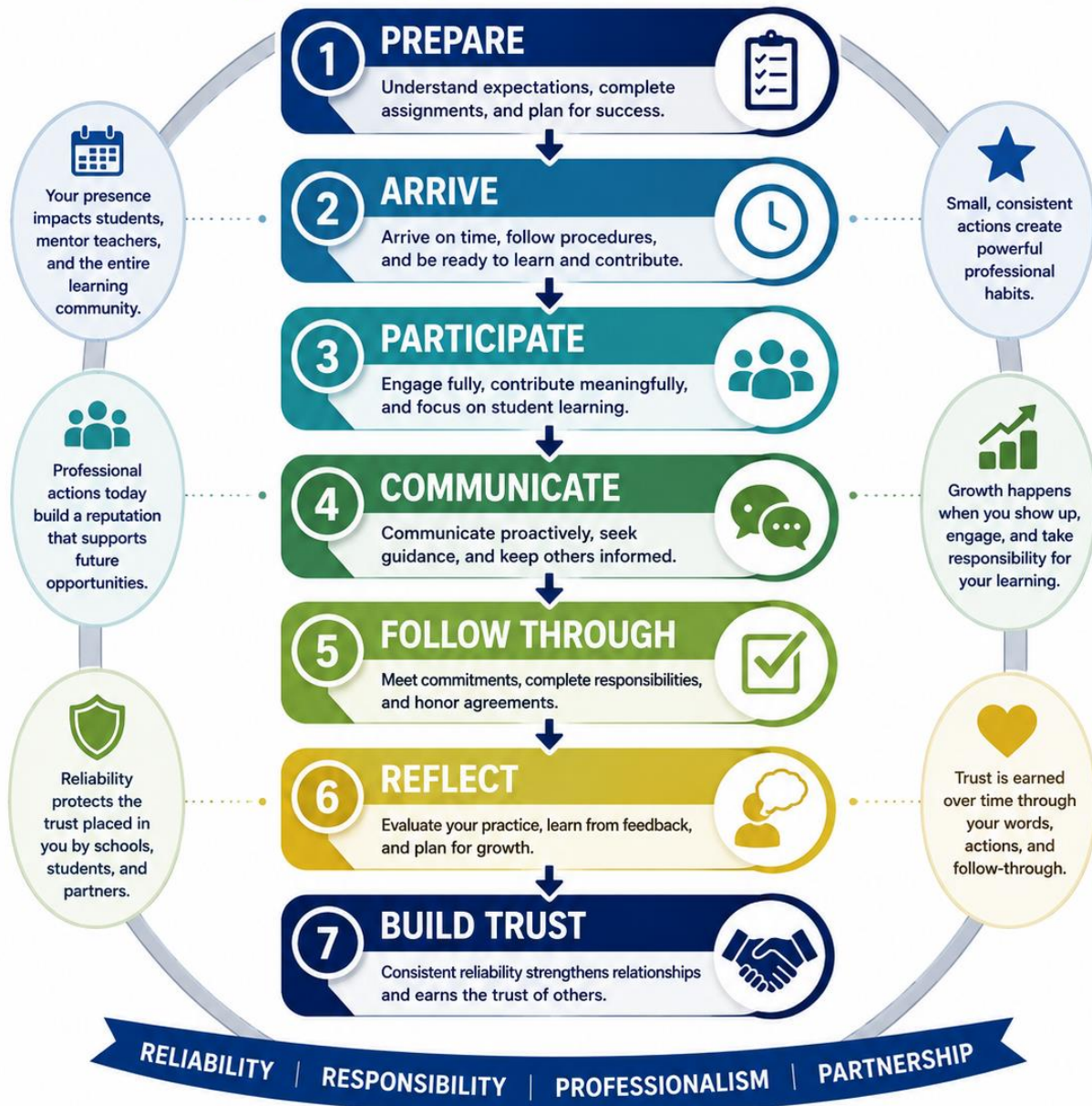
Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Figure 21

THE PROFESSIONAL RELIABILITY CONTINUUM

Professional reliability is not simply being present.

It is being prepared, engaged, communicative, and accountable to others.



Professional reliability is demonstrated through daily actions that strengthen relationships and support student learning.

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Department Standard 3.8

Attendance and Professional Reliability During Clinical Experiences

Educator candidates are expected to participate fully in all required clinical experiences and demonstrate the reliability expected of members of the teaching profession.

Candidates are expected to:

- Attend all scheduled clinical experiences.
- Arrive on time and prepared to participate.
- Remain for the full scheduled clinical experience unless otherwise authorized.
- Follow the schedule established by the school, mentor teacher, clinical supervisor, and Education Department.
- Communicate absences, emergencies, or unavoidable delays promptly through the appropriate professional channels.
- Complete required clinical hours and experiences according to course, program, and state requirements.
- Follow established procedures for documenting clinical participation.
- Complete approved make-up experiences when required and available.
- Recognize that some clinical experiences, observations, simulations, collaborative activities, or instructional opportunities cannot be recreated simply by completing additional hours at another time.

Clinical attendance expectations complement the professional responsibility expectations established in **Department Standards 2.4 and 2.5**.

Presence Is More Than Attendance

Professional presence cannot be measured only by whether you entered the building.

Meaningful participation means arriving ready to learn and contribute.

Professional Presence Looks Like...

- Arriving with the materials and preparation needed for the day's experience.
- Being attentive and engaged.
- Participating appropriately in classroom activities.
- Taking initiative when opportunities arise.
- Observing with professional purpose.
- Asking thoughtful questions at appropriate times.
- Responding to mentor teacher guidance.

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- Remaining focused on students and learning.
- Limiting personal device use to appropriate educational purposes.
- Following through on commitments made to students, mentor teachers, faculty, or clinical supervisors.

Clinical practice is active learning.

Simply being physically present does not fulfill the professional purpose of the experience.

When an Absence or Emergency Occurs

Professional educators are human. Illnesses, family emergencies, transportation problems, and unexpected circumstances occur.

Professional responsibility is demonstrated not by pretending these circumstances never happen, but by how you communicate and respond when they do.

When you know that you will be absent or late, communicate as soon as reasonably possible.

Follow the communication expectations established for your course and clinical placement. Depending upon the experience, this may require communication with more than one person, such as:

Mentor Teacher → Course Instructor or Clinical Supervisor → Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator, when applicable

Do not assume that notifying one person automatically communicates the information to everyone who needs to know.

When circumstances allow, communication should occur **before** the scheduled clinical experience rather than after it has begun.

Make-Up Experiences

Required clinical hours and experiences must be completed according to program, course, and applicable state requirements.

When an absence occurs, educator candidates are responsible for following established procedures to determine whether and how the missed clinical experience may be completed.

An additional day or additional hours should **not** be independently arranged with a mentor teacher without following applicable course or departmental procedures.

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Some experiences can be rescheduled.

Others cannot.

A scheduled observation, simulation, collaborative instructional activity, professional development experience, or unique classroom event may not be reproducible simply by spending equivalent time in the clinical setting later.

For this reason, completing required hours and completing required learning experiences are related, but they are not always the same thing.

Documentation Is Part of Professional Practice

Clinical documentation provides evidence that program and state requirements have been successfully completed.

Educator candidates are responsible for ensuring that required hours, experiences, signatures, logs, evaluations, or other clinical documentation are completed accurately and submitted according to established procedures and deadlines.

Documentation should represent the experience honestly.

Never estimate, recreate, alter, backdate, or otherwise misrepresent clinical participation or required documentation.

Accurate documentation is both an academic integrity expectation and a professional responsibility.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Know your clinical schedule and plan accordingly.
- Arrange reliable transportation.
- Arrive early enough to complete school entry procedures and be ready at the expected start time.
- Prepare for each clinical experience.
- Participate actively and professionally.
- Maintain accurate documentation of required experiences.
- Communicate immediately when circumstances may affect your attendance or punctuality.

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- Follow the appropriate communication chain rather than relying on classmates or others to communicate on your behalf.
- Complete approved make-up requirements when applicable.
- Monitor your own progress toward required clinical hours and experiences.
- Ask for assistance early if a pattern or circumstance may interfere with successful completion of clinical requirements.

Professional responsibility includes recognizing a potential problem before it becomes a program progression problem.

How We Support You

The Education Department recognizes that unexpected circumstances occur and that successful clinical participation sometimes requires problem-solving and support.

Faculty, mentor teachers, clinical supervisors, Program Managers, and the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator work collaboratively to help educator candidates understand expectations and navigate challenges appropriately.

Support may include:

- Clarification of attendance and documentation requirements.
- Guidance regarding appropriate communication.
- Assistance understanding make-up procedures.
- Coaching around professional reliability.
- Problem-solving when circumstances interfere with clinical participation.
- Monitoring progress toward clinical requirements.
- Connecting educator candidates with appropriate College resources when needed.

The most important first step is communication.

Early communication creates more opportunities to identify appropriate solutions.

If Challenges Occur

An isolated illness or unexpected emergency that is communicated and addressed professionally is different from a pattern of missed experiences, repeated lateness, incomplete documentation, failure to communicate, or disengagement during clinical practice.

When concerns arise, the department considers both the circumstances and the educator candidate's professional response.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Most concerns can be addressed through clarification, communication, and coaching.

Patterns of concern may require additional support, documentation, or review through the SCF Education Department Support and Accountability Process described in Chapter 26.

Examples may include:

- Repeated absences or lateness.
- Failure to communicate appropriately about missed clinical experiences.
- Leaving a clinical site without following established procedures.
- Failure to complete required clinical hours or experiences.
- Repeated lack of preparation or meaningful participation.
- Inaccurate or incomplete clinical documentation.
- Failure to complete approved make-up requirements.

Clinical requirements may affect progression because required experiences must be successfully completed before an educator candidate can advance through certain stages of the program.

The goal is not to penalize unavoidable circumstances.

The goal is to ensure that every educator candidate has completed the authentic professional preparation required to serve learners successfully.

Related Resources

- Chapter 5: Communication Expectations
- Chapter 12: Professional Responsibility
- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 19: Field Placements
- Chapter 20: Shared Responsibilities
- Chapter 21: Mentor Teachers
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 24: Safety
- Chapter 26: Support and Accountability During Clinical Practice
- Course-specific clinical requirements
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Applicable district and school procedures

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Portfolio Connection

Professional reliability is part of your growth story.

Your Professional Growth Portfolio may provide opportunities to reflect upon how you developed greater independence, responsibility, preparation, communication, and follow-through across clinical experiences.

Consider evidence that demonstrates growth in areas such as:

- Preparation for clinical practice.
- Dependability and follow-through.
- Communication with mentor teachers and other professionals.
- Responsiveness to feedback.
- Time management and organization.
- Increasing professional responsibility.
- FEAP-aligned professional practices.

By final internship, the goal is not simply to demonstrate that you completed hours.

It is to demonstrate that across those hours, you became increasingly capable of assuming the responsibilities of a professional educator.

The SCF Education Way

Showing up matters because people matter.

Clinical attendance is not about occupying a seat, checking a box, or accumulating hours.

It is about honoring a commitment.

When you arrive prepared, participate fully, communicate proactively, and follow through on your responsibilities, you send an important message to your mentor teacher, your faculty, your school partners, and eventually your own students:

You can count on me.

There will be days throughout your career when circumstances do not go according to plan. Professionalism is not measured by whether life ever interrupts your plans.

It is demonstrated through how you respond.

Communicate.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Take responsibility.

Find the appropriate next step.

Follow through.

Those habits begin during educator preparation, but they will serve you throughout your professional life.

Professional Tip

Communicate before someone has to look for you.

If something may affect your ability to arrive, participate, or fulfill a commitment, communicate as early as possible.

Professional communication should answer three questions:

- What happened?
- Who needs to know?
- What is my next step?

You do not need a lengthy explanation. You do need timely, clear, and responsible communication.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about the educators, colleagues, mentors, or leaders you consider highly dependable.

What behaviors make you trust that they will follow through?

Now consider your own developing professional practice:

If your mentor teacher were asked today, *"Can I count on this educator candidate?"* what evidence from your actions would help them confidently answer yes?

Identify one habit related to preparation, punctuality, communication, participation, or follow-through that you want to strengthen before your next clinical experience.

Because professional reliability is not established by saying:

"You can count on me."

It is established when your consistent actions make saying it unnecessary.

26. Support and Accountability During Clinical Practice

"Professional growth requires both support and accountability. We learn through reflection, respond through action, and demonstrate growth through what we do next."

Purpose

Educator preparation is a developmental process.

Throughout the SCF Education Program, you will receive feedback, coaching, opportunities for reflection, and increasingly complex responsibilities designed to prepare you for professional practice. Most challenges that arise along the way can be addressed through conversation, clarification, reflection, and continued growth.

At the same time, educator preparation carries significant responsibilities. The Education Department must ensure that educator candidates demonstrate the academic integrity, professional dispositions, ethical judgment, and professional practice necessary to serve P–12 learners and enter the teaching profession.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The *SCF Education Department Support and Accountability Process* provides a consistent framework for responding when concerns arise.

Its purpose is to:

- Address concerns as early as appropriate.
- Provide clear expectations and opportunities for growth.
- Ensure consistent documentation.
- Connect educator candidates with appropriate support.
- Protect P–12 students and learning environments.
- Maintain the integrity of school and district partnerships.
- Uphold the professional standards of educator preparation.
- Provide appropriate due process.

Most concerns are resolved through coaching and never progress beyond Level 1.

Why This Matters

Learning to teach involves feedback.

You will make decisions, receive coaching, reconsider your thinking, and sometimes discover that an approach you chose did not have the impact you intended.

That is part of professional learning.

The question is not whether an educator will ever need feedback. Exceptional educators continue receiving and responding to feedback throughout their careers.

What matters is what happens next.

Can you reflect honestly?

Can you accept responsibility?

Can you understand the impact of your actions?

Can you apply feedback?

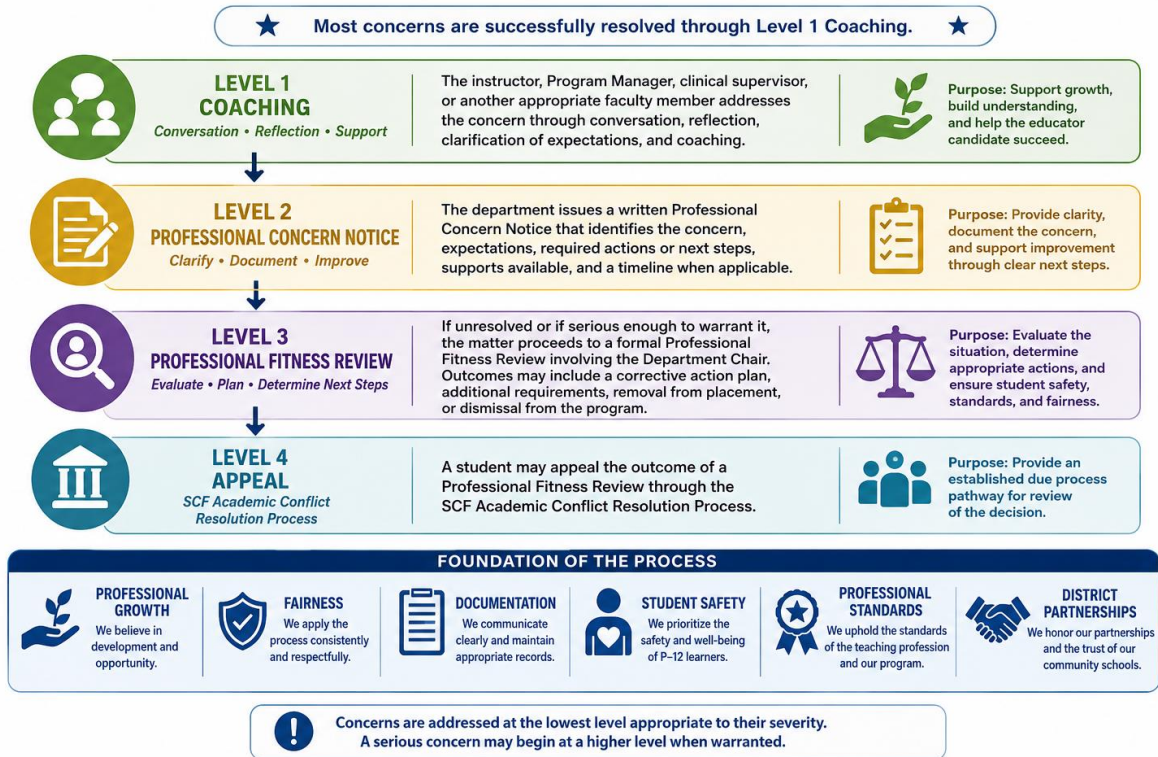
Can you demonstrate change?

Support and accountability therefore belong together.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The department has a responsibility to help you grow. It also has a responsibility to ensure that educator candidates entering schools demonstrate the standards expected of the profession.

Figure 22 — The SCF Support and Accountability Process



Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 3.9

Support and Accountability

When a concern involving academic integrity, professional practice standards, professional dispositions, or clinical expectations arises, the SCF Education Department follows a four-level Support and Accountability Process.

Concerns are addressed at the lowest level appropriate to their nature and severity, and most concerns are resolved through Level 1 Coaching.

The process is designed to support professional growth while ensuring appropriate documentation, consistency, fairness, student safety, and accountability to the standards of the educator preparation program and teaching profession.

Depending upon the seriousness of a concern, prior history, potential impact on P–12 learners, or requirements of a school or district partner, a concern may be addressed initially at a level higher than Level 1.

Level 1: Coaching

Conversation • Reflection • Support

Most concerns begin and end here.

The instructor, Program Manager, clinical supervisor, or another appropriate faculty member addresses the concern directly with the educator candidate through professional conversation, reflection, clarification of expectations, and coaching.

The purpose of Level 1 is to help the educator candidate:

- Understand the concern.
- Consider its impact.
- Connect the concern to applicable professional or departmental expectations.
- Identify what successful practice should look like moving forward.
- Determine appropriate strategies or supports.
- Demonstrate growth through subsequent actions.

Level 1 is the department's default response for most concerns and is intended to support growth rather than penalize.

A coaching conversation should be taken seriously even when no formal disciplinary consequence accompanies it. Professional coaching is an opportunity to respond early, before a concern becomes a pattern.

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Level 2: Formal Concern Professional Concern Notice

When a concern is more significant, continues after coaching, reflects a pattern, or requires formal documentation, the department may issue a **Professional Concern Notice**.

The Professional Concern Notice identifies:

- The specific concern.
- The professional, academic, dispositional, or clinical expectation involved.
- Previous coaching or interventions, when applicable.
- The expectation moving forward.
- Required actions or next steps.
- Available supports.
- A timeline for demonstrating improvement, when appropriate.

The purpose of a Professional Concern Notice is clarity.

You should understand:

What is the concern?

Why does it matter?

What is expected now?

What support is available?

What will demonstrate successful improvement?

The goal remains successful resolution whenever possible.

Level 3: Professional Fitness Review Evaluate • Plan • Determine Next Steps

A concern may proceed to a **Professional Fitness Review** when it has not been successfully resolved at an earlier level or when its seriousness warrants formal review.

The Professional Fitness Review involves the Department Chair and considers the available information related to the concern, prior interventions when applicable, the educator candidate's response, and readiness to continue within the educator preparation program or clinical setting.

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The purpose is to determine an appropriate path forward while considering the responsibilities of the candidate, the department, the College, and school partners.

Possible outcomes may include:

- Continued coaching or monitoring.
- A corrective action or professional growth plan.
- Additional learning or program requirements.
- Additional clinical preparation.
- Conditions for continued progression.
- Temporary interruption of clinical participation.
- Removal from a clinical placement.
- Other actions appropriate to the concern.
- Dismissal from the educator preparation program when warranted.

A Professional Fitness Review is a serious step. It is also intended to provide a structured process for reviewing concerns rather than allowing consequential decisions to occur informally or without appropriate consideration.

Level 4: Appeal

SCF Academic Conflict Resolution Process

An educator candidate may appeal the outcome of a Professional Fitness Review through the **SCF Academic Conflict Resolution Process**.

The appeal process provides an established College pathway for review of the decision and ensures that educator candidates have access to the applicable due-process procedures.

Students are responsible for following the procedures and timelines associated with the College's Academic Conflict Resolution Process.

Removal from a Clinical Placement

Removal from a clinical placement is not the default response to a professional concern.

Whenever appropriate, the Education Department seeks to address concerns through coaching, communication, reflection, support, and opportunities for demonstrated improvement.

However, clinical placements exist through partnerships with schools and districts, and the Education Department shares responsibility for protecting P–12 students, school communities, mentor teachers, and the integrity of those partnerships.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Removal from a placement may be considered when concerns involve circumstances such as:

- Student safety or well-being.
- Serious breaches of confidentiality.
- Serious ethical or professional conduct concerns.
- Significant or repeated professional disposition concerns.
- Academic integrity concerns that affect professional readiness.
- Repeated failure to meet clinical expectations.
- Failure to respond successfully to coaching or a corrective action plan.
- Failure to maintain required clinical participation.
- A request from the school or district partner.
- Other circumstances that make continuation of the placement inappropriate.

The presence of one of these circumstances does not automatically determine a particular outcome. Decisions are based upon the nature and severity of the situation and applicable College, program, school, and district requirements.

When a School or District Requests Removal

Clinical placements are partnerships.

Schools and districts retain responsibility for their students, employees, campuses, and learning environments. A school or district may determine that an educator candidate should no longer continue within a particular placement.

When this occurs, the Education Department will review the circumstances and determine appropriate next steps.

Removal from one clinical site does not automatically guarantee placement at another site.

Before another placement can be considered, the department may need to determine whether the educator candidate is prepared to return to clinical practice and whether additional coaching, reflection, remediation, or a Professional Fitness Review is appropriate.

This distinction protects both the candidate's opportunity for thoughtful review and the department's responsibility to its school partners.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to participate actively and professionally in the Support and Accountability Process when a concern arises.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

This includes:

- Engaging respectfully in professional conversations.
- Listening carefully to feedback.
- Asking questions when expectations are unclear.
- Reflecting honestly on your actions and their impact.
- Providing relevant information when asked.
- Completing required next steps within established timelines.
- Using available supports.
- Demonstrating improvement through subsequent actions.
- Maintaining professional communication even when conversations are difficult.
- Taking responsibility for your continued professional growth.

You do not have to agree with every piece of feedback immediately in order to engage professionally with it.

Professional maturity includes the ability to listen, reflect, seek clarification, consider another perspective, and respond appropriately.

How We Support You

Accountability should never leave you wondering what you are expected to do next.

When concerns arise, the Education Department seeks to provide clear communication about the concern, applicable expectations, available supports, and appropriate next steps.

Depending upon the situation, support may include:

- Faculty coaching.
- Mentor teacher feedback.
- Clinical supervisor guidance.
- Program Manager support.
- Support from the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- Reflection or goal-setting.
- Additional practice or learning opportunities.
- A corrective action or professional growth plan.
- Referral to appropriate College resources.
- Follow-up conversations to review progress.

Our goal is not simply to identify concerns.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Our goal is to help educator candidates understand expectations and, whenever possible, successfully demonstrate the growth necessary to move forward.

If Challenges Continue

Professional growth must ultimately become visible through professional action.

When concerns continue despite coaching, support, or formal intervention, the department has a responsibility to determine whether the educator candidate is demonstrating the readiness required for continued progression.

Repeated concerns may be significant even when each individual occurrence appears relatively minor.

For example, repeated difficulty with communication, punctuality, confidentiality, responsiveness to feedback, professional boundaries, preparation, or follow-through may demonstrate a broader concern regarding professional dispositions or readiness.

At that point, additional review may be necessary.

The purpose is not to demand perfection.

It is to determine whether the educator candidate can consistently demonstrate the professional responsibilities required to serve learners successfully.

Related Resources

- Chapter 4: Professional Dispositions
- Chapter 5: Communication Expectations
- Chapter 12: Professional Responsibility
- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 14: Artificial Intelligence and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 17: Academic Progression
- Chapter 20: Shared Responsibilities
- Chapter 21: Mentor Teachers
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 23: Confidentiality
- Chapter 24: Safety
- Chapter 25: Attendance During Clinical Experiences
- Professional Concern Notice

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Professional Fitness Review Process
- SCF Academic Conflict Resolution Process
- SCF Student Code of Conduct
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Program Manager

Portfolio Connection

Professional growth is not demonstrated by an absence of challenges.

It is demonstrated by your ability to *recognize, reflect, respond, and grow*.

When appropriate, experiences involving coaching or professional feedback can become meaningful points of reflection within your Professional Growth Portfolio.

A professional reflection might ask:

What happened?

What did I learn about myself or professional practice?

What feedback did I receive?

What action did I take?

What evidence demonstrates my growth now?

The purpose is not to include confidential departmental documentation or Professional Concern Notices within your portfolio unless specifically directed to do so.

Instead, your portfolio should demonstrate the professional learning that resulted from reflection and feedback.

By final internship, the portfolio should tell an authentic story of development, not a story of perfection.

The SCF Education Way

We believe in growth, and we believe in accountability.

Those commitments do not compete with one another.

They strengthen one another.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Educator preparation should provide a place where emerging professionals can ask questions, receive feedback, reconsider decisions, practice new approaches, and grow through experience.

It must also prepare educators who can be trusted with students.

That means there are moments when we coach.

There are moments when we clarify.

There are moments when we document.

And there are moments when we must make difficult decisions about professional readiness.

Through all of them, our purpose remains the same, to prepare exceptional educators who are ready to serve students, schools, and communities with competence, integrity, and care.

We do not expect perfection.

We do expect reflection.

We expect responsibility.

We expect responsiveness to feedback.

And we expect growth.

That is what accountability looks like when its purpose is becoming a professional educator.

Professional Tip

Feedback becomes growth only when something changes.

When you receive professional feedback, ask yourself:

What am I being asked to notice?

Why does this matter for students or professional practice?

What will I do differently?

What evidence will show that I have grown?

The goal is not simply to complete the conversation.

The goal is to change the practice.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I request a specific placement?

Placement requests may be considered but cannot be guaranteed. Placements are based on program requirements, district partnerships, school availability, and qualified Cooperating Teachers (CTs).

Can I contact schools to arrange my own placement?

No. All placements are coordinated through the Education Department.

What if I become sick or have an emergency?

Notify your Cooperating Teacher (CT), course instructor, and follow district procedures as soon as possible.

What if my Cooperating Teacher (CT) is absent?

Unless instructed otherwise, report to your assigned school and follow directions provided by school administration or your course instructor.

What if I have not received district clearance?

You may not work directly with students until the district confirms you are fully cleared.

What if I have questions?

Ask early. Your Cooperating Teacher (CT), course instructor, Program Manager, and Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator are all available to support your success.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about a time when feedback initially felt difficult but ultimately helped you improve.

What allowed you to move from hearing the feedback to learning from it?

Now consider your developing identity as an educator:

How do you want to respond when a mentor teacher, faculty member, administrator, colleague, or future school leader identifies an area in which your practice needs to grow?

Professional readiness does not mean reaching a point where you no longer need coaching.

It means developing the capacity to receive feedback, take responsibility, make meaningful adjustments, and continue growing throughout your career.

Section III Conclusion

Practicing Like an Educator

From Preparation to Practice

Clinical practice becomes real in the everyday moments: arriving prepared, communicating early, learning the rhythms of a school, observing intentionally, asking questions, and following through on professional responsibilities.

As you begin each field experience, remember that you are not simply completing required hours. **You are learning how to enter a professional community as an educator.** The relationships you build, the reliability you demonstrate, and the way you respond to new expectations all contribute to your developing professional identity. Schools often remember the educator candidates who are prepared, collaborative, reflective, and eager to learn—and those relationships can become future mentors, references, and employment opportunities.

Use the **Getting Started: Your Clinical Experience** guide below as a practical reference as you prepare to enter your placement. Return to it whenever you need to ask yourself:

Am I prepared? Am I informed? Am I communicating? Am I showing up like the educator I am becoming?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

GETTING STARTED: YOUR CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Use this guide to begin your placement with confidence and set yourself up for a successful experience.

BEFORE YOUR FIRST DAY Take these important steps to start strong. ✓ Contact your Cooperating Teacher (CT) promptly. ✓ Confirm first day expectations, arrival time, parking, and reporting procedures. ✓ Participate in preplanning or professional development if invited and district-approved. ✓ Review school procedures, dress expectations, and any materials you should bring. ✓ Know when your required participation officially begins.	DISTRICT CLEARANCE Each district has its own requirements. ✓ Clearance requirements vary by district. ✓ You are responsible for completing all onboarding requirements. ✓ Monitor both SCF and district email regularly. ✓ You may not work with students until you are officially cleared. ✓ Direct questions to the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.	COMMUNICATION PATHWAY Use the right pathway for the right support. - Coursework Questions → Your Professor - Placement Questions → Field Experience Coordinator - District Onboarding → District HR/Onboarding (then confirm with Field Experience Coordinator) - CT (Cooperating Teacher) Concerns → Field Experience Coordinator - Emergencies or Unexpected Circumstances → Contact your Professor and/or Field Experience Coordinator immediately	CALENDAR AWARENESS You are balancing multiple calendars. - SCF Academic Calendar - Your Assigned School District Calendar - Your Placement School's Daily Schedule When conflicts occur, follow guidance from your professor and the Education Department.	WORKDAY EXPECTATIONS Your professional presence matters. ✓ You are expected to report during your Cooperating Teacher's (CT's) contracted workday unless otherwise directed by faculty or the Education Department. IF YOUR COOPERATING TEACHER IS ABSENT Report to your placement unless instructed otherwise by your professor or the Education Department.
PROFESSIONAL REPUTATION Treat every day as an interview. ✓ Schools often hire former interns. ✓ Professional relationships begin during clinical experiences. ✓ Reliability, initiative, communication, and professionalism leave lasting impressions.	FIRST WEEKS FOCUS Observe with intention. ✓ Classroom routines ✓ Management systems ✓ Teacher organization ✓ Transitions ✓ Relationship building ✓ Instructional decision-making	DISTRICT DIFFERENCES Expect variety. Each district has different onboarding processes, technology systems, badge procedures, and HR requirements. Stay flexible, follow each district's instructions carefully, and ask questions when needed.	YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES Professionalism in action. ✓ Be prepared and on time. ✓ Communicate proactively. ✓ Follow school and district procedures. ✓ Protect confidentiality. ✓ Advocate for student learning.	REMEMBER You are a professional in preparation. Your actions reflect on you, the SCF Education Department, and the teaching profession. Approach each day with professionalism, curiosity, and a commitment to learning.

WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU.
 Your success is our priority. Reach out! Early, stay informed, and take advantage of the support systems available to you.
Be prepared. Be proactive. Be professional. Be the future.

Clinical practice is where educator preparation becomes professional practice.

Throughout this section, you explored how authentic experiences, field placements, shared responsibility, mentor relationships, professional conduct, confidentiality, safety, reliability, feedback, and accountability contribute to your development as an educator.

You entered this section with the question:

How do I become an educator through practice?

The answer is not simply by spending time in classrooms.

You become an educator by noticing more deeply, participating more fully, accepting increasing responsibility, learning alongside experienced professionals, responding to feedback, reflecting on your impact, and continually applying what you learn.

Clinical practice reminds us that becoming an educator is both an individual journey and a shared responsibility.

Your faculty support you.

Your mentor teachers invest in you.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your clinical supervisors coach you.

Our school and district partners welcome you.

And increasingly, you take ownership of what comes next.

As your responsibilities grow, the question begins to shift from:

What am I learning about teaching?

to:

How is what I know, do, and believe beginning to influence the learners I serve?

That is the next stage of becoming an exceptional educator.

Exceptional educators are not defined by a single lesson, semester, or placement. They are defined by a lifelong commitment to learning, reflection, responsibility, and growth.

Section IV

Certification and Program Progression

How do I prepare for the profession?

Becoming an educator is a journey with both **developmental growth and important professional milestones**.

Throughout your program, you are developing knowledge, skills, professional dispositions, instructional judgment, and an increasingly strong educator identity. At the same time, you are progressing through a state-approved educator preparation program with specific academic, certification, clinical, and graduation requirements.

These two parts of your journey belong together.

Your coursework prepares you for certification. Your clinical experiences allow you to apply what you are learning. Feedback strengthens your practice. Your Professional Growth Portfolio documents your development. Certification examinations demonstrate required knowledge and competencies. Final internship provides an opportunity to bring these elements together in sustained professional practice.

Progression, therefore, is more than moving from one semester to the next.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

It is about becoming increasingly **ready for what comes next**.

Progression With Purpose

The SCF Education Department intentionally sequences your program so that knowledge, practice, assessment, and professional responsibility build across semesters.

Throughout that progression, you will encounter important milestones related to:

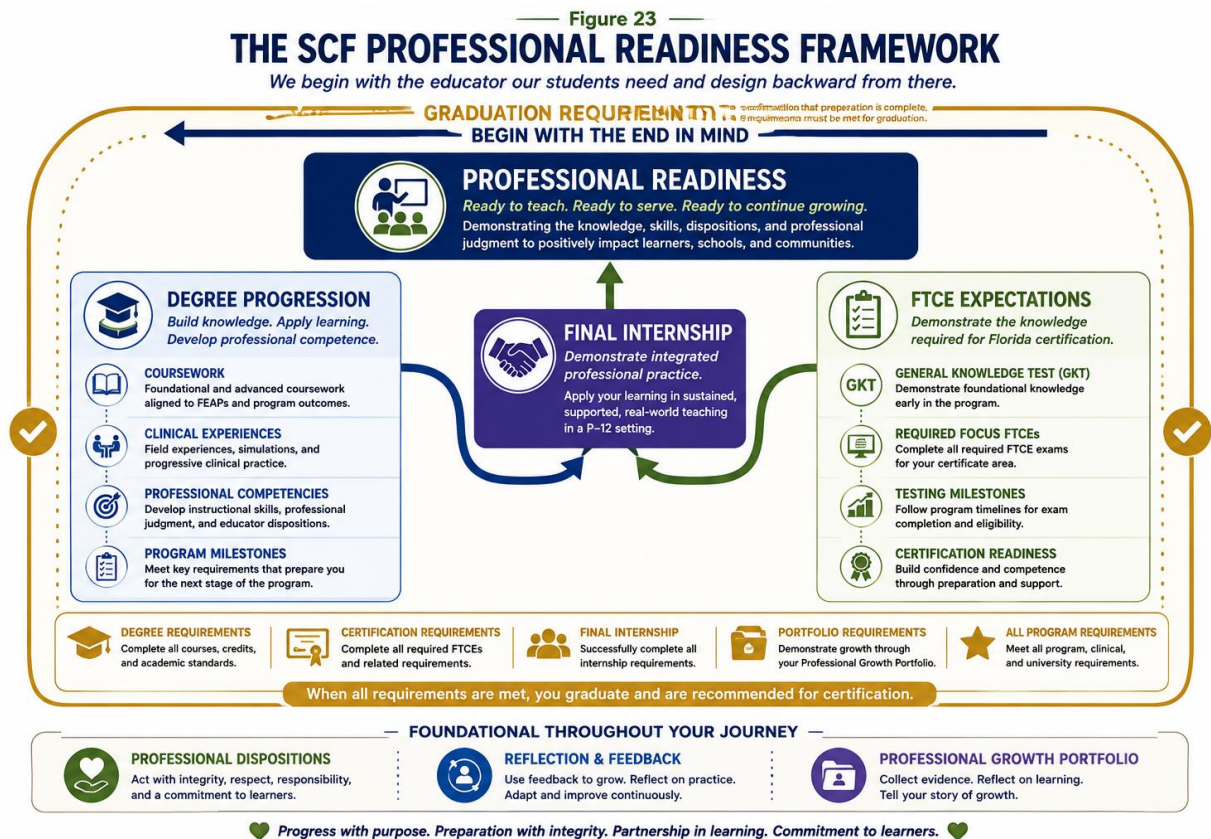
Degree Progression → FTCE Expectations → Graduation Requirements → Final Internship → Professional Readiness

Some milestones are established by SCF. Others reflect Florida educator preparation and certification requirements. Together, they help ensure that when you complete your degree, you are prepared not simply to graduate, but to enter the profession.

This means that some requirements must be completed **before** you can progress to a later stage of the program.

Knowing those expectations early allows you to plan proactively rather than discover an unmet requirement when you are ready to move forward.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.



Your Role in the Journey

You are the primary owner of your progression.

The Education Department will provide advising, communication, checkpoints, resources, feedback, and support throughout the program. We will help you understand where you are, what comes next, and what requirements must be completed along the way.

Your responsibility is to remain engaged in that process.

That means monitoring your academic progress, knowing certification testing expectations, maintaining your Professional Growth Portfolio, completing required clinical experiences, responding to advising and program communications, and asking questions early when something is unclear.

Preparing for the profession requires more than completing what is immediately in front of you.

It requires learning to **look ahead**.

The SCF Education Way

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

We do not view progression as simply moving students through a sequence of courses. We design the journey so that each experience contributes to the knowledge, practice, professional identity, and readiness you will need for the next.

27. Degree Progression

"Progress is not simply completing what comes next. It is becoming ready for what comes next."

Purpose

Your Bachelor of Science educator preparation program is intentionally designed as a progression of connected learning experiences.

Courses are sequenced so that foundational knowledge supports increasingly complex application, clinical experiences provide opportunities to practice what you are learning, feedback informs continued development, and program milestones help determine readiness for greater professional responsibility.

Understanding your degree progression helps you see the program as more than a checklist of courses.

Each semester is part of a larger journey toward professional readiness.

Why This Matters

In a professionally sequenced program, when you complete a requirement can matter as much as whether you complete it.

Courses may have prerequisites. Clinical experiences increase in complexity. Certification examinations have established progression points. Portfolio evidence develops across semesters. Final internship depends upon successful completion of requirements that begin much earlier in the program.

Falling behind in one area can therefore affect later stages of your program.

The goal is not to create barriers.

The goal is to ensure that you enter each stage with the preparation necessary to succeed.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Understanding your progression allows you to make informed decisions, anticipate upcoming milestones, seek assistance early, and take greater ownership of your journey toward becoming an educator.

Department Standard 4.1

Degree Progression and Candidate Responsibility

Educator candidates are expected to maintain satisfactory academic and professional progress and successfully complete all established course, clinical, assessment, certification, portfolio, and program requirements associated with their stage of educator preparation.

Progression through the program is based upon successful completion of applicable requirements and demonstrated readiness for increasingly complex professional responsibilities.

Educator candidates are responsible for:

- Following the approved program of study for their degree.
- Completing courses in the required sequence and satisfying applicable prerequisites.
- Monitoring academic progress toward degree completion.
- Completing required field and clinical experiences.
- Meeting certification testing milestones within established program timelines.
- Maintaining required Professional Growth Portfolio evidence throughout the program.
- Demonstrating professional dispositions and conduct consistent with program expectations.
- Responding to advising, registration, certification, clinical, and program communications.
- Meeting with appropriate faculty or program personnel when questions or concerns about progression arise.
- Understanding that an unmet requirement may affect eligibility for subsequent coursework, clinical experiences, final internship, graduation, or recommendation for certification.

Progression requirements are designed to ensure that educator candidates are prepared for the responsibilities associated with each successive stage of the program.

From Semester to Semester: A Developmental Journey

Although individual programs have distinct courses and requirements, the developmental progression is shared.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Build the Foundation

Early experiences establish the knowledge and professional habits that support later learning.

You begin developing your understanding of learners, curriculum, instruction, assessment, exceptionalities, professional expectations, and the responsibilities of becoming an educator.

This is also when habits related to communication, organization, academic integrity, professional dispositions, and reflective practice begin to matter significantly.

Apply What You Know

As you progress, coursework increasingly asks you to move from knowing about teaching to making instructional decisions.

You analyze learner needs, plan instruction, select strategies, interpret assessment information, participate in simulations and clinical experiences, and begin connecting theory to authentic classroom practice.

Demonstrate Increasing Competence

Later stages of the program require greater independence and integration.

Rather than demonstrating individual skills in isolation, you begin bringing together planning, instruction, assessment, classroom environment, differentiation, collaboration, reflection, and professional judgment.

Feedback becomes increasingly important because you are preparing to demonstrate competencies in authentic professional contexts.

Prepare for Final Internship

The semester before final internship is an important progression checkpoint.

By this stage, required coursework and clinical experiences should be nearing completion, certification testing requirements must be satisfied according to program expectations, and your Professional Growth Portfolio should demonstrate development across previous semesters.

Internship should not become the semester in which earlier requirements are reconstructed or unfinished milestones are discovered.

It should be the semester in which your preparation **comes together**.

Progression Is More Than Academic Standing

Successful progression includes academic performance, but educator preparation requires more.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your readiness to progress is shaped by the intersection of:

Academic Progress. Successful completion of required coursework and learning outcomes.

Clinical Progress. Successful completion of field experiences, simulations, and clinical requirements.

Certification Progress. Completion of required certification examinations according to established program milestones.

Professional Progress. Demonstration of professional dispositions, communication, conduct, reliability, and responsiveness to feedback.

Portfolio Progress. Ongoing collection and reflection upon evidence demonstrating your development across the program.

Together, these provide a more complete picture of your readiness for increasingly complex professional practice.

Your Responsibilities

Take an active role in monitoring your progress rather than waiting until registration, graduation, or internship to determine whether requirements have been met.

You are expected to:

- Know the requirements of your program of study.
- Review your academic progress regularly.
- Plan ahead for certification testing and other program milestones.
- Register for required courses in the appropriate sequence.
- Maintain your Professional Growth Portfolio every semester.
- Complete field and clinical requirements accurately and on time.
- Monitor communications from faculty, Program Managers, and other College personnel.
- Seek advising when considering changes to your course sequence.
- Ask questions early when you are uncertain about a requirement.
- Communicate promptly when circumstances may affect your ability to progress as planned.

One of the most important habits you can develop is to ask:

What am I completing now, and what does it prepare me to do next?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

How We Support You

You are responsible for your progression, but you are not expected to navigate it alone.

The Education Department supports you through:

- Program advising and degree planning.
- Program Managers who help clarify program-specific expectations.
- Faculty who connect current learning to future coursework and professional competencies.
- The Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator who supports clinical progression.
- Certification preparation and communication regarding testing milestones.
- Professional Growth Portfolio guidance.
- Progression checkpoints throughout the program.
- Early communication when concerns are identified.
- Coaching and problem-solving when challenges arise.

Our goal is to help you see the pathway early enough to make informed decisions throughout it.

If Challenges Occur

A challenge in one semester does not necessarily define your ability to become an educator.

It may, however, require a change in your progression plan.

If you experience difficulty with coursework, certification testing, clinical requirements, professional expectations, or another program milestone, communicate with the appropriate faculty member or Program Manager as early as possible.

Depending upon the requirement, next steps might include additional academic support, a revised course sequence, certification preparation, completion of outstanding requirements, coaching, or another individualized plan.

Some requirements must be successfully completed before progression can occur. When that happens, delaying the next stage may be necessary to ensure that you are appropriately prepared for it.

The department will work with you to understand the pathway forward while maintaining the academic, clinical, certification, and professional standards of the educator preparation program.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Related Resources

- Approved Program of Study
- Academic Advising and Degree Audit
- Chapter 16: Professional Growth Portfolio
- Chapter 17: Academic Progression
- Chapter 19: Field Placements
- Chapter 26: Support and Accountability
- Chapter 28: FTCE Expectations
- Chapter 29: Graduation Requirements
- Chapter 30: Internship
- Program Manager
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator

Portfolio Connection

Your Professional Growth Portfolio provides perhaps the clearest evidence that progression is about more than accumulating credits.

Across semesters, the portfolio allows you to see how your thinking, instructional practice, professional dispositions, clinical competence, and understanding of the FEAPs develop over time.

- An artifact from an early semester may demonstrate emerging understanding.
- A later artifact may show application.
- Still later, evidence may demonstrate greater independence, integration, and impact.
- Do not discard earlier evidence simply because your later work is stronger.
- The difference between those artifacts may be the evidence of growth.

By final internship, your portfolio should allow you to tell the story of how your experiences across the program prepared you for increasingly complex professional practice.

The SCF Education Way

We design for progression, not accumulation.

Your degree is not intended to become a collection of disconnected courses, assignments, clinical hours, examinations, and requirements.

Each experience should contribute something to the educator you are becoming.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Early learning creates foundations.

Practice turns knowledge into action.

Feedback reveals possibilities for growth.

Clinical experiences connect preparation to learners.

Certification milestones demonstrate readiness.

Reflection helps you recognize what has changed.

And eventually, final internship asks you to bring it all together.

That is why we ask you to look beyond the requirement immediately in front of you.

The question is not only:

What do I need to complete?

It is also:

What is this preparing me to become?

Professional Tip

Work backward from where you want to be.

At the beginning of each semester, identify the major milestone that comes next and ask:

What must I successfully complete now so that I am ready for it?

A few minutes of forward planning can prevent a missed requirement from becoming a delayed progression later.

Reflection

Look at where you currently are in your educator preparation journey.

Then look one stage ahead.

What knowledge, skills, experiences, certification milestones, portfolio evidence, and professional habits will you need in order to be ready for that next stage?

Identify one requirement you need to complete and one area in which you want to **grow**.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Both matter.

Because degree progression is not simply evidence that you have moved forward in the program.

It is evidence that you are becoming increasingly ready for the profession.

28. FTCE Expectations

"Certification testing is not separate from your preparation. It is one way you demonstrate that the knowledge you are building is ready to support professional practice."

Purpose

Florida teacher certification examinations are an important part of your educator preparation journey.

Throughout the SCF Education Program, coursework, clinical experiences, simulation-based learning, assessment, and reflection are intentionally designed to strengthen the knowledge and professional competencies you will need both in the classroom and on required certification examinations.

Certification testing should therefore not be viewed as something to postpone until the end of the program.

It is a *progressive responsibility* that occurs alongside your degree progression.

Planning early, preparing intentionally, and completing required examinations according to established program milestones allows you to remain on track for final internship, graduation, and entry into the teaching profession.

Why This Matters

Your coursework and certification preparation are connected.

As you develop stronger content knowledge, instructional decision-making, assessment practices, understanding of learners, and professional judgment, you are building many of the competencies represented through Florida's teacher certification examinations.

Completing certification requirements at the appropriate stages of the program also allows later semesters to remain focused on increasingly complex professional practice.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

By the time you enter final internship, your attention should be centered on:

- Planning and delivering instruction.
- Responding to learners.
- Using assessment to guide practice.
- Collaborating with educators and families.
- Demonstrating the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices.
- Reflecting upon your impact.
- Transitioning toward professional independence.

Final internship should not become the semester in which earlier certification milestones are still unresolved.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 4.2

Certification Examination Progression

Educator candidates are expected to complete required Florida teacher certification examinations according to the progression milestones established by the SCF Education Department.

General Knowledge Test (GKT)

The General Knowledge Test must be successfully completed no later than the end of the educator candidate's first semester in the program.

Completing the GKT early establishes an important foundation for continued progression and allows educator candidates to focus on increasingly specialized certification expectations as they move through the program.

Required Florida Teacher Certification Examinations (FTCE)

Educator candidates must successfully complete all required Florida Teacher Certification Examinations associated with their program and certification pathway no later than the end of the semester immediately preceding final internship.

This includes the required examinations identified for the educator candidate's certification pathway.

Final Internship Eligibility

Final internship placements will not be confirmed until required certification examination milestones have been successfully completed.

Because internship placements require extensive coordination with schools, districts, mentor teachers, and College personnel, educator candidates are responsible for completing testing early enough for scores and requirements to be verified before placement confirmation.

Certification Testing and Degree Progression Happen Together

One of the most important ideas in this chapter is that certification preparation does not occur after your degree coursework.

The two pathways develop *simultaneously*.

While you are progressing through courses and clinical experiences, you should also be progressing through certification testing.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Think of the pathways this way:

Degree Progression

Learn → Practice → Demonstrate Competence → Prepare for Internship

Certification Progression

Prepare → Test → Respond to Results → Complete Requirements

Both pathways must converge successfully before the final internship.

This is exactly what the *SCF Professional Readiness Framework* introduced at the beginning of this section illustrates: certification readiness and degree progression are parallel components of preparation, not separate journeys.

A Professional Approach to Certification Testing

Waiting until a deadline to begin preparing places unnecessary pressure on an already demanding educator preparation journey.

Professional preparation means planning ahead.

Know What You Need

Understand which certification examinations are associated with your program and when each must be completed.

Create a Testing Timeline

Identify your required testing milestones early and work backward from them.

Consider:

- Preparation time.
- Registration availability.
- Testing dates.
- Score-reporting timelines.
- The possibility that an examination may need to be retaken.

Build margin into your plan.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Prepare With Purpose

Use coursework, faculty feedback, study resources, practice questions, clinical experiences, and available testing supports to identify both strengths and areas that require additional preparation.

Respond to Results

If you do not successfully complete an examination on your first attempt, use the result as information.

Identify the areas requiring additional preparation, seek support, revise your study approach, and schedule your next attempt early enough to remain aligned with program milestones.

A testing setback requires a response.

It does not require panic.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are responsible for managing your certification testing progression.

You are expected to:

- Know the certification examinations required for your program.
- Successfully complete the GKT by the established first-semester milestone.
- Successfully complete all remaining required FTCEs no later than the end of the semester immediately preceding final internship.
- Register for examinations early enough to allow time for preparation, score reporting, and retesting if necessary.
- Monitor your own testing status.
- Maintain documentation of required examination results when requested.
- Use available preparation resources.
- Seek assistance early if you are experiencing difficulty with a certification examination.
- Communicate with your Program Manager when testing results may affect your progression.
- Understand that unmet certification requirements may delay final internship and, consequently, program completion.

The department will remind and support you.

You remain responsible for completing the requirement.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

How We Support You

Certification preparation is integrated into the larger educator preparation experience.

The Education Department supports candidates through:

- Coursework aligned with professional knowledge and competencies.
- Faculty guidance and content-specific preparation.
- Practice and application through clinical experiences.
- Simulation-based learning.
- Testing information and milestone reminders.
- Program Manager advising.
- Guidance in identifying areas requiring additional preparation.
- Available College and program testing resources.
- Coaching when an unsuccessful attempt requires a revised preparation plan.

Faculty may also help you recognize connections between what you are learning in a course and the knowledge represented on certification examinations.

The goal is not to teach only to a test.

The goal is to help you recognize that strong professional preparation supports both successful certification and effective teaching.

If Challenges Occur

Not every educator candidate completes every certification examination on the first attempt.

When an examination result indicates that additional preparation is needed, respond early.

Meet with the appropriate faculty member or Program Manager, review available score information, identify areas requiring additional preparation, and establish a realistic plan for your next attempt.

The closer you move toward the final internship, the fewer opportunities remain to recover from delayed testing.

If required certification examinations have not been successfully completed by the established milestone, final internship placement cannot be confirmed.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

This may require a change to your program's progression and may delay completion of the degree.

The Education Department will help you identify an appropriate pathway forward, but certification milestones cannot simply be waived because a candidate has reached the semester in which internship was originally planned.

Clear expectations early in the program are intended to help prevent that outcome.

Related Resources

- Figure 23: The SCF Professional Readiness Framework
- Chapter 17: Academic Progression
- Chapter 27: Degree Progression
- Chapter 29: Graduation Requirements
- Chapter 30: Internship
- Chapter 31: Professional Readiness
- Program Manager
- Certification examination preparation resources
- Florida teacher certification examination information
- Professional Growth Portfolio

Portfolio Connection

Certification examination results are only one form of evidence of professional readiness.

Your Professional Growth Portfolio provides the richer story behind that milestone.

Across coursework and clinical practice, portfolio artifacts demonstrate how the knowledge assessed through certification testing becomes visible through:

- Instructional planning.
- Assessment.
- Differentiation.
- Classroom decision-making.
- Collaboration.
- Professional reflection.
- Application of the FEAPs.

Certification testing asks:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Can you demonstrate required knowledge?

Your portfolio increasingly asks:

How does that knowledge appear in your professional practice?

By final internship, those two forms of evidence should increasingly tell the same story: you are developing the knowledge and competence required of a professional educator.

The SCF Education Way

We prepare for certification by preparing you to teach.

Certification examinations matter. They represent important milestones in your pathway toward becoming a professional educator and completing them on time is essential to successful program progression.

But the goal of educator preparation is larger than passing an examination.

Our goal is for you to understand the content deeply enough to use it.

To recognize a learner's needs.

To make an instructional decision.

To explain why you made it.

To evaluate its impact.

And to adjust when necessary.

That is why certification preparation occurs alongside coursework, clinical experiences, reflection, and professional growth.

We do not want you to arrive at final internship simply having passed your tests.

We want you to arrive ready to use what those tests represent.

Professional Tip

Test before the deadline, not at the deadline.

When planning a certification examination, work backward from the program milestone and leave room for:

Preparation → Testing → Score Reporting → Additional Preparation → Retesting, if necessary

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The requirement is not to *take* the examination by the milestone.

The requirement is to successfully complete it.

That difference should guide your timeline.

Reflection

Look at your current position in the certification pathway.

Which examination milestone comes next?

Then ask yourself:

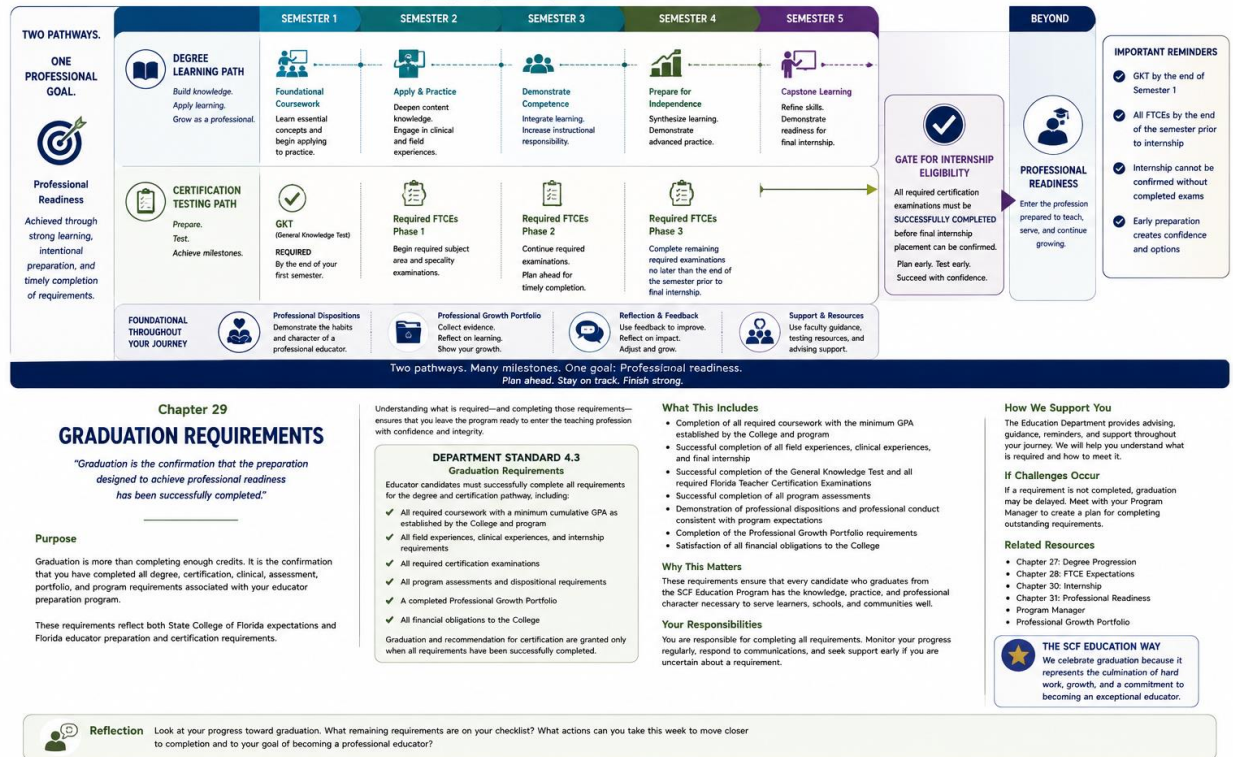
- *When do I plan to take it?*
- *What evidence tells me I am prepared?*
- *Where might I need additional support?*
- *And have I allowed enough time to respond if my first result is not the result I need?*

Professional readiness involves anticipating what comes next rather than waiting for it to arrive.

Certification testing is one of the first opportunities in your educator preparation journey to practice exactly that kind of forward-thinking professional responsibility.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

— Figure 24 —
THE SCF CERTIFICATION PROGRESSION PATHWAY
Preparing for the profession—one milestone at a time.



29. Graduation Requirements

"Graduation is the confirmation that the preparation designed to achieve professional readiness has been successfully completed."

Purpose

Graduation represents an important milestone in your educator preparation journey, but it is more than the completion of a required number of college credits.

For educator candidates, graduation confirms the successful completion of an interconnected set of academic, clinical, certification, assessment, portfolio, and program requirements designed to prepare you for the responsibilities of the teaching profession.

As illustrated in the SCF Professional Readiness Framework, graduation is not the ultimate goal of educator preparation.

Professional readiness is the goal.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Graduation confirms that the preparation designed to support that readiness has been successfully completed.

Why This Matters

A state-approved educator preparation program carries responsibilities that extend beyond the requirements of a traditional college degree.

Throughout your program, you are simultaneously completing:

- College degree requirements.
- Educator preparation program requirements.
- Required coursework and assessments.
- Field and clinical experiences.
- Certification examination milestones.
- Professional Growth Portfolio requirements.
- Professional dispositions and practice expectations.
- Final internship requirements.

These requirements intersect.

Completing your coursework does not necessarily mean that every educator's preparation requirement has been completed. Likewise, reaching the anticipated semester of graduation does not waive an outstanding certification, clinical, portfolio, assessment, or program requirement.

Understanding this distinction early allows you to monitor your progress and address missing requirements before they affect graduation.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 4.3

Graduation Requirements

Educator candidates must successfully complete all College, degree, educator preparation, and applicable certification requirements before graduation and program completion can be confirmed.

These requirements include, as applicable:

- Successful completion of all required coursework.
- Achievement of the academic standards required by the College and educator preparation program.
- Successful completion and documentation of all required field and clinical experiences.
- Successful completion of final internship.
- Successful completion of required Florida Teacher Certification Examinations according to program expectations.
- Successful completion of required program assessments.
- Demonstration of professional dispositions and conduct consistent with program expectations.
- Completion of all required components of the Professional Growth Portfolio.
- Satisfaction of applicable College graduation requirements.
- Resolution of any outstanding program requirements that affect completion.

Educator candidates are responsible for monitoring their progress toward both degree completion and educator preparation program completion.

Graduation Requirements as the Umbrella

Earlier in this section, we described degree progression and certification progression as pathways occurring simultaneously.

Graduation requirements encompass both.

They also include the successful completion of final internship and other requirements that demonstrate completion of the educator preparation program.

Think of graduation as the point at which the College and Education Department can verify:

- ☐ Coursework completed.
- ☐ Clinical preparation completed.
- ☐ Certification milestones completed.
- ☐ Program assessments completed.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- ☐ Portfolio completed.
- ☐ Final internship completed.
- ☐ Degree requirements completed.

Together, these confirm completion of the preparation pathway.

This is why graduation requirements should be monitored throughout the program rather than reviewed only during your final semester.

Degree Completion and Program Completion

It is important to understand that several types of requirements contribute to successful completion.

Academic Requirements

You must successfully complete the courses and academic requirements associated with your approved program of study and meet applicable College and program academic standards.

Clinical Requirements

Required field experiences and clinical experiences must be successfully completed and appropriately documented.

Clinical requirements represent authentic professional learning and cannot be satisfied solely through completion of academic coursework.

Certification Requirements

Required certification examinations must be successfully completed according to the progression milestones outlined in Chapter 28.

As established previously, required certification milestones also affect eligibility for final internship.

Program Assessment Requirements

Educator preparation programs collect evidence that candidates have demonstrated required knowledge, skills, competencies, and professional practices.

Required assessments must therefore be successfully completed as part of program completion.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Professional Growth Portfolio

The Professional Growth Portfolio is a program requirement and an important component of demonstrating your development across the educator preparation journey.

The internship phase of the portfolio is not intended to become a last-minute collection of artifacts.

It should demonstrate growth from evidence intentionally developed and contributed throughout prior semesters.

Professional Expectations

Successful completion also includes maintaining the professional conduct and dispositions expected of an educator candidate.

Becoming eligible to graduate academically does not remove the professional responsibilities associated with completing an educator preparation program.

Graduation Is a Checkpoint, Not a Catch-Up Point

Your final semester should be a time for bringing your preparation together.

It should not become the first time you discover that a certification examination, clinical requirement, portfolio component, assessment, or other program expectation remains incomplete.

Throughout the program, periodically ask:

- ☐ *What have I completed?*
- ☐ *What remains?*
- ☐ *What must happen before final internship?*
- ☐ *What must happen before graduation?*
- ☐ *Who should I contact if something does not look right?*

This is professional self-monitoring, the same kind of forward planning and responsibility you will use throughout your career as an educator.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are responsible for taking an active role in confirming your readiness for graduation.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You are expected to:

- Monitor your degree audit and program progression.
- Follow your approved program of study.
- Complete all required coursework.
- Monitor and complete certification examination requirements.
- Maintain accurate documentation of field and clinical experiences.
- Successfully complete required program assessments.
- Maintain and complete your Professional Growth Portfolio.
- Complete final internship requirements.
- Respond to graduation, certification, advising, and program communications.
- Complete applicable College graduation procedures and deadlines.
- Ask questions immediately when a requirement appears incomplete, inaccurate, or unclear.
- Avoid assuming that completing your final semester automatically means every graduation or program requirement has been satisfied.

You should know your graduation status before graduation becomes urgent.

How We Support You

The Education Department helps candidates understand and monitor the requirements that contribute to successful program completion.

Support may include:

- Program advising and degree planning.
- Degree progression checkpoints.
- Certification testing guidance.
- Program Manager consultation.
- Clinical experience monitoring.
- Support from the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- Professional Growth Portfolio guidance.
- Faculty feedback on program assessments.
- Final internship preparation.
- Communication regarding program and graduation requirements.
- Coordination with appropriate College offices when necessary.

Our goal is to help you identify requirements early enough to respond successfully.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your role is to remain engaged in that process.

If Challenges Occur

If you identify an incomplete requirement or learn that you are not currently eligible for graduation, communicate with the appropriate Program Manager or College representative promptly.

Depending upon the requirement, completing the program may require:

- Completing outstanding coursework.
- Successfully completing a certification examination.
- Completing required clinical hours or experiences.
- Completing or revising a required program assessment.
- Completing missing Professional Growth Portfolio requirements.
- Addressing an academic or professional progression concern.
- Completing another applicable College or program requirement.

An unmet requirement may delay graduation.

This can be disappointing, particularly when other degree requirements have already been completed. However, required educator preparation components cannot be considered complete until the established requirements have been successfully satisfied.

The department will help you understand what remains and identify the appropriate pathway toward completion.

Related Resources

- Figure 23: The SCF Professional Readiness Framework
- Figure 24: The SCF Certification Progression Pathway
- Chapter 16: Professional Growth Portfolio
- Chapter 17: Academic Progression
- Chapter 27: Degree Progression
- Chapter 28: FTCE Expectations
- Chapter 30: Internship
- Chapter 31: Professional Readiness
- Approved Program of Study

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Degree Audit
- Program Manager
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Applicable SCF graduation resources and requirements

Portfolio Connection

The Professional Growth Portfolio has a particularly important role at the point of program completion.

Throughout your preparation, you have contributed evidence from coursework, clinical experiences, assessments, reflection, feedback, and professional practice.

By graduation, those artifacts should no longer appear as isolated assignments.

Together, they should demonstrate a developmental story:

- *Where did I begin?*
- *What did I learn?*
- *How did feedback influence me?*
- *How did my practice change?*
- *What evidence demonstrates my competence now?*
- *Who am I becoming as an educator?*

This is especially important during final internship, when you are demonstrating growth from portfolio contributions developed across prior semesters.

The portfolio does not merely confirm that work was completed.

It helps make professional growth visible.

The SCF Education Way

We celebrate graduation because of what it represents.

The diploma matters.

But behind that diploma are hundreds of decisions, lessons, conversations, reflections, assessments, clinical experiences, moments of feedback, challenges, accomplishments, and opportunities to grow.

Graduation confirms that you completed the preparation designed to bring you to this point.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

But it is not the end of becoming an educator.

The educator we have been designing backward from throughout your program is someone prepared to enter the profession with knowledge, competence, integrity, curiosity, and a commitment to continued growth.

So when you cross the stage, we want the accomplishment to mean more than:

I finished my degree.

We want it to mean:

I am prepared for what comes next.

Professional Tip

Complete a graduation audit before your final semester.

Do not wait until graduation approaches to ask whether everything is complete.

Review:

Degree → FTCEs → Clinical Requirements → Program Assessments → Portfolio → Internship
→ College Requirements

If something is missing or unclear, address it while there is still time to act.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Imagine yourself at graduation.

The requirements are complete. The degree has been earned. Your educator preparation journey at SCF is reaching its conclusion.

Now look backward.

What do you want that degree to represent about the educator you have become—not simply the requirements you completed?

Then look at where you are today:

What remains between your current stage and that version of yourself?

Graduation will confirm completion.

Your growth will determine what that completion represents.

30. Internships

"Final internship is where the pieces of your preparation come together—not because your learning is finished, but because you are ready to assume greater responsibility for it."

Purpose

Final internship is the culminating clinical experience of your educator preparation program.

Throughout previous semesters, you have built professional knowledge, practiced instructional skills, participated in increasingly complex clinical experiences, responded to feedback, developed your Professional Growth Portfolio, demonstrated required competencies, and progressed through certification milestones.

Final internship asks you to bring those experiences together in sustained professional practice.

Working alongside an experienced mentor teacher and with support from SCF faculty and clinical supervision, you move toward greater responsibility for planning, instruction, assessment, classroom environment, collaboration, reflection, and student learning.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

This is not simply another clinical experience.

It is an intentional transition from educator candidate toward professional educator.

Why This Matters

Learning individual components of teaching and integrating them simultaneously are different challenges.

Earlier in your preparation, you may have focused intentionally on a particular instructional strategy, assessment practice, lesson plan, learner characteristic, or professional competency.

During final internship, those elements intersect.

A lesson requires you to consider learners, standards, objectives, instructional strategies, differentiation, classroom environment, assessment, communication, timing, and responsiveness, often simultaneously.

And then you must ask:

- *What happened?*
- *What did students learn?*
- *What evidence do I have?*
- *What needs to happen next?*

That integration is at the heart of professional practice.

Final internship provides sustained time within a school community to develop that capacity with the guidance of professionals who support your transition into the field.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 4.4

Final Internship Eligibility and Successful Completion

Final internship is a culminating educator preparation experience. Educator candidates must satisfy all established eligibility requirements before an internship placement can be confirmed and must successfully complete all internship requirements to complete the educator preparation program.

Eligibility requirements include, as applicable:

- Successful completion of required prerequisite coursework.
- Successful completion of required prior field and clinical experiences.
- Successful completion of the General Knowledge Test (GKT) and all required Florida Teacher Certification Examinations (FTCEs) according to established program milestones.
- Satisfactory academic progression.
- Completion of required program assessments and progression requirements.
- Appropriate progress within the Professional Growth Portfolio.
- Demonstration of professional dispositions and conduct consistent with program expectations.
- Completion of applicable background screening, district application, placement, and other clinical eligibility requirements.
- Satisfaction of additional program, College, district, or state requirements applicable to final internship.

Reaching the semester in which you planned to intern does not itself establish internship eligibility.

All required eligibility criteria must be verified before placement can be confirmed.

The Shift Toward Professional Practice

Final internship should feel different from earlier clinical experiences.

That difference is intentional.

As your competence develops, the nature of the support around you changes.

Early in your program, you may:

Observe → Analyze → Practice a Component → Receive Feedback

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

During internship, you increasingly:

Plan → Teach → Assess → Respond → Reflect → Adjust

Your mentor teacher remains an important source of expertise and support, but you should increasingly demonstrate the initiative and professional judgment expected of an emerging educator.

This is a gradual release of responsibility, not an abrupt expectation that you suddenly know everything.

Learning With a Mentor Teacher

Your mentor teacher is not simply providing you with a classroom in which to complete internship requirements.

The mentor relationship is a professional learning partnership.

Throughout internship, you should:

- Observe the reasoning behind instructional decisions.
- Ask thoughtful questions.
- Participate in collaborative planning.
- Seek and respond to feedback.
- Gradually assume instructional responsibilities.
- Reflect openly on successes and challenges.
- Learn the routines and responsibilities that exist beyond direct instruction.
- Develop increasing independence while remaining responsive to coaching.

As discussed in Chapter 21, effective mentoring requires both support and productive challenge.

Your goal is not to become a copy of your mentor teacher.

Your goal is to learn from an experienced professional while continuing to develop your own informed professional practice.

Increasing Responsibility

The progression of internship should reflect increasing readiness.

Depending upon program and placement expectations, responsibilities may include:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Planning standards-aligned instruction.
- Delivering whole-group and small-group instruction.
- Differentiating for learner variability.
- Creating and maintaining supportive learning environments.
- Using formative and summative assessment.
- Analyzing evidence of student learning.
- Adjusting instruction based upon that evidence.
- Collaborating with educational professionals.
- Participating appropriately in communication involving families.
- Contributing to school routines and professional responsibilities.
- Demonstrating ethical and professional judgment.
- Reflecting upon instructional impact.

Increasing responsibility does not mean working without support.

It means demonstrating that you can increasingly use support to make sound professional decisions independently.

Learning the Work Beyond the Lesson

Teaching is larger than delivering instruction.

Final internship provides an opportunity to experience the rhythms and responsibilities of professional life more fully.

You may participate, when appropriate to your placement and role, in experiences such as:

- Collaborative planning.
- Professional learning communities.
- Faculty or team meetings.
- Data discussions.
- Family communication.
- Professional development.
- School events.
- Assessment processes.
- Student support collaboration.
- Classroom preparation and organization.

These experiences help you understand something coursework alone cannot fully reproduce:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Teaching is both instructional practice and participation in a professional community.

Feedback During Final Internship

Feedback becomes especially important during internship because your practice is becoming more integrated and increasingly independent.

You will receive feedback from multiple perspectives, which may include your:

- Mentor teacher.
- Clinical supervisor.
- SCF faculty.
- Program Manager.
- Other school or district professionals, when appropriate.

Feedback should help you notice the relationship between your intentions and your impact.

Rather than asking only:

Did I do this correctly?

begin asking:

What evidence tells me whether this worked for learners?

That shift, from task completion toward analysis of impact, is an important marker of professional readiness.

Your Responsibilities

As a final intern, you are expected to:

- Follow the calendar, schedule, policies, and professional expectations associated with your placement.
- Arrive consistently prepared and ready to assume assigned responsibilities.
- Communicate proactively with your mentor teacher, clinical supervisor, and appropriate SCF personnel.
- Plan thoughtfully and within required timelines.
- Participate fully in the professional life of the clinical setting as appropriate.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Maintain confidentiality and professional boundaries.
- Demonstrate ethical and responsible use of technology and AI.
- Seek feedback and respond to it professionally.
- Complete required observations, assessments, documentation, seminar experiences, and internship assignments.
- Maintain and complete required Professional Growth Portfolio evidence.
- Demonstrate the FEAPs and applicable program competencies through authentic practice.
- Reflect upon evidence of student learning and your instructional impact.
- Ask for assistance early when challenges arise.
- Demonstrate increasing independence while remaining open to coaching.

Final internship requires substantial professional responsibility.

Your preparation, communication, and follow-through affect people beyond yourself.

How We Support You

Greater independence does not mean less support.

The SCF Education Department intentionally surrounds final internship with a professional support network.

Your support may include:

Mentor Teacher. Provides daily modeling, coaching, feedback, context, and opportunities for increasing responsibility.

Clinical Supervisor. Observes practice, provides feedback, supports reflection, and helps assess professional growth and competency.

SCF Faculty. Connect internship experiences to program learning, professional expectations, and continued development.

Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator. Supports placement processes, school and district partnerships, and clinical coordination.

Program Manager. Supports program progression, problem-solving, and successful completion of program expectations.

Together, these professionals form a coaching network.

Their purpose is not to remove every challenge from internship.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

It is to help you learn through those challenges successfully.

If Challenges Occur

Final internship is demanding, and challenge is not automatically evidence that you are unsuccessful.

You may encounter a lesson that does not work as planned, difficulty managing competing responsibilities, uncertainty about an instructional decision, challenging feedback, or an area of practice that requires additional development.

Communicate early.

Seeking support when a concern is emerging creates more opportunities for coaching, adjustment, and successful growth.

Depending upon the concern, support may include:

- Mentor coaching.
- Additional observation or modeling.
- Collaborative planning.
- Targeted professional goals.
- Additional practice.
- Increased feedback.
- A corrective action or professional growth plan.
- Other supports appropriate to the situation.

Concerns involving professional conduct, dispositions, safety, confidentiality, integrity, or readiness may also be addressed through the Support and Accountability Process described in Chapter 26.

Because internship is a culminating professional experience, successful completion requires both participation and demonstrated competency.

Completing the required number of days or hours alone does not establish successful completion.

Related Resources

- Figure 17: The SCF Mentoring Partnership Framework
- Figure 23: The SCF Professional Readiness Framework
- Figure 24: The SCF Certification Progression Pathway

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Chapter 16: Professional Growth Portfolio
- Chapter 21: Mentor Teachers
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 23: Confidentiality
- Chapter 24: Safety
- Chapter 25: Attendance During Clinical Experiences
- Chapter 26: Support and Accountability During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 27: Degree Progression
- Chapter 28: FTCE Expectations
- Chapter 29: Graduation Requirements
- Chapter 31: Professional Readiness
- Final internship course requirements
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Program Manager

Portfolio Connection

Final internship represents the culminating phase of your Professional Growth Portfolio, but it does ***not*** represent the beginning of it.

Your portfolio is an educator preparation program requirement developed intentionally across prior semesters.

During internship, your task is to use evidence from your earlier preparation alongside current evidence to demonstrate growth, integration, and increasing professional competence.

You might examine:

Earlier Evidence → Feedback and Learning → Internship Evidence → Demonstrated Growth

An early lesson plan may reveal how you once approached instructional design.

A later artifact may demonstrate greater attention to learner variability.

Internship evidence may show how you now plan, teach, assess, analyze impact, and adjust instruction within authentic practice.

The strength of the portfolio lies in those connections.

By the conclusion of internship, it should help you answer:

How has my preparation changed what I know, what I do, and how I think as an educator?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your portfolio becomes evidence not simply of what you completed, but of who you have become through completing it.

The SCF Education Way

Final internship is where preparation becomes practice and practice becomes increasingly your own.

You arrive carrying everything that came before:

The courses.

The clinical experiences.

The simulations.

The feedback.

The certification preparation.

The successes.

The difficult moments.

The reflections.

The relationships.

The portfolio evidence.

And the many small decisions through which you have been becoming an educator.

Now those pieces begin working together.

You will still ask questions.

You will still receive feedback.

You will still make mistakes.

You will still discover things you need to learn.

Professional readiness has never meant reaching a point where those things stop.

It means that increasingly, you know how to respond when they happen.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You notice.

You reflect.

You seek evidence.

You collaborate.

You adjust.

You try again.

And gradually, the question changes from:

Can I do this with support?

to:

How will I continue growing as the professional responsible for doing this work?

That is the transition final internship is designed to support.

Professional Tip

Do not try to prove that you no longer need feedback.

Final internship is not an audition for perfection.

Approach feedback with four questions:

What am I noticing? → What is my mentor or supervisor noticing? → What does the evidence show? → What will I try next?

The candidate who can use feedback independently is demonstrating something far more important than perfection: Professional learning capacity.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think back to the version of yourself who entered the Education Program.

Consider what you understood about teaching then, and what you understand now.

Now imagine yourself entering final internship.

What will you bring with you?

What knowledge has become stronger?

What professional habits have become more consistent?

What feedback has changed your practice?

What evidence demonstrates your growth?

And what are you still excited to learn?

Final internship is not where you prove that you have finished becoming an educator.

It is where you demonstrate that you are ready to continue becoming one with increasing professional responsibility.



31. Professional Readiness

"Professional readiness does not mean that you have finished learning. It means that you are prepared to continue learning with increasing responsibility, confidence, and purpose."

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Purpose

Professional readiness is the goal of your educator preparation journey.

Throughout the SCF Education Program, you have developed knowledge, instructional skill, professional judgment, dispositions, communication habits, reflective practices, and increasingly complex clinical experience designed to prepare you for the responsibilities of teaching.

You have progressed through coursework.

You have practiced within simulations and clinical settings.

You have responded to feedback.

You have documented growth through your Professional Growth Portfolio.

You have completed certification milestones.

You have brought your preparation together through final internship.

Professional readiness represents the point at which those individual experiences begin to function as an integrated professional foundation.

It does not mean that you know everything an educator will ever need to know.

It means that you are ready to begin the profession with the capacity to continue learning, reflecting, adapting, and growing.

Why This Matters

There is no single moment when a person suddenly becomes a fully developed educator.

Professional competence develops over time.

Graduation and program completion provide important evidence that you have successfully completed the preparation designed to support entry into teaching. Yet your first classroom, first team meeting, first family conference, first unexpected instructional challenge, and first year in the profession will continue teaching you things no preparation program can fully reproduce.

Professional readiness therefore asks a different question than:

Am I finished?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

It asks:

Do I have the knowledge, habits, judgment, and learning capacity to responsibly begin?

That distinction matters.

Exceptional educators are not defined by knowing every answer.

They are defined by their ability to recognize what learners need, make informed decisions, examine their impact, seek support, respond to evidence, and continue improving.

Department Standard 4.5

Professional Readiness

Successful completion of the SCF educator preparation program reflects demonstrated readiness to enter the teaching profession and continue developing as a professional educator.

Professional readiness includes successful completion of applicable academic, clinical, certification, assessment, portfolio, and program requirements and evidence of the knowledge, skills, professional dispositions, and judgment expected of an emerging educator.

Candidates demonstrate readiness through:

- Successful degree and program progression.
- Completion of required certification examination milestones.
- Successful completion of required field and clinical experiences.
- Successful completion of final internship.
- Demonstration of applicable Florida Educator Accomplished Practices.
- Professional conduct and ethical decision-making.
- Appropriate professional dispositions.
- Effective communication and collaboration.
- Responsiveness to coaching and feedback.
- Reflective practice and continuous improvement.
- Completion of the Professional Growth Portfolio and required program assessments.

Professional readiness represents preparation for entry into the profession—not completion of professional growth.

The Markers of Professional Readiness

Professional readiness is multidimensional.

It becomes visible in the way you think, act, communicate, respond, and make decisions.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You Know Your Learners

You recognize that effective instruction begins with understanding who learners are.

You consider:

- Prior knowledge.
- Strengths and needs.
- Learner variability.
- Culture and identity.
- Exceptionalities.
- Language.
- Interests.
- Development.
- Evidence of learning.

You understand that equitable teaching requires responding thoughtfully to that variability.

You Design With Purpose

You can connect standards, learning objectives, instructional strategies, assessment, and learner needs.

You increasingly ask:

What do I want learners to know or be able to do?

How will I know whether they learned it?

What instructional decisions will best support them?

Intentional design becomes part of your professional thinking.

You Teach Responsively

You understand that a lesson plan is a plan, not a guarantee.

Professional readiness means noticing what is happening during instruction and making informed adjustments when learners need something different.

You use evidence rather than assumption to guide your decisions.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You Use Assessment to Move Learning Forward

You recognize assessment as more than grading.

You collect evidence of understanding, interpret what that evidence tells you, provide feedback, and use assessment information to determine appropriate next steps.

The question shifts from:

What grade did the student earn?

to:

What does this evidence tell me about learning?

You Create Supportive Learning Environments

You understand that learning depends upon relationships, belonging, safety, expectations, accessibility, and trust.

You intentionally contribute to environments where learners can participate, take intellectual risks, make mistakes, and grow.

You Collaborate

You recognize that teaching is shared work.

Professional readiness includes learning to collaborate with:

- Students.
- Families.
- Colleagues.
- Specialists.
- School leaders.
- Community partners.

You communicate professionally, listen thoughtfully, contribute responsibly, and understand that supporting learners often requires multiple perspectives.

You Demonstrate Professional Judgment

You understand that professional standards do not eliminate the need for judgment.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

They guide it.

You consider ethics, student well-being, professional expectations, evidence, and potential impact when making decisions.

When you are uncertain, you know when to ask.

You Reflect and Grow

Perhaps most importantly, you have developed the habit of asking:

What happened?

Why?

What did I learn?

What evidence supports my interpretation?

What will I do next?

Reflection is no longer simply an assignment.

It becomes part of how you practice.

Readiness Is Not Perfection

One of the most important messages we can give you as you complete the program is this:

You are not expected to leave SCF as a finished educator.

No preparation program could, or should, make that promise.

Professional educators continue developing throughout their careers.

You will encounter:

- New learners.
- New curricula.
- New technologies.
- New policies.
- New colleagues.
- New communities.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- New challenges.
- New evidence about teaching and learning.

Professional readiness means that you have developed a foundation strong enough to help you navigate those changes responsibly.

You know how to learn.

You know how to seek feedback.

You know how to reflect.

You know how to collaborate.

You know that when something is not working for learners, professional responsibility requires you to notice and respond.

Those capacities will serve you long after individual course content has faded.

Your Responsibilities

As you transition from educator candidate to professional educator, your responsibility for your own continued development increases.

You are expected to:

- Continue learning throughout your career.
- Seek meaningful feedback and use it to strengthen practice.
- Reflect honestly on instructional impact.
- Maintain professional and ethical standards.
- Stay informed about evolving professional expectations.
- Advocate appropriately for learners.
- Continue developing inclusive and accessible learning environments.
- Collaborate with families and professional colleagues.
- Maintain confidentiality and professional boundaries.
- Use technology thoughtfully and responsibly.
- Participate in professional learning.
- Ask for support when needed.
- Contribute positively to the professional community you join.

Your degree marks completion of a program.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your professional identity will continue developing through the choices you make afterward.

How We Support You

Your relationship with the SCF Education Department does not lose meaning when you graduate.

The professional relationships developed throughout your preparation become part of the network you carry into the profession.

Your faculty, mentors, supervisors, peers, school partners, and professional community have all contributed to your preparation.

As you move forward, we encourage you to continue seeking:

- Mentorship.
- Professional learning.
- Collegial collaboration.
- Evidence-informed practice.
- Reflective dialogue.
- Professional organizations and networks.
- Opportunities to contribute to the profession.

One of the strongest habits you can carry with you is the willingness to remain connected to people who challenge, encourage, and help you grow.

Professional learning remains relational.

When You Do Not Feel Ready

There may be moments, even after successful program completion, when you question whether you are ready.

That does not automatically mean you are unprepared.

Beginning something important often reveals how much there still is to learn.

When uncertainty occurs:

Return to evidence.

What have you successfully demonstrated?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

What feedback have you received?

What challenges have you already learned to navigate?

What does your portfolio reveal about your growth?

Where do you genuinely need additional support?

Then seek that support.

Professional confidence is not the belief that you will never encounter difficulty.

It is the knowledge that when difficulty comes, you have strategies, relationships, and professional habits that can help you respond.

Related Resources

- Figure 23: The SCF Professional Readiness Framework
- Figure 24: The SCF Certification Progression Pathway
- Figure 25: From Preparation to Professional Practice
- Chapter 16: Professional Growth Portfolio
- Chapter 17: Academic Progression
- Chapter 21: Mentor Teachers
- Chapter 26: Support and Accountability
- Chapter 27: Degree Progression
- Chapter 28: FTCE Expectations
- Chapter 29: Graduation Requirements
- Chapter 30: Final Internship
- Career Services
- Program Manager
- Faculty Mentors
- Professional organizations and educator networks

Portfolio Connection

At this point in your journey, your Professional Growth Portfolio becomes something different.

Early in the program, you were adding artifacts.

Later, you were identifying patterns of development.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

During final internship, you used evidence to demonstrate growth and integrated competence.

Now the portfolio becomes a **professional narrative**.

It should help you articulate:

- What you value as an educator.
- What you have learned.
- How your practice has changed.
- What evidence demonstrates your competencies.
- How feedback influenced your development.
- What strengths you bring into the profession.
- What areas you remain committed to developing.

The most powerful portfolio does not communicate:

Look at everything I completed.

It communicates:

Here is evidence of how I became the educator standing before you today and where I intend to grow next.

That story can support employment, professional reflection, continued certification, and future professional learning.

More importantly, it reminds **you** that growth has already occurred and can continue occurring.

The SCF Education Way

Professional readiness is not an ending. It is a beginning with a strong foundation.

You entered this program as a learner preparing to become an educator.

Along the way, you were asked to think differently about what that means.

You learned that professionalism begins before employment.

That participation means more than attendance.

That feedback is something to use.

That integrity protects learning.

That technology should strengthen rather than replace thinking.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

That clinical practice is built through partnership.

That trust is earned through consistent action.

That professional responsibility includes both support and accountability.

That certification milestones matter because they are part of a larger preparation journey.

And that final internship is not a finish line.

It is a bridge.

Now you stand on the other side of that bridge with something more valuable than the expectation that you know everything.

You have a professional foundation.

You know how to learn.

You know how to reflect.

You know how to ask questions.

You know how to collaborate.

You know how to examine evidence.

You know that every learner deserves an educator willing to continue growing.

That is professional readiness.

And that is where the next chapter of your work begins.

Professional Tip

Carry your learner identity with you.

Your first professional role may tempt you to believe that because you are now the teacher, you should already know what to do.

Resist that idea.

Ask questions.

Find mentors.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Observe colleagues.

Seek feedback.

Read.

Reflect.

Experiment thoughtfully.

Professional expertise grows when educators remain willing to learn.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Look back across your educator preparation journey.

Not simply at the courses you completed, but at who you were when you began and who you are now.

What do you understand about learners that you did not understand before?

What professional habit are you most proud of developing?

What feedback changed you?

What challenges strengthen you?

What evidence demonstrates the educator you have become?

Then look forward.

What kind of professional do you want to be known as?

What will your students experience because you are their educator?

What will your colleagues be able to count on you for?

What will you continue learning?

And when you look back several years from now, how will you know that you continued becoming the educator you hoped to be?

You are not leaving SCF as a finished educator.

You are leaving prepared to begin.

Section IV Conclusion

Ready to Begin

Section IV began with a destination:

Professional Readiness.

You explored degree progression, certification milestones, graduation requirements, final internship, and the professional competencies that signal readiness to enter the field.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

But the story of this section is not ultimately about requirements.

It is about alignment.

Your coursework developed knowledge.

Your clinical experiences developed practice.

Your certification requirements confirmed important professional competencies.

Your portfolio made growth visible.

Your internship integrated your preparation.

Graduation confirms completion.

And professional readiness asks what all of those experiences now allow you to do for learners.

The journey from educator candidate to professional educator is significant.

So is what comes next.

You are ready to begin. Keep learning. Keep reflecting. Keep growing. Keep contributing. And keep becoming the educator your learners need.

Section V

Support for Your Success

Who supports my journey?

Becoming an educator is demanding work.

Throughout your program, you will balance coursework, clinical experiences, certification requirements, professional responsibilities, personal commitments, and the ongoing work of becoming the educator you hope to be.

There will be moments when you need information.

Moments when you need feedback.

Moments when you need academic support.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Moments when you need someone to help you think through a decision, remove a barrier, locate a resource, or simply identify the right next step.

Support is not separate from professional growth.

Knowing when to seek support, who to ask, and how to use the resources available to you is part of becoming a successful adult learner and professional educator.

The SCF Education Department works within a larger College community committed to supporting your academic, professional, financial, personal, and career development.

Support Is a Professional Skill

Professional educators do not work in isolation.

They collaborate.

They seek expertise.

They use available resources.

They ask questions before small concerns become large problems.

They recognize when another professional can help them make a stronger decision.

The same is true during educator preparation.

Seeking support does not diminish your independence.

It strengthens your ability to act responsibly.

Throughout this section, you will learn more about the people, services, and opportunities available to support your success:

Faculty Advising • Accessibility • Tutoring • CARE Team • Wellness • Financial Aid • Career Services • Student Organizations

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Figure 26. Your SCF Support Network

*You are responsible for your journey.
You are not expected to travel it *alone*.*



Each serves a different purpose, but together they create a network of support around your journey.

Your Role in the Support Partnership

Support works best when you are an active participant.

That means:

- Asking questions when expectations are unclear.
- Seeking help early rather than waiting until a challenge becomes urgent.
- Preparing for advising and support conversations.
- Following through on recommendations and next steps.
- Communicating openly and professionally.
- Using resources intentionally rather than only during moments of crisis.
- Recognizing that different needs may require different forms of support.

The goal is not to remove every challenge from your educator preparation journey.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The goal is to ensure that you have access to the people, tools, resources, and relationships that help you navigate those challenges successfully.

The SCF Education Way

Exceptional educators know that asking for support is part of professional responsibility. We build strong learning communities when we recognize that success is both an individual commitment and a shared endeavor.

32. Advising

"Strong advising does more than help you choose courses. It helps you understand where you are, where you are going, and what must happen next."

Purpose

Advising within the SCF Education Department is an ongoing professional partnership between educator candidates and faculty.

Because educator preparation includes carefully sequenced coursework, clinical experiences, certification milestones, portfolio requirements, internship eligibility, and graduation expectations, advising must extend beyond selecting classes for the next semester.

Education faculty serve as advisors because they understand the academic, clinical, certification, and professional progression of the programs they teach within.

Your faculty advisor helps you see the larger pathway.

Your responsibility is to remain actively engaged in navigating it.

Why This Matters

In a sequenced educator preparation program, one decision can affect several later milestones.

A course taken out of sequence may affect a prerequisite.

A delayed certification examination may affect internship eligibility.

An incomplete clinical requirement may affect progression.

A missing portfolio component may become difficult to recreate later.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Effective advising helps you understand these connections before they become barriers.

The goal is not simply to answer:

What should I register for next semester?

It is to help you continually answer:

Am I on track academically, clinically, professionally, and for certification—and what should I be preparing for next?

Department Standard 5.1

Faculty Advising and Candidate Ownership

The SCF Education Department provides advising through faculty who understand program curriculum, professional expectations, certification requirements, clinical progression, and educator preparation milestones.

Educator candidates are expected to participate actively in the advising process and maintain responsibility for monitoring their own degree and program progression.

Advising conversations may include:

- Degree and course progression.
- Prerequisites and course sequencing.
- Clinical and field experience requirements.
- General Knowledge Test and FTCE milestones.
- Professional Growth Portfolio progress.
- Internship eligibility.
- Graduation requirements.
- Professional dispositions and readiness.
- Career and certification planning.
- Challenges that may affect successful progression.

Advising provides guidance.

It does not transfer responsibility for program completion from the educator candidate to the advisor.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.



Advising Is More Than Registration

Registration is one important part of advising, but it is not the whole relationship.

Academic Planning

Faculty advisors help you understand your program of study, course sequence, prerequisites, and degree progression.

Certification Planning

Your advisor can help you identify certification testing milestones and consider whether your testing timeline aligns with program progression.

Clinical Planning

As clinical experiences increase in complexity, advising can help you understand how coursework, field requirements, and internship preparation intersect.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Professional Growth

Advising conversations may also help you reflect on professional strengths, areas for continued growth, dispositions, feedback, and the educator you are becoming.

Problem-Solving

When something changes, a course is not successfully completed, testing is delayed, personal circumstances affect enrollment, or a requirement becomes unclear, faculty advising helps you understand the implications and identify an appropriate next step.

Preparing for an Advising Conversation

The strongest advising conversations are collaborative.

Before meeting with your faculty advisor, review:

- Your current course schedule.
- Your degree audit or program plan.
- Courses already completed.
- Upcoming certification testing milestones.
- Clinical or field experience requirements.
- Professional Growth Portfolio progress.
- Questions or concerns you want to discuss.

Then come prepared to ask questions such as:

- *What should I be preparing for next?*
- *Is my certification timeline aligned with my degree progression?*
- *Are there prerequisites or clinical requirements I need to anticipate?*
- *Am I on track for internship eligibility?*
- *Is there anything I should address now rather than later?*

Advising becomes much more valuable when the conversation is about planning, not simply reacting.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Know who your faculty advisor or Program Manager is.
- Participate in advising at appropriate points throughout the program.
- Review your degree and program progression regularly.
- Prepare for advising conversations.
- Maintain awareness of certification, clinical, portfolio, internship, and graduation milestones.
- Ask questions when something is unclear.
- Communicate changes that may affect your academic plan.
- Follow through on agreed next steps.
- Complete registration and other College processes within published timelines.
- Verify that your enrollment aligns with your approved program progression.
- Avoid relying solely on classmates or informal information when making decisions that affect your degree.

When a decision affects your progression, ask the person responsible for advising your program.

How We Support You

Education faculty bring their knowledge of both teaching and program design into the advising relationship.

Faculty advisors can help you:

- Understand the sequence and purpose of required coursework.
- Connect current courses with future program expectations.
- Identify upcoming milestones.
- Recognize potential progression concerns.
- Develop a plan when circumstances change.
- Connect with the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator regarding clinical questions.
- Connect with appropriate College services when your needs extend beyond faculty advising.
- Think about certification and professional readiness as part of the larger educator journey.

Faculty advising also allows the department to notice patterns that may require broader support.

When several students encounter the same challenge, that information can help us strengthen communication, program design, or available resources.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Advising therefore supports both individual success and continuous program improvement.

If Challenges Occur

If you become concerned that you are off track, do not wait until registration, internship, or graduation to ask for help.

Meet with your faculty advisor or Program Manager as early as possible.

Depending upon the situation, your plan may involve:

- Revising a future course sequence.
- Repeating a required course.
- Adjusting the timing of a clinical experience.
- Developing a certification testing plan.
- Completing an outstanding requirement.
- Connecting with academic or College support services.
- Reviewing internship eligibility.
- Developing another appropriate progression plan.

Sometimes an adjustment means your original timeline changes.

That can be disappointing.

But a revised plan is far more useful than discovering an unresolved requirement when there is no longer time to address it.

The goal of advising is to help you understand the implications of your choices and make informed decisions about the path forward.

Related Resources

- Approved Program of Study
- Degree Audit
- Chapter 17: Academic Progression
- Chapter 27: Degree Progression
- Chapter 28: FTCE Expectations
- Chapter 29: Graduation Requirements
- Chapter 30: Final Internship
- Chapter 31: Professional Readiness

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Program Manager
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- SCF Registration and Academic Resources

Portfolio Connection

Advising can also help you see your Professional Growth Portfolio as more than an assignment requirement.

Your portfolio provides evidence that can enrich advising conversations.

For example, you may notice:

- A professional strength emerging across several semesters.
- An area where repeated feedback suggests a growth goal.
- A clinical experience that changes your professional interests.
- Evidence that you are increasingly prepared for final internship.
- A connection between your coursework and the type of educator you hope to become.

As your program progresses, consider periodically bringing your own reflection on portfolio growth into advising conversations.

The question becomes not only:

Am I completing the program?

but also:

What is the program revealing about the educator I am becoming?

The SCF Education Way

Advising is a partnership in purposeful progression.

Faculty advisors do more than tell you which course comes next.

They help you understand why the sequence matters.

They help you see connections between coursework, certification, clinical experiences, internship, graduation, and professional readiness.

But the most important person in the advising relationship remains you.

Your advisor can explain the pathway.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your advisor can help you interpret it.

Your advisor can help you problem-solve when the pathway changes.

What your advisor cannot do is travel it for you.

Professional responsibility means learning to monitor your own progress, ask thoughtful questions, seek guidance when needed, and make informed decisions about your future.

Those habits will serve you long after graduation.

Professional Tip

Do not wait for registration to think about advising.

A strong advising rhythm is:

Review → Anticipate → Ask → Plan → Follow Through

When you regularly look one semester, and one major milestone, ahead, advising becomes a tool for professional planning rather than emergency problem-solving.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about your current place in the program.

If you met with your faculty advisor tomorrow, what are the three most important questions you should ask?

Then consider:

What information should you review before that conversation so that you can participate as an informed partner in your own progression?

Advising is most powerful when you arrive not simply asking:

What do I take next?

but ready to discuss:

Where am I going, what do I need to be ready for, and how do I get there successfully?

33. Accessibility

"Access is not an accommodation to learning. It is a condition that makes meaningful learning possible."

Purpose

The SCF Education Department is committed to creating learning environments in which educator candidates can access, engage with, and demonstrate learning as fully as possible.

Accessibility includes both the intentional design of learning experiences and the individualized supports that some students may need in order to participate equitably.

Throughout the program, faculty work to reduce unnecessary barriers through accessible course materials, multiple ways to engage with learning, clear organization, supportive technology, and thoughtful instructional design.

At the same time, educator candidates may need individualized accommodations or additional accessibility support.

Seeking those supports is a responsible part of managing your learning.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Why This Matters

Learners vary.

They differ in how they access information, communicate, organize tasks, sustain attention, process language, demonstrate knowledge, navigate technology, and participate in learning environments.

That variability is expected.

As future educators, you will be responsible for recognizing and responding to learner differences in your own classrooms. Your experiences as an SCF student provide an opportunity to understand accessibility from both perspectives: As a learner who deserves access and as a future educator responsible for creating it.

Accessibility is therefore not simply a student service.

It is also part of your preparation for inclusive professional practice.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 5.2

Accessible Learning and Student Support

The SCF Education Department is committed to providing accessible learning experiences and supporting educator candidates in using approved accommodations and accessibility resources.

Educator candidates are encouraged to:

- Review course materials and learning expectations early.
- Use approved accommodations when applicable.
- Communicate with faculty about how approved accommodations apply within a particular learning experience.
- Seek assistance when a learning, technology, or access barrier affects participation.
- Use available assistive and accessibility technologies appropriately.
- Engage in collaborative problem-solving when an accommodation requires planning within a simulation, clinical, assessment, or other specialized learning environment.
- Maintain responsibility for completing course and program requirements while using available accessibility supports.

Accessibility supports provide equitable access to learning.

They do not reduce the academic, clinical, or professional competencies required for successful program completion.

Accessibility by Design

Many accessibility practices benefit all learners.

Throughout Education courses, you may experience practices such as:

- Clearly organized Canvas modules.
- Accessible documents and presentations.
- Captioned or transcribed media.
- Multiple formats for learning resources.
- Clear directions and assignment expectations.
- Flexible ways to interact with course content when appropriate.
- Structured opportunities for reflection and feedback.
- Assistive and instructional technologies.
- Universal Design for Learning principles.

These practices are intentionally incorporated to reduce unnecessary barriers before they interfere with learning.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You may notice that what supports one learner can improve the learning experience for many. That is one of the central ideas behind inclusive design.

Accessibility and Individual Accommodations

Accessible course design and individualized accommodations are related, but they are not the same.

Accessible design creates a stronger learning environment for everyone.

Individual accommodations provide specific supports when a documented need requires them.

If you have approved accommodations, you are encouraged to communicate with your instructors early so that appropriate implementation can be planned.

Some learning environments such as:

- Simulations
- Clinical experiences
- Laboratories
- Presentations
- Assessments
- Collaborative activities
- Field placements

may require additional planning to determine how an approved accommodation can be implemented while preserving the essential learning outcomes of the experience.

Early communication provides the greatest opportunity for thoughtful planning.

Accessibility in Clinical and Professional Settings

As you progress into clinical experiences, accessibility may require additional coordination because learning occurs within partner schools and authentic professional environments.

If an accommodation may affect participation within a clinical setting, communicate early with the appropriate SCF personnel.

Depending upon the situation, planning may involve:

- Your faculty member.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Accessibility Services.
- The Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- Your Program Manager.
- Appropriate school or district partners.

The goal is to support equitable access while maintaining the essential requirements associated with educator preparation and clinical practice.

You should not be expected to independently negotiate accommodations with a school placement without appropriate SCF guidance.

Accessibility as an Educator Mindset

Your experience with accessibility should also influence how you think about your future students.

Professional educators continually ask:

- *Where might learners encounter unnecessary barriers?*
- *Can I provide another way to access this information?*
- *Can learners demonstrate understanding in more than one appropriate way?*
- *Does my instructional design assume that every learner experiences learning the same way?*
- *What support allows a learner to access the intended challenge without removing the learning itself?*

That last distinction matters.

Accessibility should reduce barriers.

It should not remove meaningful cognitive engagement.

This is the same principle we established in our approach to technology and artificial intelligence:

Support the learner without replacing the learning.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Become familiar with available accessibility resources.
- Initiate accommodation processes when individualized support is needed.
- Communicate approved accommodations to faculty according to College procedures.
- Discuss implementation questions early.
- Use approved supports responsibly.
- Seek assistance when course materials or technology create an access barrier.
- Participate in collaborative planning when accommodations affect clinical or specialized learning experiences.
- Continue meeting essential course and program learning outcomes.
- Respect the accessibility needs and privacy of classmates and future learners.
- Apply what you learn about accessibility to your developing instructional practice.

Self-advocacy is part of professional responsibility.

How We Support You

Accessibility is a shared commitment.

Support may come from:

- Accessibility Services.
- Education faculty.
- Program Managers.
- The Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- Instructional and assistive technologies.
- Accessible course design.
- Canvas and digital learning resources.
- College academic support services.

Faculty will work with students and appropriate College personnel to implement approved accommodations within the context of course learning outcomes and instructional experiences.

When accessibility questions involve clinical practice or another specialized environment, the department will help coordinate the appropriate conversation.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

If Challenges Occur

If you encounter an accessibility barrier, communicate as early as possible.

Examples might include:

- Difficulty accessing a document, video, or digital platform.
- Questions about implementation of an approved accommodation.
- A learning environment that creates an unexpected barrier.
- An accommodation that may require planning for a simulation or clinical experience.
- Technology that does not function as expected with an assistive tool.

Do not wait until the learning experience is over if the barrier can be addressed earlier.

Faculty and support personnel can only help solve a problem when they know that the problem exists.

If an approved accommodation does not appear to be implemented appropriately, contact the appropriate College accessibility resource and communicate professionally with your instructor so the concern can be reviewed.

Related Resources

- Accessibility Services
- Canvas Accessibility Resources
- Assistive Technology Resources
- Chapter 9: Learning as an Adult Learner
- Chapter 10: Course Design
- Chapter 11: Canvas and Technology
- Chapter 14: Artificial Intelligence and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 24: Safety
- Chapter 32: Advising
- Program Manager
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator

Portfolio Connection

Accessibility can become an important part of your developing instructional identity.

Your Professional Growth Portfolio may provide opportunities to reflect on:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- How course design influenced your own access to learning.
- How you used accessibility principles within lesson planning.
- How you applied Universal Design for Learning.
- How you adapted instruction for learner variability.
- How feedback influenced your understanding of inclusive practice.
- How clinical experiences deepened your awareness of barriers and supports.

As you collect evidence, move beyond simply documenting that you included an accommodation or strategy.

Ask:

- *What barrier was I trying to reduce?*
- *How did my design support access?*
- *What evidence suggests the learner was able to engage more meaningfully?*

That reflection moves accessibility from a checklist toward professional judgment.

The SCF Education Way

Access is part of excellent teaching.

We do not begin with the assumption that every learner should experience learning in exactly the same way.

We begin with the belief that every learner should have meaningful access to the learning that matters.

That requires thoughtful design.

It requires flexibility.

It requires listening.

It requires collaboration.

And sometimes, it requires individualized support.

As an educator candidate, you deserve access to your own learning.

As a future educator, you will also carry the responsibility of creating access for others.

Those two experiences belong together.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

When we remove unnecessary barriers while preserving meaningful challenge, we do more than help students complete coursework.

We create conditions in which learners can participate, grow, and belong.

Professional Tip

Ask about the barrier, not the learner.

Instead of beginning with:

Why is this student struggling with the task?

try asking:

What about the task, environment, format, or support may be creating a barrier to participation or understanding?

That shift in perspective can transform both your learning and your future teaching.

Reflection

Think about a time when the design of a learning environment either increased or reduced your ability to participate successfully.

What specific feature made the difference?

Now consider your future classroom:

How will you design learning so that students can access the intended challenge without unnecessary barriers getting in the way?

Accessibility is not simply something we provide when a learner requests help.

It is a way of thinking about who gets to participate in learning from the very beginning.

34. Tutoring and Academic Success

"Strong learners do not wait until they are struggling to use support. They use resources intentionally to strengthen what they know and prepare for what comes next."

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Purpose

The **SCF Tutoring and Academic Success Center (TASC)** is an important partner in your success as an educator candidate.

TASC provides academic support designed to help students strengthen course learning, develop effective academic habits, prepare for assessments, and become increasingly confident and independent learners. Current services include tutoring in mathematics and science, writing support, workshops and test reviews, assistance navigating Canvas and course materials, research and citation support, and academic coaching.

For educator candidates, these resources have an additional connection.

The knowledge and academic skills you strengthen through tutoring do not end with a course assignment or examination. They also contribute to your preparation for the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations (FTCE) and, ultimately, to the knowledge you will use as a professional educator.

Tutoring is therefore not simply remediation.

It is one of the resources available to help you learn more deeply, prepare strategically, and move forward with confidence.

Why This Matters

Throughout your educator preparation program, you will encounter content and skills that require sustained practice.

You may need additional support with:

- Mathematics concepts.
- Reading and written communication.
- Academic writing.
- Research and citation.
- Test-taking strategies.
- Study organization.
- Understanding course materials.
- Preparing for high-stakes assessments.
- Strengthening content areas connected to certification examinations.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Needing additional practice in one area does not mean you are not capable of becoming an educator.

It means you have identified an opportunity to strengthen your preparation.

That is exactly what professional learners do.

The most effective use of tutoring is often proactive rather than reactive. You do not need to wait for a low grade, unsuccessful exam attempt, or approaching deadline before seeking support.

Department Standard 5.3

Academic Support and Certification Preparation

The SCF Education Department encourages educator candidates to use academic support resources proactively throughout their preparation.

Tutoring and academic support may be used to:

- Strengthen understanding of course content.
- Develop academic reading, writing, mathematics, and study skills.
- Prepare for course assessments.
- Respond to instructor feedback.
- Address identified areas of academic need.
- Develop effective test-taking and study strategies.
- Support preparation for certification examinations.
- Build confidence and independence as an adult learner.

Educator candidates remain responsible for meeting course, certification, and program requirements.

Academic support strengthens preparation.

It does not replace participation in coursework, independent practice, or completion of required learning.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.



Coursework and Certification Preparation Are Connected

One of the most important ideas to understand is that preparation for the FTCE does not begin when you open an FTCE study guide.

It begins in your courses.

The reading comprehension you strengthen in coursework matters.

The mathematics concepts you revisit matter.

The writing skills you develop matter.

Your understanding of instructional practice matters.

The professional knowledge you build across the program matters.

When a faculty member, advisor, or test result identifies an area that needs strengthening, TASC can become part of a larger preparation plan.

The goal is not simply:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

How do I pass this test?

The better question is:

What knowledge or skill does this result suggest I need to strengthen, and what resources can help me do that?

That connects tutoring directly to the certification philosophy we established in Chapter 28.

Using TASC for Course Success

Academic support can be valuable throughout the learning process.

You might use tutoring when you are:

Learning Something New

A tutor can help you revisit concepts, unpack difficult material, or identify what you do and do not yet understand.

Practicing

Guided practice can help you recognize patterns, strengthen strategies, and receive immediate feedback before an assessment.

Responding to Feedback

If instructor feedback identifies an area that needs development, tutoring can help you translate that feedback into action.

Preparing for an Assessment

Tutoring and academic coaching can support review, study planning, and test preparation.

Strengthening Academic Skills

Writing, research, citation, mathematics, reading, technology use, and study strategies are transferable skills that support success across courses. TASC currently provides support across many of these areas.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The FTCE Connection

Certification preparation should become increasingly individualized.

One educator candidate may need additional support with mathematics.

Another may need to strengthen reading comprehension.

Another may need help developing a study plan or test-taking strategy.

Still another may benefit from reviewing specific content before retesting.

The Education Department encourages candidates to use TASC as part of a coordinated FTCE preparation strategy when academic skill-building, tutoring, or test-preparation support can help address identified needs.

That process might look like:

Identify the Need → Connect With Support → Practice Intentionally → Check Progress → Adjust → Test

The goal is not endless preparation.

The goal is targeted preparation based upon evidence.

A faculty advisor, Program Manager, instructor, certification result, or your own self-assessment may help you determine which support would be most useful.

Do Not Wait for an Unsuccessful Attempt

Chapter 28 established an important principle: Test before the deadline, not at the deadline.

The same principle applies to academic support.

Use tutoring *before*:

- A course becomes difficult to recover.
- An assessment determines your final grade.
- A certification examination deadline approaches.
- You repeatedly practice a strategy that is not working.

Early support creates more opportunity for growth.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

If you know that a particular subject has historically been challenging for you, consider connecting with TASC **before the challenge becomes urgent.**

That is proactive professional planning.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are encouraged to:

- Recognize areas where additional academic support may strengthen your learning.
- Seek tutoring early.
- Bring course materials, assignment directions, instructor feedback, or other relevant information to tutoring sessions.
- Arrive with specific questions whenever possible.
- Use tutoring to deepen understanding rather than obtain answers to complete assignments.
- Practice independently between tutoring sessions.
- Apply strategies learned through tutoring to future coursework.
- Use assessment or certification results to identify areas for targeted preparation.
- Develop a realistic FTCE preparation plan when additional support is needed.
- Communicate with faculty or your Program Manager when academic challenges may affect progression.

Tutors can support your learning.

They cannot do the learning for you.

How We Support You

The Education Department views TASC as part of the broader network supporting educator candidates.

Faculty can help you identify when tutoring may be beneficial and clarify the concepts, skills, or assignment expectations that should guide your work with a tutor.

Your support network may include:

Course Faculty. Identifies course-specific learning goals, provides feedback, and helps you understand areas requiring additional development.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Faculty Advisor or Program Manager. Helps connect academic needs with degree progression and certification milestones.

Tutoring and Academic Success Center. Provides academic coaching, tutoring, workshops, writing support, test-review opportunities, and other learning resources.

You. Practice, reflect, ask questions, apply feedback, and remain responsible for your learning.

The strongest support occurs when these pieces work together.

If Challenges Occur

If tutoring does not immediately resolve a learning challenge, that does not mean the support has failed.

Learning sometimes requires multiple strategies and repeated practice.

Consider:

- *Do I understand exactly what I am struggling with?*
- *Am I practicing consistently?*
- *Have I shared my instructor's feedback with the tutor?*
- *Do I need a different strategy?*
- *Should I speak with my faculty member or advisor?*
- *Does my certification score report identify a particular area requiring attention?*

If academic difficulties continue, communicate with your instructor and faculty advisor or Program Manager.

Together, you can determine whether additional tutoring, academic coaching, a revised study plan, or another College support resource may be appropriate.

Related Resources

- SCF Tutoring and Academic Success Center
- Chapter 9: Learning as an Adult Learner
- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 15: Assessment and Feedback
- Chapter 28: FTCE Expectations
- Chapter 32: Advising
- Faculty Advisor

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Program Manager
- Course Faculty
- SCF Library and Research Resources
- Certification preparation resources

Portfolio Connection

Tutoring itself does not need to become a portfolio artifact.

What you do with the learning can.

For example, tutoring may help you strengthen academic writing, mathematical reasoning, instructional planning, research skills, or another area that later becomes visible through stronger coursework and clinical practice.

Your portfolio may eventually reveal a growth story:

Challenge → Support → Practice → Feedback → Stronger Evidence

That story demonstrates something important about professional development.

You were able to identify an area for growth, use available resources, apply what you learned, and improve your practice.

That is precisely the kind of learning process professional educators use throughout their careers.

The SCF Education Way

Seeking support is an act of ownership.

Strong educators do not know everything.

Strong students do not understand everything the first time.

Strong professionals do not wait until difficulties become crises before asking for help.

They notice.

They identify what they need.

They seek expertise.

They practice.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

They use feedback.

And they keep going.

The SCF Tutoring and Academic Success Center exists to strengthen that process.

Whether you are working through challenging course content, improving academic skills, preparing for an assessment, or building the foundation necessary for successful certification testing, tutoring gives you another professional partner in your learning.

The goal is not dependence upon support.

The goal is to use support in ways that help you become an increasingly confident, capable, and independent learner.

Professional Tip

Bring evidence, not just “I don’t get it.”

When you meet with a tutor, bring something that helps identify the learning need:

An assignment → Instructor feedback → A practice problem → A quiz result → A certification score report → A specific question

The more clearly you can identify where learning is breaking down, the more intentionally you can work on strengthening it.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about an academic area you currently find challenging, or one you know will matter for an upcoming FTCE.

Now ask:

What exactly do I need to strengthen?

Not:

What am I bad at?

But:

What skill, concept, or strategy needs more practice?

Then identify one action you could take now:

Meet with a tutor? Attend a workshop? Practice with feedback? Talk with faculty? Develop a study plan?

Professional learners do not measure strength by whether they ever need support.

They demonstrate strength by knowing how to use support to keep growing.

35. CARE Team

"Caring for a learning community includes noticing when someone may need support and knowing how to help connect them to it."

Purpose

College students sometimes experience circumstances that affect their ability to learn, participate, or move forward successfully.

Academic challenges may intersect with personal circumstances, unexpected changes, basic needs, relationships, stress, or other concerns that extend beyond what a faculty member or advisor can appropriately address alone.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

SCF's CARE Team provides a pathway for identifying concerns and connecting students with appropriate support.

Within the Education Department, we view that process as an expression of one of our core values:

Well-being

We believe well-being is strengthened when people experience a community that notices, listens, responds with care, and connects individuals with appropriate resources.

Seeking or accepting support is not separate from your professional journey.

Sometimes, it is what allows that journey to continue.

Why This Matters

Educator preparation asks a great deal of you.

You are balancing college coursework, clinical experiences, certification testing, employment and personal responsibilities, and the intellectual and emotional work of becoming a professional educator.

Sometimes a challenge can be resolved through tutoring or an advising conversation, sometimes it cannot.

The CARE Team provides another layer within the College's support network when a concern extends beyond ordinary academic support or when someone may benefit from coordinated assistance.

You do not need to determine exactly what resource will solve a concern before reaching out.

Sometimes the first important step is simply:

Someone needs to know.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 5.4

Care, Connection, and Student Well-Being

The SCF Education Department recognizes student well-being as an important condition for learning, professional growth, and successful program participation.

When concerns arise that may affect an educator candidate's well-being or ability to participate successfully, students and faculty are encouraged to use appropriate College support and referral processes, including the CARE Team when applicable.

Educator candidates are encouraged to:

- Communicate when circumstances are significantly affecting their ability to participate successfully.
- Seek support before concerns become more difficult to address.
- Respond when College personnel reach out to offer assistance.
- Use appropriate College resources.
- Recognize the boundaries between faculty support and services requiring specialized expertise.
- Demonstrate care for members of the learning community by appropriately sharing concerns when another person may need assistance.

Care does not require you to solve someone else's problem.

Sometimes care means helping connect someone with the people who can.

Notice. Connect. Support.

I think these three words should become the organizing idea of this chapter.

Notice

Well-being begins with attention.

We notice when our own ability to function, learn, participate, or meet responsibilities has meaningfully changed.

We may also notice when someone within our community appears to be struggling.

Noticing does not mean diagnosing.

It means paying attention rather than assuming that a concern will simply resolve itself.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Connect

Once a concern is recognized, the next step may be connection.

That might mean speaking with faculty, contacting the CARE Team, responding to outreach, or connecting with another appropriate College resource.

You do not need to know the entire solution before beginning the conversation.

Support

Different situations require different kinds of support.

The purpose of a coordinated support system is to help identify what may be useful and connect students with appropriate resources.

Support should strengthen your capacity to move forward—not remove your responsibility for participating in that process.

The Faculty Role

Education faculty care deeply about student success.

Faculty can listen.

We can notice.

We can help you think through academic implications.

We can connect you with resources.

We can make referrals when appropriate.

But faculty members are not expected to serve as counselors, healthcare providers, financial specialists, or emergency-response professionals.

Recognizing those boundaries is itself part of responsible care.

Sometimes the most supportive thing a faculty member can say is:

There are people at SCF who are better equipped to help with this. Let me help you connect with them.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

That is not passing responsibility away.

It is connecting you with the right expertise.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are encouraged to:

- Pay attention to changes that may be affecting your learning or participation.
- Communicate with faculty when circumstances affect academic responsibilities.
- Seek appropriate support early.
- Respond to outreach from faculty or College personnel.
- Participate actively in identifying reasonable next steps.
- Continue communicating when a challenge affects program progression.
- Recognize when a concern requires support beyond what peers or faculty can appropriately provide.
- Share significant concerns about another member of the College community through appropriate channels rather than attempting to manage the situation independently.

Professional responsibility includes knowing when a situation requires connection rather than self-management.

How We Support You

Support within the Education Department begins with relationships.

Faculty, advisors, Program Managers, and other department personnel may notice changes in participation, communication, academic performance, or professional engagement and reach out to you.

That outreach is an invitation to communicate.

Depending upon the concern, we may:

- Listen and help identify the immediate issue.
- Discuss academic implications.
- Help you prioritize next steps.
- Connect you with advising or tutoring.
- Refer you to the CARE Team or another appropriate College resource.
- Help you understand how circumstances may affect program progression.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Continue supporting your academic and professional journey within our role.

Our department value of ***Well-being*** asks us to consider the whole learning community.

We cannot promise that every challenge can be removed.

We can commit to noticing, connecting, and responding with care.

If Challenges Occur

If personal circumstances begin affecting coursework, clinical experiences, certification preparation, attendance, communication, or other program responsibilities, communicate early whenever possible.

Support and accountability can exist at the same time.

A difficult circumstance may help faculty understand what is happening and identify available support, while some academic, clinical, or professional requirements may still need to be completed.

Early communication gives us the greatest opportunity to help you understand both:

What support is available?

and

What responsibilities still need to be addressed?

Those conversations are much more productive before a concern becomes urgent.

Related Resources

- SCF CARE Team
- Chapter 32: Advising
- Chapter 33: Accessibility
- Chapter 34: Tutoring and Academic Success
- Chapter 36: Wellness
- Faculty Advisor
- Program Manager
- Appropriate SCF Student Support Services

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Portfolio Connection

Personal circumstances and CARE Team involvement are not portfolio evidence.

Your privacy matters.

However, the professional capacities developed through navigating challenge may contribute to your broader understanding of resilience, communication, help-seeking, boundaries, and community care.

As a future educator, you will also work within systems designed to support students.

Your own experience of being part of a community that notices and connects may deepen an important professional understanding:

Educators do not need to solve every challenge their students experience.

They do need to know how to notice concerns, maintain appropriate boundaries, and connect learners with support.

The SCF Education Way

Well-being is shared work.

It begins with the recognition that people bring their whole lives into learning environments.

Sometimes learners need academic support.

Sometimes they need accessibility.

Sometimes they need guidance.

And sometimes they need a connection to resources beyond the classroom.

Our responsibility as a learning community is not to have every answer.

It is to notice.

To listen.

To care.

To know our professional boundaries.

And to help connect people with appropriate support.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

That is how Well-being becomes more than a value written on a page.

It becomes something we practice.

Professional Tip

You do not need to know the solution before you ask for support.

Begin with what you know:

Something has changed. This is affecting me. I am not sure what I need. *Who can help me identify the next step?*

That is enough to begin a conversation.

Reflection

Think about the professional community you hope to create for your future students.

How will students know that someone notices when they need support?

Then consider your own role within a community:

How can you demonstrate care without assuming responsibility for solving something that requires another person's expertise?

Sometimes professional care begins with one simple act: making the connection.

36. Wellness

"Well-being is strengthened in community. The relationships you build while becoming an educator may become some of the relationships that sustain you throughout your career."

Purpose

Well-being is one of the core values of the SCF Education Department.

We understand well-being as more than managing stress or responding when something becomes difficult. It includes creating the conditions that allow people to learn, contribute, connect, grow, and sustain meaningful professional lives.

Well-being is our value. Wellness is one way we intentionally support it.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Throughout your educator preparation journey, wellness involves developing habits, relationships, boundaries, and support systems that help you navigate the demands of college, clinical practice, certification, and eventually the teaching profession.

Importantly, you do not build those capacities alone.

Your cohort, the educator candidates learning alongside you, is one of the most important resources you will develop throughout this journey.

Why This Matters

Teaching is deeply relational work.

So is learning to teach.

Throughout your program, there will be moments of excitement and accomplishment, but also demanding semesters, challenging assignments, certification testing, clinical responsibilities, difficult feedback, and experiences that cause you to question what you thought you knew.

The people in your cohort are often experiencing those moments alongside you.

They understand the assignment.

They remember the conversation.

They know what it felt like to prepare for the examination.

They understand the anticipation of entering a clinical placement.

They can celebrate the breakthrough because they witnessed the work that preceded it.

Over time, classmates can become:

Study partners → Thought partners → Encouragers → Critical friends → Professional colleagues → Lifelong members of your educator network

Those relationships matter.

Research and professional experience repeatedly remind us that educators thrive when they experience connection, collaboration, belonging, and professional community.

Your professional network does not begin when you receive your first teaching position.

You are building it now.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 5.5

Well-Being and Sustainable Professional Practice

The SCF Education Department recognizes well-being as an important condition for learning, professional development, and sustainable practice within the education profession.

Educator candidates are encouraged to develop habits and relationships that support personal and professional well-being, including:

- Building meaningful relationships within their cohort.
- Participating actively in a supportive learning community.
- Developing sustainable approaches to workload and time management.
- Establishing appropriate personal and professional boundaries.
- Seeking assistance when support is needed.
- Using available College wellness and student support resources.
- Maintaining connections with people who encourage growth and accountability.
- Supporting peers without assuming responsibilities beyond appropriate personal or professional boundaries.
- Recognizing that wellness practices may change as circumstances and professional responsibilities change.
- Developing habits that can continue into professional practice.

Well-being is both personal and relational.

You are responsible for caring for your own capacity while also contributing positively to the community in which others are learning.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.



Your Cohort Is Part of Your Professional Story

Look around early in your program.

The people sitting beside you may one day be teaching across the hall from you.

One may become a reading coach.

Another may become an ESE specialist.

Someone may become an instructional coach, administrator, district leader, mentor teacher, or professor.

Years from now, you may contact one another to ask:

- Have you taught this before?
- What would you do with this student?
- Do you have a resource for this?
- Can I talk through something with you?
- Are you seeing this too?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

That is professional community.

The relationships you develop within your cohort are not incidental to your preparation. They provide opportunities to practice many of the same relational capacities effective educators need:

Trust • Communication • Collaboration • Empathy • Feedback • Encouragement • Accountability • Belonging

Invest in those relationships.

They may become some of your strongest sources of professional support.

Community Is More Than Getting Along

A supportive cohort does not mean everyone must become close friends or always agree.

Professional community is stronger than that.

Healthy professional relationships allow people to:

- Ask questions without embarrassment.
- Share ideas.
- Challenge one another's thinking respectfully.
- Celebrate accomplishments.
- Admit when something is difficult.
- Exchange resources without doing work for one another.
- Give and receive feedback.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Hold one another accountable.
- Make room for different experiences and perspectives.
- Encourage someone who needs reminding that progress is still happening.

This is another reason our department values *Collaboration*, *Well-being*, *Innovation*, and *Inclusion* together.

Well-being is strengthened when people experience belonging within a community where they can contribute authentically.

Wellness as Sustainable Practice

Wellness is not about creating a life without stress.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Education is meaningful work, and meaningful work can be demanding.

Instead, sustainable professional practice means learning to recognize what helps you continue doing that work effectively over time.

That may include:

Relationships

Maintain connections with people who support, challenge, encourage, and understand you.

Boundaries

Learn when work needs your attention and when stepping away allows you to return more effectively.

Organization

Develop systems that prevent every responsibility from becoming an emergency.

Reflection

Notice patterns in what strengthens or depletes your capacity.

Movement and Rest

Recognize that physical well-being affects attention, learning, patience, decision-making, and professional presence.

Purpose

Reconnect with why the work matters, particularly during demanding periods.

Support

Know when your own strategies are insufficient and another resource is needed.

Wellness is not one behavior.

It is an ongoing practice of noticing and responding to what allows you to remain engaged in meaningful work.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

From Cohort to Colleagues

One of the most valuable things you can take from your educator preparation program may not appear on your transcript.

It may be *your people*.

As you move into professional practice, intentionally maintain the relationships that matter.

Your cohort members will enter different schools and encounter different learners, curricula, leadership structures, grade levels, and professional experiences.

That makes your network increasingly valuable.

Someone else's experience can expand your perspective.

Your experience can support theirs.

Over time, your cohort can become a distributed professional learning community, one that extends beyond a single classroom, school, or district.

Your degree program eventually ends.

Your professional learning community does not have to.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are encouraged to:

- Develop sustainable habits rather than relying continuously on urgency.
- Build authentic relationships within your cohort.
- Contribute positively to the well-being of the learning community.
- Check in with peers and allow others to check in with you.
- Celebrate the success of others.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Protect time for responsibilities beyond college and professional preparation.
- Use available College wellness resources.
- Recognize when a concern requires support beyond what friends, classmates, or faculty can appropriately provide.
- Develop wellness practices that can transition with you into professional life.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Supporting one another does not mean becoming responsible for one another.

Healthy professional community combines connection with appropriate boundaries.

How We Support You

The Education Department seeks to create a culture in which well-being is practiced rather than simply discussed.

Faculty support that culture through:

- Building relationships with educator candidates.
- Creating opportunities for cohort connection.
- Encouraging collaboration rather than unnecessary competition.
- Designing learning with intentionality and clarity.
- Providing feedback that supports growth.
- Recognizing the demands of educator preparation while maintaining meaningful professional expectations.
- Connecting students with College resources.
- Modeling appropriate professional boundaries.
- Creating opportunities for reflection and community-building.

SCF also provides resources designed to support different dimensions of student wellness and success.

The goal is not for the Education Department to become every student's entire support system.

It is to help you build and recognize a network of support that extends beyond any one person.

If Challenges Occur

There may be times when the practices and relationships that usually support your well-being are not enough.

Recognize that distinction.

A classmate can listen.

A friend can encourage you.

A faculty member can help you understand academic implications.

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An advisor can help you reconsider your progression.

The CARE Team can help connect you with resources.

Other College professionals provide specialized forms of support.

Part of wellness is knowing which kind of support a situation requires.

If circumstances begin significantly affecting your ability to learn, participate, complete responsibilities, or function successfully within the program, communicate and seek appropriate support early.

You do not need to manage every challenge independently simply because you are preparing to become a professional.

Related Resources

- Chapter 4: Professional Dispositions
- Chapter 5: Communication Expectations
- Chapter 9: Learning as an Adult Learner
- Chapter 12: Professional Responsibility
- Chapter 32: Advising
- Chapter 33: Accessibility
- Chapter 34: Tutoring and Academic Success
- Chapter 35: CARE Team
- Chapter 39: Student Organizations
- Faculty Advisor
- Program Manager
- Appropriate SCF student wellness and support resources

Portfolio Connection

Wellness itself is not something you need to document for your Professional Growth Portfolio.

However, your ability to build professional relationships, collaborate effectively, establish boundaries, seek feedback, use support, and contribute positively to a professional community is part of your developing educator identity.

Your portfolio may reveal evidence of that development through:

- Collaborative experiences.

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- Clinical partnerships.
- Professional dispositions.
- Reflections on teamwork.
- Responsiveness to feedback.
- Leadership.
- Contributions to learning communities.

You may also notice something when you look across several semesters:

Some of your growth happened because someone else helped you see what you could not yet see for yourself.

That is worth recognizing.

The SCF Education Way

Well-being grows through connection.

We want you to leave the SCF Education Program with strong knowledge.

With instructional competence.

With professional judgment.

With certification.

With a portfolio that demonstrates growth.

With readiness to teach.

But we also hope you leave with **people**.

People who remember where you started.

People who challenged your thinking.

People who celebrated when you passed the test you were worried about.

People who sat beside you while you figured something out.

People who understand the work because they were becoming educators alongside you.

Years from now, your job titles may change.

Your schools may change.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your roles may change.

But some of the people in your cohort may still be the ones you call when you need an idea, a perspective, encouragement, or someone who simply understands.

That is not separate from professional preparation.

That is part of it.

Our value of **Well-being** reflects a simple belief:

People are more likely to thrive when they know they belong to a community that values both who they are and who they are becoming.

Professional Tip

Build your professional network before you need it.

Do not wait until you need help to build relationships.

Share resources.

Ask questions.

Celebrate others.

Offer encouragement.

Stay connected.

The strongest professional relationships are built through many small interactions long before the moment when someone needs to say:

“Can I talk this through with you?”

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about the people in your cohort.

Who has already influenced the educator you are becoming?

Who challenges your thinking?

Who encourages you?

Who sees something in your practice that you sometimes miss?

And perhaps most importantly:

What kind of cohort member are you becoming for someone else?

Now look several years into the future.

Imagine that your cohort has spread across classrooms, schools, districts, and perhaps entirely different roles in education.

What would it take for those relationships to remain part of your professional life?

The program will eventually end.

The relationships do not have to.

Some of the people becoming educators beside you today may become your greatest advocates, collaborators, and sources of professional strength for years to come.

37. Financial Aid and Scholarships

"Planning for your education includes planning for the resources that help make completing it possible."

Purpose

Completing an educator preparation program is an investment in your future.

Tuition and fees are part of that investment, but educator candidates may also encounter expenses associated with textbooks and learning materials, technology, certification

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examinations, background screening, transportation to clinical placements, professional preparation, and other program requirements.

As you move toward final internship, the amount of time available for outside employment may also change.

For these reasons, financial planning should occur throughout your program, not only when tuition is due.

SCF offers multiple forms of financial support, including federal and state financial aid, grants, scholarships, student employment, and other resources. The SCF Foundation also provides donor-supported scholarships, while community organizations offer additional scholarship opportunities that students are encouraged to explore.

Why This Matters

Financial circumstances can affect academic decisions.

A student who experiences an unexpected financial challenge may consider reducing enrollment, changing a course sequence, increasing work hours, or postponing a requirement without realizing how that decision could affect degree progression, financial aid eligibility, certification preparation, or final internship.

That is why financial planning and academic planning should sometimes happen together.

Before making a change that affects your enrollment, ask:

- *How will this affect my degree progression?*
- *How might it affect my financial aid?*
- *Are there scholarships or other resources I have not explored?*
- *Who should I speak with before making the decision?*

A conversation with Financial Aid and your faculty advisor can provide information you need to make a more informed choice.

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Department Standard 5.6

Financial Planning and Resource Awareness

The SCF Education Department encourages educator candidates to take a proactive approach to understanding the financial resources available to support degree completion.

Educator candidates are encouraged to:

- Complete the FAFSA when applicable and renew it as required.
- Monitor financial aid requirements and deadlines.
- Review their financial aid status regularly.
- Maintain awareness of requirements affecting continued financial aid eligibility.
- Apply for SCF Foundation scholarships for which they may qualify.
- Explore scholarships offered by community and professional organizations.
- Plan ahead for expenses associated with certification and clinical preparation.
- Consider the financial implications of final internship before reaching the internship semester.
- Consult Financial Aid before making enrollment changes that may affect aid.
- Seek assistance early when financial circumstances may interfere with continued enrollment or program progression.

Financial planning is part of planning successfully for degree completion.

Understanding Your Financial Support Network

There is no single source of college financial support.

SCF Financial Aid

The Financial Aid Office helps students navigate federal, state, and institutional forms of financial assistance.

Financial aid may include:

- Grants
- Scholarships
- Work-Study
- Loans
- Other Eligible Assistance

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The FAFSA is used to determine eligibility for several types of aid, and SCF advises students to complete it as early as possible. Students must apply for financial aid each year and should monitor their SCF email and MySCF financial aid status for information and required actions.

Because enrollment changes and academic progress can affect financial aid eligibility, consult Financial Aid when questions arise rather than relying on assumptions.

[SCF Financial Aid](#)

The SCF Foundation

The SCF Foundation is an important partner in making higher education accessible to SCF students.

Through the generosity of donors, Foundation scholarships provide financial support to degree-seeking SCF students who meet individual scholarship criteria. Students submit a scholarship application, which is reviewed and matched with available scholarship opportunities based on eligibility.

This is an important distinction for students: Do not assume you will not qualify. Apply.

Scholarships may consider different combinations of:

- Academic achievement.
- Financial need.
- Program of study.
- Career goals.
- Talents or accomplishments.
- Donor-established criteria.
- Other eligibility requirements.

Not every scholarship is based solely on financial need, and scholarships generally do not need to be repaid. SCF specifically encourages students to research and apply for all scholarships for which they may qualify.

[SCF Foundation Scholarship Information](#)

Look Beyond SCF: Community Scholarships

Your scholarship search should not stop at the College.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Our community includes foundations, nonprofit organizations, civic organizations, businesses, professional associations, school-related organizations, and other groups that invest in students pursuing higher education.

SCF currently directs students to outside opportunities including the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Manatee Community Foundation, and Manatee Education Foundation, among others.

As an educator candidate, you may also find opportunities specifically connected to:

- Education
- Teaching
- Children and Families
- Exceptional Student Education
- Early Childhood
- Community Service
- Leadership
- Academic Achievement

Scholarship availability and eligibility change, so searching should become a recurring habit, not a one-time event.

A scholarship that did not apply to you during your first year may become relevant later in your program.

Think Ahead to Final Internship

Final internship deserves special financial planning.

As you learned in Chapter 30, final internship requires sustained participation in a professional school environment. That can affect the time available for employment outside the program. Do not wait until the semester before internship to begin thinking about that reality.

Earlier in your program, consider:

What will my financial responsibilities look like during internship?

Will my employment schedule need to change?

What expenses should I anticipate?

Are there scholarships I could pursue now?

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Could I begin setting aside resources earlier?

Who can help me understand my options?

Planning cannot eliminate every financial challenge. It can create more options for responding to one.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are encouraged to:

- Know the financial commitments associated with your education.
- Complete required financial aid processes accurately and on time.
- Monitor your SCF email for financial aid communications.
- Review your financial aid status.
- Understand that enrollment changes may affect aid.
- Maintain awareness of Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements.
- Apply for SCF Foundation scholarships.
- Search for community scholarship opportunities regularly.
- Read scholarship eligibility requirements carefully.
- Submit scholarship applications by established deadlines.
- Plan for certification, clinical, transportation, and internship-related expenses.
- Ask questions when financial aid information is unclear.
- Seek assistance before a financial challenge affects program progression.

One application may not result in a scholarship.

That does not mean the search should stop.

How We Support You

Financial aid and scholarship administration occur outside the Education Department, but faculty can help you recognize when a financial concern may also affect your academic progression.

Your support network may include:

SCF Financial Aid. Provides expertise regarding aid eligibility, FAFSA, grants, loans, scholarships, student employment, and financial aid requirements.

SCF Foundation. Connects eligible students with donor-supported scholarship opportunities.

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Community Organizations. Provide additional scholarship opportunities with their own eligibility requirements and application processes.

Education Faculty Advisor or Program Manager. Helps you understand how a possible enrollment change could affect your educator preparation sequence.

You. Ask questions, meet deadlines, explore opportunities, and plan ahead.

Sometimes the strongest plan requires more than one of these conversations.

If Challenges Occur

If financial circumstances begin affecting your ability to remain enrolled or continue your planned course sequence, communicate early.

Do not simply drop a course or change your enrollment without understanding the possible academic and financial implications.

Depending upon the situation, useful next steps may include:

- Speaking with Financial Aid.
- Meeting with your faculty advisor or Program Manager.
- Reviewing SCF Foundation scholarship opportunities.
- Searching community scholarships.
- Exploring available grants or student employment.
- Reviewing whether another College support resource may apply.
- Developing a revised academic plan if a change becomes necessary.

SCF also identifies limited scholarship resources for certain special circumstances, including eligible students nearing graduation, although availability and eligibility requirements apply.

The important first step is to ask before assuming there are no options.

Related Resources

- SCF Financial Aid
- SCF Foundation Scholarships
- FAFSA
- Community Scholarship Opportunities
- Chapter 27: Degree Progression
- Chapter 29: Graduation Requirements

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Chapter 30: Final Internship
- Chapter 32: Advising
- Chapter 35: CARE Team
- Faculty Advisor
- Program Manager

Portfolio Connection

Your financial aid information and personal financial circumstances do not belong in your Professional Growth Portfolio.

However, scholarship applications may occasionally invite you to articulate something your portfolio has been helping you develop all along:

Who are you becoming as an educator?

Your experiences, professional goals, leadership, service, accomplishments, and commitment to education may provide meaningful material when writing scholarship essays or requesting recommendations.

Your portfolio can help you remember the evidence behind that story.

Use it as a resource for reflection, not as a place to document private financial information.

The SCF Education Way

Opportunity matters only when students can access it.

We can design an exceptional educator preparation program, provide meaningful clinical experiences, create strong professional partnerships, and establish a pathway toward certification.

But students also need the resources that make completing that journey possible.

That is why financial support belongs within a section about student success.

Ask the question.

Complete the application.

Search beyond the first opportunity.

Talk with Financial Aid.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Explore the SCF Foundation.

Look within your community.

Plan for internship before internship arrives.

And when circumstances change, communicate before deciding that your only option is to step away.

Financial planning may not be the part of becoming an educator that first inspired you to enter the profession.

But protecting your ability to complete the journey is part of reaching the students you entered this profession to serve.

Professional Tip

Treat scholarships like opportunities, not predictions.

Do not decide for the scholarship committee that you will not qualify.

Create a recurring routine:

Search → Review → Apply → Update → Search Again

Keep a basic scholarship file with information you may reuse appropriately: your résumé, accomplishments, professional goals, service experiences, and a strong general statement about why you are becoming an educator.

Make applying easier the next time.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Look ahead through the remainder of your program.

Where are the financial pressure points likely to occur?

Certification testing?

Transportation to clinical experiences?

Reduced work availability during final internship?

Books, technology, or other program expenses?

Now ask:

What could I begin doing before those expenses arrive?

Identify one action:

Complete or review the FAFSA. Apply for an SCF Foundation scholarship. Search community opportunities. Meet with Financial Aid. Begin planning financially for final internship.

Financial planning is not separate from degree planning.

Both help protect your pathway toward becoming an educator.

38. Career Services

"You have done the work to become an educator. You do not have to step into the profession alone."

Purpose

Moving from educator candidate to employed professional is exciting and it brings an entirely new set of questions.

How do I translate my experiences into a résumé?

What should I highlight from clinical practice?

How do I prepare for an interview?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

What does professional networking look like?

How do I communicate what I bring to a school?

How do I put my best “face forward” when I am ready to enter the profession?

SCF Career Services exists to support students as they prepare for that transition.

Throughout your educator preparation program, you have developed knowledge, practiced skills, accumulated clinical experience, received feedback, created a Professional Growth Portfolio, and developed an increasingly clear professional identity.

Career preparation helps you learn to communicate that story to others.

Why step into the job search on your own when you have professionals available to help you prepare?

Why This Matters

Being prepared for a position and being able to communicate your readiness for that position are two different skills.

You may know that you:

- Build meaningful relationships with learners.
- Design standards-aligned instruction.
- Differentiate for learner variability.
- Use assessment to inform instruction.
- Collaborate effectively.
- Apply feedback.
- Understand the FEAPs.
- Have meaningful clinical experience.

But an employer cannot automatically see those things.

Your résumé, application materials, interview responses, professional presence, and portfolio help make your preparation visible.

Career Services can provide another perspective as you learn to translate:

What I have done → What I have learned → What I can contribute

That translation is an important final stage of professional preparation.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 5.7

Career Preparation and Professional Transition

The SCF Education Department encourages educator candidates to begin preparing for professional employment before program completion and to use available College and department resources throughout that process.

Professional career preparation may include:

- Developing and refining a professional résumé.
- Preparing application materials.
- Practicing interview skills.
- Identifying and articulating professional strengths.
- Using the Professional Growth Portfolio to communicate professional development.
- Developing an appropriate professional presence.
- Learning job-search strategies.
- Participating in career fairs and networking opportunities.
- Researching potential employers.
- Seeking feedback before submitting professional materials.
- Preparing for the transition from educator candidate to employed educator.

Career preparation is not separate from professional readiness.

It is how you begin communicating that readiness beyond the program.

From Educator Candidate to Professional Candidate

Throughout this handbook, we have asked:

Who are you becoming as an educator?

Career preparation introduces another question:

How will you help someone else understand who you have become?

That does not mean creating an exaggerated version of yourself.

It means learning to articulate your authentic preparation clearly and professionally.

Consider the difference:

I completed a final internship.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

versus

During final internship, I assumed increasing responsibility for planning, instruction, assessment, differentiation, and analysis of student learning within an authentic classroom environment.

Both statements describe the same experience.

Only one begins communicating your professional capacity.

Career Services can help you learn how to recognize and articulate the value of experiences you may otherwise underestimate.

Put Your Best “Face Forward”

Professional presentation is not about pretending to be someone you are not.

It is about ensuring that the materials and presence representing you accurately reflect the professional you have worked to become.

Your Résumé

Your résumé should communicate more than employment history.

For an emerging educator, relevant experiences may include:

- Final internship.
- Clinical experiences.
- Education-related employment.
- Leadership.
- Service.
- Relevant technology and instructional skills.
- Certifications and credentials.
- Professional organizations.
- Specialized preparation.
- Other experiences that demonstrate readiness to serve learners.

Your Professional Portfolio

Your Professional Growth Portfolio provides evidence behind the résumé.

The résumé says: Here is what I can do.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The portfolio helps you say: Here is evidence of how I developed that capacity.

Your Interview

An interview is not simply an examination in which you try to produce the “correct” response.

It is a professional conversation.

You should be prepared to discuss:

- Your instructional philosophy.
- How you build relationships with learners.
- How you respond to learner variability.
- How you use assessment.
- How you collaborate.
- How you approach classroom environment and behavior.
- How you respond to feedback.
- How you have grown through clinical experiences.
- What you are still learning.

The strongest examples will usually come from *authentic experiences*, not memorized interview answers.

Your Digital Professional Presence

Putting your best “face forward” also includes considering what an employer may encounter online.

Before entering the job market, review your public-facing digital presence.

Ask:

Does what is publicly associated with me align with the professional identity I want to communicate?

Consider:

- Public social media.
- Profile photographs.
- Usernames.
- Public posts and comments.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Professional networking profiles.
- Digital portfolio materials.
- Publicly accessible content associated with your name.

Professional identity does not require eliminating your personality.

It does require understanding that digital communication can contribute to how others perceive your professional judgment.

Career Preparation Begins Before Graduation

Do not wait until your final week of internship to begin thinking about employment.

Career preparation can develop gradually.

Earlier in the Program

Begin collecting evidence of experiences, accomplishments, leadership, service, certifications, and professional learning.

As Clinical Experiences Grow

Identify examples that demonstrate professional competencies.

Before Final Internship

Develop or update your résumé and begin considering how your Professional Growth Portfolio may support future employment.

During Final Internship

Continue collecting meaningful evidence, request feedback, strengthen professional relationships, and learn about employment opportunities.

As Graduation Approaches

Refine your materials, practice interviewing, research employers, participate in career opportunities, and seek feedback before submitting applications.

The job search becomes much more manageable when you have been preparing for it all along.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are encouraged to:

- Begin career preparation before graduation.
- Develop and regularly update a professional résumé.
- Maintain appropriate professional contact information.
- Review your digital professional presence.
- Use Career Services resources.
- Practice interviewing before an actual interview.
- Research schools, districts, and organizations before applying.
- Tailor application materials appropriately.
- Use your Professional Growth Portfolio to identify evidence of professional strengths.
- Seek feedback on application materials.
- Participate in relevant career fairs, networking, recruitment, and professional opportunities.
- Communicate professionally with prospective employers.
- Follow through promptly when an employer requests information.
- Represent your qualifications and experiences accurately.

You have invested significant time in becoming prepared.

Invest time in presenting that preparation well.

How We Support You

You have a team.

Career Services

Career professionals can provide expertise related to career exploration, employment preparation, professional materials, interviewing, job-search strategies, and other aspects of transitioning into employment.

Education Faculty

Your faculty know your preparation.

They can help you identify examples from coursework and clinical experiences that demonstrate your professional competencies.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Faculty Advisor or Program Manager

Your advisor or Program Manager can help you connect program completion, certification, and professional goals.

Mentor Teachers and Clinical Supervisors

These professionals have observed you in practice and can provide valuable feedback about strengths, professional growth, and readiness.

Your Cohort

The professional network you developed throughout the program remains valuable.

Share opportunities.

Practice interview questions.

Review materials.

Encourage one another.

Celebrate the first interview.

Celebrate the first offer.

And stay connected after the first day of school.

You do not need to navigate the transition alone.

If Challenges Occur

The job search can involve uncertainty.

You may submit an application and receive no response.

You may interview and not receive an offer.

You may discover that a position you thought you wanted does not feel like the right fit.

Do not interpret one outcome as a judgment of your entire professional readiness.

Instead, use the same learning cycle you have practiced throughout the program:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflect → Seek Feedback → Adjust → Try Again

Ask:

Are my materials communicating my strengths clearly?

Am I using specific examples during interviews?

Am I researching positions before applying?

Do I need more interview practice?

Am I applying to opportunities that align with my preparation and goals?

Career Services, faculty, mentors, and professional colleagues can help you examine those questions.

Your first professional opportunity matters. It does not need to be pursued alone.

Related Resources

- SCF Career Services
- Chapter 8: Building Your Professional Identity
- Chapter 16: Professional Growth Portfolio
- Chapter 21: Mentor Teachers
- Chapter 30: Final Internship
- Chapter 31: Professional Readiness
- Chapter 32: Advising
- Chapter 36: Wellness
- Chapter 39: Student Organizations
- Faculty Advisor
- Program Manager
- Mentor Teacher
- Clinical Supervisor

Portfolio Connection

This is one of the places where your Professional Growth Portfolio begins doing work beyond program completion.

Look across your portfolio for evidence that helps you tell your professional story.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

An employer may ask:

Tell me about a time you differentiated instruction.

You have evidence.

How do you use assessment to guide instruction?

You have evidence.

How have you grown from feedback?

You have evidence.

How do you collaborate with others?

You have evidence.

What does inclusive teaching look like in your practice?

You have evidence.

The portfolio helps move your interview responses from:

“I believe...”

to:

“I believe and here is an example from my practice that demonstrates it.”

That is a powerful transition. Your portfolio began as a place to document growth. Now it can help you communicate professional readiness.

The SCF Education Way

You have a story worth learning how to tell.

You have spent semesters learning.

Practicing.

Reflecting.

Receiving feedback.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Working with students.

Learning from mentor teachers.

Passing certification examinations.

Building your portfolio.

Developing your professional identity.

And completing increasingly complex professional experiences.

When it is time to step into the profession, you do not need to stand alone in front of a blank résumé, an unfamiliar application, or your first interview and wonder:

Now what?

Use your resources.

Ask Career Services.

Talk with faculty.

Practice with your cohort.

Seek feedback from your mentors.

Let the people who have supported your preparation help you prepare for the transition.

Then step forward.

Not as someone trying to convince an employer that you might someday become an educator.

But as an emerging professional prepared to say:

Here is who I am.

Here is how I have grown.

Here is what I can contribute.

And here is the educator I am continuing to become.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Professional Tip

Do not make your first interview your first practice interview.

Practice saying your professional story aloud.

Not just what you did, but:

What happened? → What did you do? → Why did you do it? → What was the impact? → What did you learn?

You already have the experiences.

Practice communicating them.

Reflection

Imagine that tomorrow you meet the principal of a school where you would love to teach.

You have two minutes.

They ask:

“Tell me about yourself as an educator.”

What would you want them to know?

Not your course list.

Not your GPA.

Not every assignment you completed.

What distinguishes the educator you are becoming?

What evidence supports that?

Who could help you communicate it more clearly?

You have an entire professional preparation journey behind you and an entire support network around you.

You do not have to put your best foot forward alone. Let your SCF community help you put your best face forward, too.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

39. Student Organizations and Professional Community

"Your education prepares you for a profession. Your professional community helps you grow within it."

Purpose

Some of the most meaningful learning in college happens beyond a course assignment.

Student organizations provide opportunities to connect with others, develop leadership, serve the community, explore professional interests, and begin building networks that can continue long after graduation.

For educator candidates, involvement can take on additional significance.

You are entering a profession built around relationships, collaboration, service, advocacy, and continuous learning. Participating in student and professional organizations gives you another environment in which to begin practicing those commitments.

Within the SCF Education Department, we want you to see involvement not simply as something to add to a résumé.

We want you to see it as another opportunity to ask:

How can I contribute to the professional community I am becoming part of?

Why This Matters

Throughout this handbook, we have emphasized that becoming an educator is relational.

You learn with faculty.

You learn with mentor teachers.

You learn with students.

You learn with school partners.

And perhaps most consistently, you learn alongside your cohort.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Student organizations can expand that circle.

They may connect you with educator candidates outside your immediate cohort, students in other Education programs, practicing educators, community partners, professional organizations, and future colleagues.

They also provide something coursework cannot always provide: The opportunity to lead because you choose to contribute.

Department Standard 5.8

Professional Engagement and Student Leadership

The SCF Education Department encourages educator candidates to participate in student organizations, professional associations, service opportunities, leadership experiences, and other activities that extend professional learning beyond required coursework.

Professional engagement may provide opportunities to:

- Build relationships across Education programs and cohorts.
- Develop leadership capacity.
- Participate in service.
- Strengthen communication and collaboration.
- Engage with practicing educators.
- Explore areas of professional interest.
- Attend professional learning opportunities.
- Contribute to the College and community.
- Develop professional networks.
- Celebrate academic and professional achievement.
- Build connections that continue beyond graduation.

Participation in student organizations is encouraged as an opportunity for connection, contribution, leadership, and professional growth.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Student Organizations



Your community. Your future.
The relationships you build today can open doors tomorrow. Get involved, make an impact, and help shape the professional community we **create together**. 



PRO TIP:
Start where you are. Use what you have.
Whether you lead, serve, plan, or participate—your contribution matters.
You don't have to do everything to make a difference. 

**Get involved. Grow together.
Make a difference.** 



Connect
Build friendships and a network that lasts beyond graduation.



Lead
Develop leadership skills and take initiative.



Serve
Give back to schools, children, communities, and each other.



Learn
Explore your interests and attend professional learning opportunities.



Celebrate
Recognize achievements and support one another's success.

*Be part of something bigger than you.
Help build the future of education.* 

Kappa Delta Pi: Building an Education Honor Society at SCF

The SCF Education Department is working toward developing an opportunity for eligible educator candidates to participate in **Kappa Delta Pi (KDP)**, the national professional association and honor society for educators.

KDP was founded in 1911 and today supports a community of educators through professional learning, networking, leadership, recognition, and opportunities for continued growth. Its stated mission is to inspire and equip teachers to thrive.

Kappa Delta Pi

For SCF, however, the opportunity should be about more than establishing another organization.

It is an opportunity to build professional community.

Imagine an organization in which educator candidates across Elementary Education, Exceptional Student Education, Early Childhood Education, and other educator preparation pathways come together around:

Scholarship • Leadership • Service • Community • Professional Learning

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

That community could become something students help shape.

More Than an Honor Cord

Recognition matters.

Academic achievement should be celebrated.

But membership in a professional or honor organization becomes most meaningful when the experience extends beyond the recognition itself.

We want professional involvement to invite you to ask:

How will I contribute?

Perhaps through:

Leadership

Serve in a student leadership role, help organize an initiative, facilitate a meeting, or develop an idea with others.

Service

Participate in projects that support schools, children, families, educators, or community partners.

Professional Learning

Attend or help create workshops, speaker events, panels, discussions, or other learning experiences.

Mentorship

Create relationships between students at different stages of the program.

Imagine candidates approaching final internship supporting candidates entering their first clinical experiences.

Community

Create spaces for Education students to know one another beyond their individual courses and cohorts.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Celebration

Recognize academic achievement, professional milestones, service, certification success, internship accomplishments, and entry into the profession.

That is how an organization becomes a professional learning community rather than simply a line on a résumé.

Your Professional Network Starts Here

In Chapter 36, we discussed the importance of your cohort.

Student organizations allow that network to grow.

Your future professional community may begin with the people sitting beside you today, but it can extend across:

Programs → Cohorts → Schools → Districts → Communities → Professional Organizations

Someone you meet through an SCF Education event may later become a colleague.

Someone you serve alongside may recommend a professional opportunity.

Someone several semesters ahead of you may become a source of advice as you prepare for internship.

And eventually, you may become that person for someone coming behind you.

Professional networks become powerful when relationships move in both directions.

From Member to Contributor

There is an important difference between *joining* an organization and *belonging to* one.

Membership asks:

What can I receive?

Professional community also asks:

What can I contribute?

You may contribute:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- An idea.
- Your time.
- Leadership.
- Encouragement.
- A resource.
- A connection.
- A service project.
- A professional interest.
- A different perspective.
- Support for another educator candidate.

You do not need to hold an officer title to demonstrate leadership.

Sometimes leadership is simply recognizing:

Something valuable could happen here and I am willing to help make it happen.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate participating in student or professional organizations, you are encouraged to:

- Explore opportunities that align with your interests and professional goals.
- Participate meaningfully rather than joining solely for recognition.
- Represent yourself, the Education Department, and SCF professionally.
- Follow organizational expectations.
- Communicate reliably.
- Contribute to collaborative work.
- Seek leadership opportunities when appropriate.
- Participate in service.
- Welcome students from different programs, cohorts, backgrounds, and experiences.
- Help create environments of belonging.
- Connect organizational experiences to your developing professional identity.
- Maintain professional relationships beyond individual events.

Your involvement becomes meaningful through what you do with the opportunity.

How We Support You

The Education Department wants student organizations to be genuinely student-centered.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Faculty may serve as advisors, provide mentorship, help students make professional connections, identify opportunities, and support organizational development.

But the strongest student organizations are not faculty organizations with students attending them.

They are communities in which **students have voice, ownership, and responsibility.**

As new opportunities develop, including Kappa Delta Pi, we want educator candidates to help answer:

- *What kind of professional community do we want to build?*
- *How can this organization serve our students?*
- *How can it serve our community?*
- *How can it connect cohorts?*
- *How can it strengthen the profession?*

Your ideas can help shape what comes next.

If Challenges Occur

Student involvement should enrich your educator preparation, not compete with it to the point that your academic, clinical, or personal responsibilities become unsustainable.

There may be semesters when you can lead.

There may be semesters when you can participate.

There may be semesters when your responsibilities require you to step back.

That is okay.

Professional involvement also requires learning to make thoughtful decisions about capacity.

If you accept a leadership responsibility, communicate when circumstances change rather than simply disappearing from the commitment.

That is part of professional reliability.

Engagement should support your growth, not require you to sacrifice your well-being to demonstrate commitment.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Related Resources

- Kappa Delta Pi
- SCF Student Organizations
- Chapter 4: Professional Dispositions
- Chapter 5: Communication Expectations
- Chapter 8: Building Your Professional Identity
- Chapter 16: Professional Growth Portfolio
- Chapter 31: Professional Readiness
- Chapter 36: Wellness
- Chapter 38: Career Services
- Education Faculty
- Program Manager
- Student organization advisors

Portfolio Connection

Student organization involvement can provide meaningful evidence of professional growth when the experience demonstrates something about your development.

That might include:

- Leadership.
- Service.
- Collaboration.
- Professional learning.
- Community engagement.
- Advocacy.
- Event development.
- Mentoring.
- Professional communication.

But remember:

Membership alone is not evidence of professional growth.

The stronger question is:

What did I contribute, what did I learn, and how did the experience influence the educator I am becoming?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

A leadership experience may demonstrate communication.

A service project may deepen your understanding of community partnership.

Mentoring another educator candidate may reveal how your own confidence has grown.

Professional involvement becomes portfolio-worthy when you can explain its meaning and impact.

The SCF Education Way

Do more than join. Belong. Contribute. Lead.

Your Education program gives you a cohort.

Professional involvement can give you a community.

That community can stretch across programs, semesters, schools, districts, and eventually careers.

We hope you will take advantage of opportunities to connect with other educators.

But we hope you will do something more.

Help create the opportunities you wish existed.

Help welcome the student who enters the program after you.

Share what you learned before internship.

Celebrate someone else's certification success.

Organize the service project.

Invite the speaker.

Ask the question.

Run for the leadership position.

Build the tradition.

If you become one of the founding students who helps establish a Kappa Delta Pi community at SCF, someday another educator candidate may participate in something you helped begin.

That is a different kind of legacy.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You are not only preparing to enter the profession.

You can begin contributing to it now.

Professional Tip

Choose involvement for impact, not accumulation.

You do not need a résumé filled with organization names.

One meaningful experience in which you ***contributed, led, served,*** or ***grew*** can tell a much stronger professional story than five memberships in which you rarely participated.

Ask:

Where can I make a meaningful contribution?

Then show up.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Imagine the SCF Education professional community several years from now.

New cohorts have entered.

You are working in the field.

Some of your classmates are teaching nearby.

Others have moved into different roles.

And new educator candidates are participating in traditions that your cohort helped establish.

- *What would you want to have contributed to that community?*
- *What could you help build?*
- *Who could you encourage?*
- *What might you begin that continues after you graduate?*

Professional community is not something we simply enter.

It is something we create together.

Section V Conclusion

Supported to Succeed

Section V began with a question: *Who supports my journey?*

By now, the answer should be clear.

Many people do.

Your faculty advisor helps you understand your pathway.

Accessibility resources help ensure meaningful access to learning.

The Tutoring and Academic Success Center helps strengthen learning and preparation.

The CARE Team helps connect students with support when challenges extend beyond the classroom.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Wellness reminds us that sustainable success grows through healthy practices, relationships, boundaries, and belonging.

Financial Aid, the SCF Foundation, and community scholarship opportunities can help make continuing the journey financially possible.

Career Services helps you translate years of preparation into a professional story you are ready to share.

Student organizations and professional communities give you opportunities to connect, contribute, serve, and lead.

Together, these resources create something larger:

Your SCF Support Network

But there is one important piece at the center of that network.

You.

Support + Agency

The philosophy of this section is not that the College will remove every obstacle from your path.

Nor is it that successful students should be able to manage everything independently.

Neither reflects how learning, or professional life, actually works.

Instead:

SCF provides a network of support. You develop the agency to use it.

That means learning to notice what you need.

Ask questions.

Seek expertise.

Build relationships.

Use resources.

Respond to feedback.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Advocate for access.

Plan ahead.

Help someone else make a connection.

And recognize when a situation requires support beyond what you can provide yourself.

Those are not simply college-success strategies.

They are professional skills.

From Supported Learner to Supportive Educator

There is another reason this section matters in an Education handbook.

Someday, you will be part of someone else's support network.

A student will need access.

A learner will need additional academic support.

A family may need a connection to resources.

A colleague may need encouragement.

Someone may need you to notice.

Someone may need you to know that you are **not** the person who should solve the problem—but that you know who can help.

Your experience learning within a network of support can influence the kind of learning community you eventually create for others.

That is the larger lesson of Section V.

The SCF Education Way

You are responsible for your journey.

You are not expected to travel it alone.

Know your people.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Know your resources.

Build your cohort.

Ask for help.

Offer help appropriately.

Use the expertise around you.

Develop relationships that last beyond graduation.

And as you grow more capable, look around for opportunities to become part of the support network for someone else.

Because ultimately, education has never been solitary work.

We learn in community.

We grow through relationships.

And we are stronger when we know how to support and be supported by one another.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

That is the SCF Education Way.



Section VI

Policy, Safety, and Accountability

How do we honor the trust placed in educators?

Education is a profession built on trust.

Students trust educators with their learning.

Families trust educators with their children.

Schools trust educators to exercise sound professional judgment.

Colleagues trust one another to communicate responsibly.

Communities trust educators to uphold ethical and professional standards.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

And throughout your educator preparation program, SCF and our school partners increasingly trust you with access to authentic classrooms, learners, information, technology, and professional responsibilities.

That trust matters.

This section addresses policies, safeguards, and accountability expectations that help protect the people and communities educators serve.

But these expectations are not simply a collection of rules.

They represent something larger:

Professional responsibility means understanding that your decisions can affect the safety, privacy, dignity, rights, learning, and trust of others.

From Compliance to Professional Judgment

Some expectations in education are non-negotiable.

Laws must be followed.

Confidential information must be protected.

Safety procedures matter.

Professional boundaries matter.

Ethical standards matter.

College, district, school, and program requirements matter.

But becoming a professional requires more than memorizing what you are or are not allowed to do.

It requires developing the judgment to recognize why those expectations exist and how they guide your decisions when circumstances are not perfectly clear.

Throughout this section, we will therefore return to several questions:

- *Who could be affected by this decision?*
- *What information or responsibility has been entrusted to me?*
- *What policy, law, or professional expectation applies?*

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- *Is this mine to share, decide, document, or act upon?*
- *When should I stop and ask before proceeding?*

That last question is especially important.

Professional judgment does not mean always knowing the answer.

Sometimes excellent professional judgment sounds like:

“I need to check before I do this.”

Trust Is Built Through Everyday Decisions

Professional trust is rarely established through one extraordinary action.

It develops through repeated choices.

How you speak about a student.

Where you leave a document.

What you photograph.

What you post.

Who you include in an email.

How you respond to information shared with you.

Whether you follow a safety procedure when no one appears to be watching.

Whether you ask before making an assumption.

Whether you acknowledge a mistake and take responsibility for correcting it.

These moments may seem small.

Together, they communicate something significant:

Can others trust me with the responsibilities of this profession?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Accountability and Support Belong Together

Earlier sections introduced the SCF Education Department's approach to support and accountability.

That philosophy continues here.

Accountability is not the opposite of support.

Clear expectations are part of support.

Early communication is part of support.

Coaching is part of support.

Feedback is part of support.

And when a concern is serious or persistent, documentation and formal processes may also be necessary.

Our goal is to help educator candidates understand expectations before problems occur, recognize concerns early, learn from feedback, and develop the professional judgment required for increasingly independent practice.

At the same time, some responsibilities involving safety, privacy, ethics, professional conduct, or legal requirements carry serious implications.

Supporting your growth does not mean minimizing those responsibilities.

It means preparing you to meet them.

The Professional Trust Lens

I think this could become the organizing framework for Section VI and eventually a strong visual.

Before acting, communicating, sharing, documenting, or making a professional decision, consider:

Protect

Does my action protect the learner's safety, privacy, dignity, and rights?

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Pause

Is there anything about this situation that makes me uncertain about what I should do?

Check

What law, policy, procedure, or professional expectation applies?

Ask

Who has the appropriate authority or expertise if I am unsure?

Act

What is the most responsible professional action?

Reflect

What can I learn from this experience for future professional practice?

The goal is not fear of making decisions.

It is learning to make them *thoughtfully, ethically, and responsibly*.

The SCF Education Way

Trust is something educators are given and something we continually earn.

We honor that trust through the decisions we make when people are watching and when they are not. We protect learners. We respect privacy. We follow safety expectations. We maintain professional boundaries. We ask when we are uncertain. We take responsibility when something goes wrong.

Professional accountability is not simply about avoiding consequences. It is about becoming someone others can confidently trust with the responsibility of educating learners.

40. FERPA and Student Privacy

"Access to information is not permission to share it."

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Purpose

As an educator candidate, you may encounter information about students that you would not ordinarily have access to outside a professional educational setting.

You may see student work.

Assessment results.

Grades.

Educational records.

Individualized plans.

Classroom information.

Contact information.

Digital records.

Information discussed during professional meetings.

And other information connected to individual learners.

Access to that information comes with responsibility.

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** is a federal law protecting the privacy of student education records. In your role as an educator candidate, however, the larger professional principle is straightforward:

Information entrusted to you because of your educational role must be treated with care, confidentiality, and professional judgment.

FERPA is not simply something to remember for an examination.

It is part of learning how educators protect the people they serve.

Why This Matters

Imagine a family allowing you into a classroom where you are learning to become an educator.

During that experience, you learn something about their child.

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Perhaps you see an assessment result.

You observe a behavioral challenge.

You participate in a conversation about instructional support.

You review student work.

You learn something about an educational need.

The family did not give you access to that information because it was interesting.

You received access because your professional role required it.

That distinction matters.

Information can be accurate and still be inappropriate to share.

A story can be positive and still violate privacy.

A photograph can be well-intentioned and still be inappropriate to take or post.

A conversation can occur between friends and still contain information that should have remained within a professional setting.

Professional confidentiality asks you to consider not simply:

“Is what I’m saying true?”

but:

“Do I have a professional reason and appropriate authority to share it?”

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Department Standard 6.1

Student Privacy, Confidentiality, and FERPA

Educator candidates are expected to protect student information and comply with applicable federal and state law, College requirements, school and district policies, and professional expectations regarding student privacy and confidentiality.

Educator candidates must:

- Protect personally identifiable student information.
- Access student information only when appropriate to their authorized educational role.
- Discuss student information only with appropriate individuals for legitimate educational purposes.
- Follow school, district, College, and clinical placement requirements regarding educational records.
- Protect physical and digital student information from unauthorized access.
- Use approved systems and processes for accessing, storing, transmitting, or documenting student information.
- Avoid discussing identifiable student information in public or inappropriate settings.
- Follow applicable requirements regarding photography, video, audio recording, and student work.
- Remove or appropriately de-identify student information when using permitted evidence for coursework or the Professional Growth Portfolio.
- Ask the mentor teacher, clinical supervisor, faculty member, or other appropriate professional when uncertain about whether information may be accessed, used, or shared.

Student information encountered through coursework or clinical practice must never be used for personal interest, entertainment, social media content, or other purposes unrelated to the authorized educational experience.

When in doubt, protect the information and ask before sharing.

What Counts as an Education Record?

FERPA applies to education records maintained by an educational institution or a party acting on its behalf.

For educator candidates, however, the safest professional habit is not trying to make an independent legal determination every time you encounter information.

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Instead, begin with a broader question:

Could this information identify a student or reveal something about their educational experience that I learned because of my professional role?

If so, treat it carefully.

Depending upon your role and setting, protected or sensitive information might include:

- Grades and assessment results.
- Student identification information.
- Attendance information.
- Academic performance.
- Educational services or supports.
- Student work.
- Behavior or disciplinary information.
- Disability-related educational information.
- Individualized education information.
- Communications involving a student's educational experience.
- Information stored within school information systems.
- Other personally identifiable educational information.

You do not need to become the school's FERPA expert.

You do need to develop the habit of recognizing when privacy matters.

The “Need to Know” Principle

One of the most useful habits you can develop is asking:

Do I need this information to fulfill my professional responsibility?

Being curious is not the same as having a legitimate educational reason to access information.

Likewise, having access to information does not mean you should discuss it with everyone else who works in the building.

Professional conversations about learners should occur with the appropriate people, in the appropriate setting, for an appropriate educational purpose.

This principle will serve you throughout your career:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Access only what you need.

Share only with those who appropriately need it.

Use it only for the professional purpose for which access was provided.

Conversations Matter Too

Privacy is not only about files and computer systems.

Some of the most common confidentiality concerns begin with conversation.

Consider where you are before discussing a learner.

A faculty lounge.

Hallway.

Elevator.

Parking lot.

Restaurant.

Social gathering.

Group text.

Personal messaging application.

Social media platform.

Even when names are not used, details may make a student identifiable.

Instead of asking:

“Did I say the student's name?”

ask:

“Could someone reasonably identify the student from what I am sharing?”

Professional confidentiality travels with you beyond the classroom door.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Digital Privacy

Technology makes information easier to access and easier to share unintentionally.

Protect student information when using:

- Email.
- Learning management systems.
- Student information systems.
- Shared documents.
- Cloud storage.
- Mobile devices.
- Photographs.
- Video.
- Messaging platforms.
- AI tools.
- Other digital applications.

Do not upload identifiable student information into personal applications, AI systems, social media platforms, or other tools unless their use has been specifically authorized within the educational setting and complies with applicable requirements.

Convenience does not override confidentiality.

When technology makes sharing effortless, professional judgment becomes even more important.

FERPA and Your Coursework

Your Education courses may ask you to analyze teaching, reflect on clinical experiences, examine student work, or demonstrate evidence of your professional growth.

That does not mean identifiable student information belongs in your assignments.

When discussing clinical experiences:

- Follow faculty directions for protecting student identity.
- Use pseudonyms or other approved de-identification practices when appropriate.
- Remove identifying information from permitted student work.

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- Do not include unnecessary personal details.
- Follow school or district requirements regarding student artifacts.
- Ask before using photographs, recordings, or other identifiable materials.

The learning objective is usually to examine your professional practice, not to document the identity of the learner.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Treat student information as professionally entrusted information.
- Learn and follow the privacy expectations of your clinical setting.
- Protect documents and devices containing student information.
- Log out of systems when you are finished using them.
- Avoid leaving student information visible or unattended.
- Communicate about students only in appropriate professional settings.
- Avoid discussing students casually with friends, family members, or classmates.
- Protect confidentiality when completing coursework.
- Use only authorized technologies and systems with student information.
- Never post identifiable student information or clinical stories on social media.
- Ask before photographing, recording, copying, downloading, or retaining student information.
- Immediately seek guidance if information is accidentally disclosed, lost, sent to the wrong person, or otherwise compromised.

If a mistake occurs, do not attempt to hide it.

Prompt reporting gives appropriate professionals the opportunity to respond.

That is part of accountability.

How We Support You

You are learning these responsibilities.

Faculty, mentor teachers, clinical supervisors, Program Managers, and school partners can help you understand how privacy expectations apply within authentic educational settings.

Before using student information in an unfamiliar way, ask.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Before taking the photograph, ask.

Before saving the artifact, ask.

Before including something in your portfolio, ask.

Before sharing information electronically, ask.

Questions asked **before** an action are usually easier to address than concerns discovered afterward.

Our goal is to help you develop the professional instincts that eventually make these questions increasingly automatic.

If Challenges Occur

If you believe student information has been accessed, shared, stored, transmitted, or disclosed inappropriately, communicate immediately with the appropriate professional.

Depending upon the context, that may include your:

- Mentor teacher.
- Clinical supervisor.
- Course faculty member.
- Program Manager.
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- Appropriate school or district personnel.

Do not delete evidence, attempt to independently correct a disclosure without guidance, or avoid reporting the concern because you are embarrassed.

Professional accountability includes being able to say:

“I think I made a mistake, and I need help addressing it appropriately.”

Depending upon the nature and severity of a concern, additional College, school, district, program, or legal processes may apply.

The department's Support and Accountability Process may also be used when appropriate.

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Related Resources

- FERPA
- SCF student privacy policies
- School and district confidentiality requirements
- Clinical placement policies
- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 14: Artificial Intelligence
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 23: Confidentiality
- Chapter 31: Professional Readiness
- Professional Growth Portfolio requirements
- Mentor Teacher
- Clinical Supervisor
- Program Manager
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator

Portfolio Connection

Your Professional Growth Portfolio should demonstrate your growth, not expose a student's private information.

Before including any clinical artifact, ask:

- *Does this contain a student's name?*
- *Could a student be identified from the information shown?*
- *Does it include a photograph or image of a student?*
- *Does it contain assessment, disability, behavioral, family, or other protected information?*
- *Do I have permission and authorization to use this artifact in this way?*
- *Can I demonstrate the same professional competency without including identifiable information?*

When possible, preserve the evidence of your professional practice while removing information that identifies the learner.

Protecting privacy is in itself evidence of professional judgment.

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The SCF Education Way

What you learn about students because you are an educator belongs to the responsibility of your role, not to you personally.

That distinction is foundational.

Students and families allow educators access to parts of their lives because that information may be necessary to support learning.

We honor that trust by treating information carefully.

We do not share because the story is interesting.

We do not post because the moment was adorable.

We do not access because we are curious.

We do not keep an artifact simply because we are proud of the lesson.

We stop.

We consider the learner.

We check the expectation.

We ask when we are uncertain.

And we protect what has been entrusted to us.

That is more than FERPA compliance.

That is professional integrity.

Professional Tip

If you're wondering whether you should share it, pause before you do.

Use four questions:

- *Do I need to share this?*
- *Does this person need to know it?*
- *Am I using an appropriate method to share it?*
- *Could the learner be identified unnecessarily?*

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Once private information has been shared, you may not be able to take it back.

A thoughtful pause is professional practice.

Reflection

Imagine that a student or family could see every way you handled information about them during a clinical experience.

Every conversation.

Every document.

Every email.

Every photograph.

Every assignment.

Every digital tool.

Would your choices communicate respect for the trust they placed in you?

Now consider the educator you are becoming:

What habits can you establish now so that protecting student privacy becomes an automatic part of your professional practice?

FERPA establishes an important legal responsibility.

The deeper professional responsibility is earning the trust that makes educational relationships possible.

41. Ethics and Professional Judgment

"The question is not only, 'Am I allowed to do this?' It is also, 'Is this the right thing to do as an educator?'"

Purpose

Educators make decisions every day that affect learners.

Some decisions are clearly governed by laws, policies, procedures, or professional standards.

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Others require judgment.

A student shares something unexpected.

A family asks a difficult question.

A colleague makes a comment that concerns you.

You notice a learner being treated differently.

You encounter information you were not expecting to receive.

Technology creates an option that policy has not yet fully anticipated.

You recognize that something may be wrong, but you are uncertain about your role.

In moments like these, professional ethics helps guide what happens next.

Ethics is not simply knowing a professional code.

It is developing the capacity to recognize when a decision carries professional implications and to respond in ways that protect learners, preserve trust, and honor the responsibilities of the profession.

Why This Matters

Teaching involves relationships, authority, information, influence, and responsibility.

That creates an important imbalance.

Educators often know more about students than students know about them.

They evaluate student performance.

They make instructional decisions.

They communicate with families.

They have access to information.

They establish expectations.

They influence opportunities.

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They interact with children and young people who depend upon adults to exercise sound judgment.

That professional position requires care.

Ethical educators continually recognize that: Professional authority exists to serve learners, not the person who holds it.

The decisions you make should therefore be guided not simply by convenience, preference, or intention, but by consideration of the people affected by those decisions.

Department Standard 6.2

Ethical Practice and Professional Judgment

Educator candidates are expected to demonstrate ethical conduct and professional judgment consistent with the expectations of the SCF Education Department, applicable College and clinical partner requirements, and the ethical standards governing the education profession.

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Place the safety, dignity, rights, learning, and well-being of students at the center of professional decision-making.
- Act honestly and with integrity.
- Maintain appropriate professional relationships and boundaries.
- Protect confidential and private information.
- Communicate respectfully and professionally.
- Treat learners equitably and without discrimination.
- Represent qualifications, experiences, documentation, and professional work accurately.
- Use educational resources, technology, and information responsibly.
- Follow applicable laws, policies, procedures, and professional standards.
- Avoid using professional authority for personal advantage.
- Recognize and appropriately address conflicts of interest.
- Seek guidance when ethical expectations are unclear.
- Report concerns when professional, legal, or institutional responsibilities require action.
- Accept responsibility for professional decisions and actions.

Ethical practice requires both knowledge of expectations and judgment in applying them.

Ethics Begins Before Something Goes Wrong

Ethics is sometimes discussed only when misconduct occurs.

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That is too narrow.

Most ethical practice happens quietly.

It happens when you:

Protect information even though sharing it would be easier.

Give credit for someone else's work.

Treat two students equitably even when you connect more naturally with one.

Admit that you made an error.

Ask permission.

Maintain a boundary.

Speak respectfully about a student who is challenging you.

Represent your experience accurately on a résumé.

Avoid participating in inappropriate workplace conversation.

Question whether a technology is appropriate before using it.

Ask for guidance instead of pretending you know.

Ethical practice is built through ordinary professional choices repeated consistently over time.

From Rules to Reasoning

Rules matter.

But rules cannot anticipate every situation you will encounter as an educator.

Professional judgment helps you navigate the space between clearly stated expectations and complex human situations.

When you encounter uncertainty, consider the *Professional Trust Lens* introduced in this section:

Protect

Who needs protection in this situation?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Consider safety, privacy, dignity, rights, learning, and well-being.

Pause

What is making me uncertain?

Do not let urgency, convenience, embarrassment, or pressure push you toward a decision before you have considered its implications.

Check

What law, policy, professional standard, procedure, or established expectation applies?

Ask

Who has the appropriate expertise or authority to help?

Your mentor teacher? Clinical supervisor? Faculty member? Program Manager? School administrator? Another designated professional?

Act

Take the most responsible action available within your professional role.

Reflect

What did this situation teach you?

What would you recognize sooner next time?

Ethical judgment becomes stronger through thoughtful practice.

Legal Does Not Always Mean Ethical

An important distinction in professional practice is that legal compliance establishes a minimum expectation, not necessarily the complete standard for professional judgment.

Something may not explicitly violate a law and still be:

- Unprofessional.
- Harmful.
- Disrespectful.

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- Inconsistent with school expectations.
- A violation of professional boundaries.
- Inappropriate for an educator candidate.
- Damaging to trust.

Similarly, your intention does not determine the full impact of your action.

You may have intended to help.

You may have meant something as a joke.

You may not have realized information was private.

You may have thought everyone understood.

Ethical reflection requires being able to consider both:

What did I intend?

and

What was the impact?

Professional growth sometimes begins in the space between those answers.

Ethics and Equity

Ethical practice also requires examining whether our decisions affect learners equitably.

Educators bring experiences, assumptions, preferences, expectations, and biases into their work.

Professional responsibility requires us to examine them.

Ask:

- *Whose perspective am I considering?*
- *Am I making an assumption about this learner?*
- *Would I respond the same way if another student did this?*
- *Is this expectation creating an unnecessary barrier?*
- *Who benefits from this decision?*
- *Who may be disadvantaged by it?*
- *Have I listened before deciding?*

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Ethical practice does not require pretending that bias does not exist.

It requires developing the reflective capacity to notice when assumptions may be influencing professional judgment.

Professional Boundaries

Caring relationships are essential to education.

Boundaries help protect those relationships.

As an educator candidate, you are learning to distinguish between being:

- Friendly and becoming a friend.
- Supportive and becoming personally responsible for solving a student's problems.
- Accessible and available without boundaries.
- Interested in learners and seeking information you do not professionally need.
- Connected through approved educational communication and connected through inappropriate personal channels.

Strong professional boundaries do not make educators less caring.

They help ensure that care remains appropriate, equitable, sustainable, and focused on the learner.

Ethics in Digital Spaces

Professional ethics travels with you into digital environments.

The fact that communication occurs through a screen does not reduce your professional responsibilities.

Consider your use of:

- Email.
- Text messaging.
- Social media.
- Learning platforms.
- Shared documents.
- Photography and video.
- Artificial intelligence.

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- Digital student information.
- Online professional communities.

Before posting, sending, uploading, or sharing, ask:

Would I make this same professional decision if the learner, family, mentor teacher, school administrator, and my faculty member were standing beside me?

If that question changes your decision, pause.

When Another Person's Conduct Concerns You

Ethical responsibility sometimes involves something you did not do.

You may observe or become aware of conduct that concerns you.

Do not assume that being an educator candidate means you should personally investigate or confront every situation.

Your responsibility is to recognize the concern and use the appropriate professional pathway.

Depending upon the situation, that may mean communicating with a:

- Mentor teacher.
- Clinical supervisor.
- Faculty member.
- Program Manager.
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- School administrator.
- Other designated professional.

Some situations may also carry specific reporting obligations.

When you are uncertain, seek guidance immediately rather than deciding independently that something is probably fine.

Knowing when to elevate a concern is part of professional judgment.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Learn the ethical expectations associated with the education profession.
- Follow applicable laws, policies, and professional standards.
- Protect student rights, privacy, dignity, and safety.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Communicate honestly.
- Represent your work and qualifications accurately.
- Examine the influence of assumptions and biases on professional decisions.
- Use technology and AI responsibly.
- Avoid conflicts between personal interests and professional responsibilities.
- Ask when an ethical expectation is unclear.
- Use appropriate reporting and communication pathways.
- Accept feedback about professional conduct.
- Take responsibility when your actions cause concern.
- Reflect on ethical decisions as part of professional growth.

Professional integrity is demonstrated most clearly when doing the responsible thing is less convenient than doing something else.

How We Support You

You are not expected to enter educator preparation already knowing how to navigate every ethical situation.

Ethical judgment develops through:

Coursework → Discussion → Modeling → Clinical Experience → Feedback → Reflection → Practice

Faculty may introduce ethical scenarios.

Mentor teachers may help you understand how professional expectations operate within schools.

Clinical supervisors may help you reflect on decisions you make during practice.

Program Managers and department leadership can help when concerns require additional guidance.

Ask questions.

Especially the uncomfortable ones.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

“Is this appropriate?”

“Should I have access to this?”

“Am I the right person to handle this?”

“Do I need to tell someone?”

“I already did this. What should I do now?”

Those questions are opportunities for professional learning.

If Challenges Occur

If you make an ethical mistake or realize that you may have exercised poor professional judgment, communicate promptly.

Do not:

Hide the concern.

Alter documentation.

Blame someone else.

Wait to see whether anyone notices.

Attempt to independently repair a situation that requires professional oversight.

Instead:

Stop → Communicate → Listen → Respond → Reflect

Depending upon the nature of the concern, support may begin with coaching.

More serious or repeated concerns may require formal documentation or review through the department's *Support and Accountability Process* and may also involve applicable College, school, district, or other processes.

Accountability is not eliminated because a mistake becomes a learning opportunity.

Both can be true: You can be supported in learning from a decision, and you can be responsible for the consequences of that decision.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

That is an important part of professional preparation.

Related Resources

- Applicable educator ethical standards
- SCF policies and procedures
- School and district professional expectations
- Chapter 4: Professional Dispositions
- Chapter 6: Professional Conduct
- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 14: Artificial Intelligence
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 23: Confidentiality
- Chapter 26: Support and Accountability
- Chapter 40: FERPA and Student Privacy
- Mentor Teacher
- Clinical Supervisor
- Program Manager
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator

Portfolio Connection

Ethical judgment may not always produce a tangible artifact.

But it should be visible throughout your Professional Growth Portfolio.

Look for evidence in:

- How you protect student information.
- How you discuss learners in reflections.
- How you credit sources.
- How you use technology.
- How you respond to feedback.
- How you describe collaboration.
- How you reflect on instructional decisions.
- How you demonstrate professional dispositions.
- How you examine the impact of your choices.

The portfolio should communicate not only:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

I can perform the work of teaching.

It should also communicate:

I understand the responsibility that comes with being trusted to do this work.

The SCF Education Way

Ethics becomes visible through choices.

It is easy to act professionally when the expectation is obvious and everyone is watching.

Professional character becomes more visible when:

No one would know.

The shortcut would be easier.

The conversation is uncomfortable.

The mistake is yours.

A friend wants information you should not share.

You disagree with someone.

You have the power to make a decision that affects another person.

Or you simply are not sure what to do.

Those are the moments when professional values move from words into practice.

Pause.

Protect the learner.

Check what applies.

Ask for guidance.

Act responsibly.

Own your decision.

Learn from it.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Because ultimately, ethical practice asks a question larger than:

“Can I do this?”

It asks:

“Is this consistent with the educator I am becoming?”

Professional Tip

When something feels professionally uncomfortable, don't explain the feeling away. Investigate it.

Pause and ask:

What is making me hesitate?

You may discover that you need more information, a clearer boundary, another perspective, or guidance from someone with greater authority.

Your discomfort does not always mean something is wrong.

But professionally, it can be a useful signal to slow down and think.

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Reflection

Imagine that no policy specifically tells you what to do.

No rubric.

No checklist.

No supervisor standing beside you.

Only you, the situation, and the professional judgment you have developed.

- *What principles would guide your decision?*
- *Who would be affected?*
- *Whose rights, dignity, safety, or learning need consideration?*
- *What would preserve trust?*
- *When would you seek another perspective?*
- *And when the decision was over, would you be able to explain not only what you chose, but why it was the responsible choice for an educator?*

That is the work of ethics.

The goal of educator preparation is not to give you a rule for every situation you will encounter. It is to help you become a professional capable of making responsible decisions when there isn't one.

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Figure 28 — The Anatomy of Professional Trust



42. Mandatory Reporting

"When the responsibility to report applies, caring means acting."

Purpose

Educators occupy a position of significant trust.

Because teachers spend substantial time with children and young people, they may notice changes, observe injuries or behaviors, hear statements, or receive information that raises concerns about a student's safety or well-being.

When concerns involve suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, educators have responsibilities that extend beyond ordinary classroom problem-solving.

Florida law establishes mandatory reporting requirements for suspected child abuse, abandonment, and neglect. As an educator candidate participating in clinical experiences, you must understand that protecting learners includes knowing when a concern must move beyond conversation and into an appropriate reporting process.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your role is not to determine whether abuse or neglect actually occurred.

Your role is not to investigate.

Your role is to recognize, respond appropriately, and follow required reporting procedures.

Why This Matters

Relationships are central to teaching.

Students may come to trust you.

Sometimes that trust means a learner shares something difficult.

At other times, no disclosure occurs at all. You may simply notice something that causes concern.

These moments can feel uncomfortable, particularly for an educator candidate who may wonder:

- *What if I misunderstood?*
- *What if the student asks me not to tell anyone?*
- *Should I ask more questions?*
- *Should I tell my mentor teacher?*
- *What if I'm wrong?*

Those are understandable questions.

But when reporting requirements apply, your responsibility is not to establish certainty before taking action.

That is why one of the most important professional distinctions in this chapter is:

Reasonable concern does not require you to conduct an investigation.

The professionals responsible for receiving and investigating reports have that role.

You do not.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 6.3

Mandatory Reporting and Protection of Learners

Educator candidates are expected to understand and comply with applicable mandatory reporting laws, College requirements, clinical partner procedures, and professional responsibilities related to suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

Educator candidates must:

- Take concerns involving student safety seriously.
- Become familiar with applicable reporting expectations before beginning clinical experiences.
- Recognize that reporting responsibilities may apply even when information is incomplete.
- Avoid independently investigating suspected abuse, abandonment, or neglect.
- Avoid making promises of secrecy or confidentiality that cannot appropriately be maintained.
- Follow applicable legal reporting requirements and established procedures.
- Seek immediate guidance when uncertain about the appropriate process without unnecessarily delaying a required report.
- Share information only with appropriate individuals and through appropriate reporting pathways.
- Protect student privacy beyond what must appropriately be communicated.
- Document information only as directed and through authorized processes.
- Cooperate appropriately with authorized professionals following a report.
- Maintain professional boundaries throughout the process.

Protecting the learner takes priority over avoiding an uncomfortable professional conversation.

Recognize Your Role

Mandatory reporting can feel especially complicated for educator candidates because you are simultaneously a college student and a participant within a professional school environment.

The safest professional mindset is:

Notice

Pay attention to what you directly observe, hear, or receive.

Protect

Consider the immediate safety and well-being of the learner.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Do Not Investigate

Do not attempt to prove or disprove what happened.

Follow the Required Reporting Process

Use the legally and professionally appropriate reporting pathway.

Seek Guidance

When you are uncertain about procedures, immediately involve the appropriate professional without allowing uncertainty to become inaction.

Maintain Confidentiality

After appropriate reporting, do not discuss the situation with classmates, friends, family members, or others who do not have a professional need to know.

This is professional responsibility in action.

When a Student Tells You Something

A student disclosure can be one of the most difficult situations an emerging educator encounters.

Your response matters.

Listen calmly.

Allow the learner to communicate without pressing for unnecessary details.

Avoid expressing disbelief, shock, blame, or judgment.

Do not promise:

“I won’t tell anyone.”

You may not be able to keep that promise.

Instead, your response should communicate care without making commitments beyond your role.

The student needs an adult who can listen appropriately and take responsible action—not someone who conducts an interview.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Listen Without Investigating

There is an important difference between **listening** and **investigating**.

If a student begins sharing information, you do not need to stop them from speaking.

But you should avoid:

- Interrogating the student.
- Asking leading questions.
- Repeatedly asking the student to tell the story.
- Attempting to identify who is responsible.
- Contacting the person you suspect.
- Asking classmates or other students what they know.
- Searching for additional evidence yourself.
- Trying to determine whether the student's account is credible.
- Conducting your own inquiry before deciding whether the concern is serious enough.

Why?

Because investigation belongs to appropriately authorized professionals.

Your responsibility is to communicate the concern through the required process.

You Do Not Need Proof

One of the most dangerous assumptions a professional can make is:

"I shouldn't say anything until I'm sure."

Mandatory reporting requirements are not built around educators independently proving that maltreatment occurred.

You may have only part of the story.

Something may not make sense.

You may worry that you have interpreted something incorrectly.

Those uncertainties do not give you permission to substitute your own investigation for the appropriate reporting process.

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Your task is to recognize when the information you have meets the applicable threshold for reporting and act accordingly.

When uncertain about procedure, seek immediate guidance.

Reporting Is Not the Same as Accusing

This distinction may help when reporting feels uncomfortable.

A report does not mean:

“I have determined that this person abused or neglected a child.”

It communicates:

“I have information or observations that raise a concern requiring the appropriate professionals to determine what happens next.”

You are not making a legal determination.

You are fulfilling your responsibility to place the concern into the hands of those authorized to respond.

What About My Mentor Teacher?

Your mentor teacher is an important professional support during clinical practice.

But educator candidates should not assume that simply telling another person automatically satisfies any individual legal reporting obligation that applies to them.

Similarly, you should not delay required action while waiting for someone else to decide whether your concern is serious enough.

Because reporting procedures and legal responsibilities are significant, candidates should become familiar with applicable requirements **before** entering clinical practice and immediately seek appropriate guidance when questions arise.

This is an area where:

“I thought someone else was handling it”

is not an adequate professional strategy.

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Confidentiality After Reporting

A serious concern can naturally leave you wanting to talk about what happened.

Be careful.

After following appropriate reporting procedures, the information does not become an appropriate topic for:

- Cohort conversation.
- Class discussion unless specifically structured and appropriately de-identified by faculty.
- Social media.
- Family conversation.
- Group messaging.
- Informal conversations with other teachers.
- Portfolio storytelling.
- Personal reflection shared publicly.

The learner's experience is not your story to tell.

Continue protecting the student's privacy.

If the experience affects you and you need support processing your professional response, seek guidance through appropriate confidential or professional resources without unnecessarily disclosing identifiable student information.

Digital Communication Does Not Change the Responsibility

Concerns may arise through more than face-to-face interactions.

You might encounter information through:

- Student writing.
- Digital assignments.
- School-approved communication platforms.
- Email.
- Classroom technology.
- Other authorized educational environments.

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The format in which you encounter a concern does not make it less important.

At the same time, do not copy, forward, screenshot, download, or independently preserve sensitive student information unless doing so is authorized and appropriate within the required process.

Report through the appropriate pathway rather than creating additional copies of sensitive information.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Understand that mandatory reporting is a serious legal and professional responsibility.
- Complete required training related to student safety and reporting.
- Know the reporting expectations applicable to your clinical setting.
- Take student disclosures and safety concerns seriously.
- Listen without conducting an investigation.
- Avoid promising secrecy.
- Follow applicable reporting requirements promptly.
- Seek immediate guidance when uncertain about procedure.
- Avoid assuming another person's knowledge automatically satisfies your own responsibility.
- Maintain confidentiality after reporting.
- Follow authorized documentation procedures.
- Cooperate appropriately with subsequent professional processes.
- Continue treating the learner with dignity and professionalism.

Your responsibility does not end with knowing the policy.

It requires acting when the policy applies.

How We Support You

You are not expected to navigate a difficult situation without professional guidance.

Your support network may include your:

- Mentor teacher.
- Clinical supervisor.

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- Course faculty member.
- Program Manager.
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- Appropriate school or district personnel.

These individuals can help you understand professional procedures and your role.

However, guidance should support, not replace or unnecessarily delay, any reporting responsibility that applies to you.

This is why learning the process *before* a concern occurs is so important.

In a difficult moment, you should not be encountering the concept of mandatory reporting for the first time.

If Challenges Occur

If you are unsure whether you responded appropriately to a disclosure or safety concern, communicate immediately with the appropriate professional.

If you realize that you delayed reporting, shared information inappropriately, asked questions you should not have asked, or otherwise mishandled a concern:

Do not conceal the mistake.

Seek guidance.

Explain factually what occurred.

Follow the direction of the appropriate professional.

Depending upon the circumstances, applicable College, program, school, district, state, or legal procedures may apply.

Concerns involving failure to meet professional responsibilities may also be addressed through the department's Support and Accountability Process.

The department can support you in learning from an error while still recognizing the seriousness of responsibilities involving student safety.

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Related Resources

- Florida mandatory reporting requirements
- Florida Abuse Hotline and applicable reporting procedures
- School and district child protection procedures
- Required clinical placement training
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 23: Confidentiality
- Chapter 24: Safety
- Chapter 26: Support and Accountability
- Chapter 40: FERPA and Student Privacy
- Chapter 41: Ethics and Professional Judgment
- Mentor Teacher
- Clinical Supervisor
- Program Manager
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator

Portfolio Connection

Specific reports, student disclosures, identifying information, and details involving suspected abuse, abandonment, or neglect do not belong in your Professional Growth Portfolio.

Do not turn a learner's difficult experience into a professional artifact.

However, your broader professional learning about:

- Student safety.
- Ethical responsibility.
- Professional boundaries.
- Confidentiality.
- Appropriate reporting.
- Professional judgment.

may become part of your understanding of what it means to be an educator.

If reflection is required within coursework, follow faculty directions carefully and protect all identifying and sensitive information.

Sometimes the most professional evidence of learning is understanding what should never become evidence in a portfolio.

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The SCF Education Way

Caring requires action.

Educators build relationships with learners.

We listen.

We notice.

We create environments where students feel seen and valued.

And because those relationships carry trust, sometimes we may learn something we wish a student never had to experience.

In those moments, caring does not mean investigating.

It does not mean promising secrecy.

It does not mean carrying the concern alone.

And it does not mean waiting until we are certain.

It means understanding our role.

Protecting the learner.

Following the required process.

Sharing information only where it appropriately belongs.

And trusting the professionals responsible for the next stage to do their work.

There may be moments in your career when doing what is required feels uncomfortable.

The learner's safety matters more than our comfort.

That is part of the trust placed in educators.

Professional Tip

Know the process before you need the process.

Do not wait for a student disclosure to ask:

- *Who do I contact?*

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- *What am I required to do?*
- *What is my role?*

Before beginning a clinical placement, know where to find the applicable reporting information and who can provide immediate procedural guidance.

Preparation reduces hesitation when action matters.

Reflection

Imagine a learner begins telling you something that causes you to become concerned about their safety.

Your instinct may be to ask questions because you care.

Your instinct may be to promise confidentiality because you want the student to keep trusting you.

Your instinct may be to wait because you are afraid of being wrong.

Now apply the Professional Trust Lens:

Protect. Pause. Check. Ask. Act. Reflect.

What changes?

Professional care is not always demonstrated by doing more.

Sometimes it means understanding precisely what your responsibility is, and acting on it.

When a learner's safety may be at stake, knowing when and how to act is one of the most important ways an educator honors trust.

43. Social Media and Digital Professionalism

"Your digital presence does not need to erase who you are. It should reflect the judgment expected of the professional you are becoming."

Purpose

Social media is part of contemporary life.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

It allows people to connect, create, celebrate, advocate, learn, share ideas, participate in communities, and maintain relationships across distance.

Educators participate in those spaces too.

Becoming an educator does not mean giving up your personal identity or avoiding social media altogether. It does mean recognizing that your personal, academic, and professional identities may intersect in digital spaces in ways you cannot always control.

A post intended for friends can be shared.

A photograph can be saved.

A comment can lose its original context.

A private account can still reach an unintended audience.

A student's identity can be revealed without using their name.

An interaction that feels harmless personally may create a professional boundary concern.

Digital professionalism therefore asks you to use the same thoughtful judgment online that you are developing throughout your educator preparation program.

Why This Matters

Social media can make boundaries feel less visible.

A student sends you a follow request.

You take a wonderful photograph during a clinical experience.

You want to celebrate something that happened in the classroom.

A frustrating day makes you want to vent.

Someone posts something about your school that you know is inaccurate.

A family member asks about one of your students.

You join an online educator group where teachers discuss classroom experiences.

You encounter a disagreement and want to respond immediately.

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None of these situations automatically has one simple answer.

They require professional judgment.

Before posting, commenting, messaging, photographing, tagging, sharing, or responding, consider:

What changes because I am participating in this space as someone entrusted with learners?

That question, not fear of social media, is the foundation of digital professionalism.

Department Standard 6.4

Social Media and Digital Professionalism

Educator candidates are expected to demonstrate professional judgment in social media and other digital environments consistent with SCF expectations, clinical partner requirements, applicable law, student privacy protections, and professional standards.

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Protect student privacy and confidential information in all digital environments.
- Follow College, school, district, and clinical placement requirements regarding social media, photography, video, recording, and digital communication.
- Maintain appropriate digital boundaries with students.
- Use authorized communication channels for interactions related to clinical practice.
- Avoid posting identifiable student information, images, educational records, or confidential school information without appropriate authorization.
- Consider how public digital content may affect professional relationships and responsibilities.
- Communicate respectfully in digital spaces.
- Avoid using social media to ridicule, demean, embarrass, or disclose information about students, families, colleagues, faculty, schools, or clinical partners.
- Distinguish personal expression from communication made on behalf of SCF, a school, district, or other organization.
- Accurately represent professional roles, qualifications, experiences, and affiliations.
- Follow applicable expectations when using content created by others.
- Seek guidance when uncertain about whether a digital interaction or post is professionally appropriate.

Personal account does not mean professional responsibilities disappear.

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Personal, Professional, and Public Can Overlap

You may think of your digital life as separate spaces:

- Personal Me
- Student Me
- Professional Me

In practice, those boundaries can blur.

- A prospective employer may encounter a public profile.
- A mentor teacher may follow the same community organization you do.
- A parent may recognize your name.
- A screenshot may move content from a private conversation into a public one.
- A post from years ago may still be searchable.

The goal is not to make every social media account a professional portfolio.

Instead, understand this principle:

You may control your post. You cannot fully control its audience once it is shared.

Privacy settings are useful.

They are not guarantees of privacy.

Students and Digital Boundaries

Relationships are central to teaching, but professional relationships require professional boundaries.

During clinical experiences, educator candidates should follow school and district expectations regarding digital communication with students.

Do not independently move student communication onto personal:

- Social media accounts.
- Messaging applications.
- Text messages.
- Email accounts.
- Gaming platforms.

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- Other communication channels.

If a student attempts to connect with you through a personal account, do not assume that accepting the request is harmless simply because the interaction would be visible to others.

Ask:

- *What does the school or district require?*
- *What boundary does my professional role require?*
- *What approved communication channel should be used instead?*

A boundary is not a rejection of the student. It protects professional relationships.

“But I Didn't Use Their Name”

Protecting student privacy requires more than removing a name.

Consider a post such as:

One of my students completely melted down during my third-period lesson today. Sometimes you just have to laugh!

No name appears.

But perhaps your placement is public.

Perhaps the grade level is known.

Perhaps classmates know which classroom you are in.

Perhaps the situation was distinctive enough that someone could identify the learner.

The better question is not:

“Did I use the student's name?”

It is:

“Am I turning a learner's experience into content?”

Students should not become stories, jokes, frustrations, inspirational posts, or social media material simply because an educator finds the experience worth sharing.

Their dignity travels with them into digital spaces.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Photographs, Video, and the “Adorable Moment”

You will experience moments in classrooms that make you proud.

A student finally understands.

A lesson works beautifully.

Your classroom display comes together.

Students create something extraordinary.

You may instinctively reach for your phone.

Pause.

Permission to participate in a classroom is not permission to photograph or post students.

Before taking, retaining, sharing, or posting photographs, video, audio, student work, or other classroom content, follow the applicable school, district, College, and clinical placement requirements.

Even when a school has obtained media permissions, that does not necessarily mean an educator candidate has personal permission to publish content through an individual social media account.

When uncertain:

Do not post first and ask later.

Ask first.

Venting Is Still Sharing

Teaching can be challenging.

You will have frustrating days.

You may eventually encounter difficult interactions with students, families, colleagues, administrators, or systems.

You will need people with whom you can process those experiences.

Social media is rarely the appropriate substitute for that professional support network.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Before posting from frustration, ask:

Am I seeking support, or seeking an audience?

Your cohort, mentor, trusted colleague, faculty member, supervisor, or another appropriate support may provide a better place to process a professional challenge.

A difficult moment does not need to become permanent digital content.

Digital Citizenship Includes Disagreement

Educators do not stop having opinions when they enter the profession.

You may participate in public conversations, professional discussions, community issues, advocacy, or other forms of digital engagement.

Professionalism does not require silence.

It does require judgment.

Consider:

- *Is the information accurate?*
- *Am I communicating respectfully?*
- *Am I revealing information obtained through my professional role?*
- *Am I representing my personal perspective as though I speak for an organization?*
- *Am I engaging in productive dialogue or escalating conflict?*
- *Would I communicate this same way in a face-to-face professional setting?*
- *Am I prepared for this statement to be separated from its original context?*

Your professional identity should not eliminate your voice.

It should strengthen the judgment with which you use it.

Your Digital Footprint

Chapter 38 asked you to consider your digital presence as you prepare for employment.

Here, we go one step further.

Search your own name periodically.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Review what is publicly visible.

Look at old accounts.

Review profile information.

Consider photographs in which you are tagged.

Examine public comments and posts.

Ask:

If someone encountered only this digital information, what conclusions might they reasonably draw about my professional judgment?

You do not need to manufacture a flawless online identity.

You do want to understand the digital identity that already exists.

Social Media Can Also Strengthen Your Profession

Digital professionalism should not be framed only around risk.

Used thoughtfully, digital spaces can extend professional learning.

Educators use online communities to:

- Exchange instructional ideas.
- Participate in professional learning networks.
- Follow educational organizations.
- Discover research and resources.
- Connect with professional associations.
- Celebrate the profession.
- Share appropriately de-identified professional learning.
- Advocate for learners and education.
- Build professional networks across geographic boundaries.

The goal is not:

Stay off social media.

The goal is:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Know why you are there, who you are communicating with, and what responsibilities travel with you.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Review and follow applicable social media and digital communication policies.
- Maintain appropriate digital boundaries with students.
- Protect confidential and identifying information.
- Use approved communication channels.
- Consider audience and permanence before posting.
- Obtain appropriate authorization before photographing, recording, or sharing classroom content.
- Avoid using learners or clinical experiences as personal social media content.
- Communicate respectfully about students, families, colleagues, schools, SCF, and clinical partners.
- Distinguish personal views from official organizational communication.
- Review your public digital footprint.
- Consider how online interactions contribute to professional identity.
- Seek guidance before posting when professional expectations are unclear.

When you are uncertain, **pause before you publish.**

How We Support You

Digital professionalism develops through conversation, modeling, feedback, and experience.

Faculty can help you think through digital scenarios.

Mentor teachers can explain school expectations.

Clinical supervisors can help clarify professional boundaries.

Program Managers and the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator can help when questions involve clinical practice.

You are encouraged to ask:

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- *Can I photograph this?*
- *Can this go in my portfolio?*
- *A student followed me. What should I do?*
- *Can I share this classroom experience if I remove the name?*
- *Is this an approved communication platform?*
- *Does the district have a policy about this?*

Those are professional questions.

Ask them before the post becomes the problem.

If Challenges Occur

If you realize that you have posted, shared, photographed, recorded, or communicated something that may violate privacy, professional boundaries, College expectations, or clinical partner requirements, act promptly.

Do not assume deleting a post means the concern no longer exists.

Do not attempt to conceal what occurred.

Instead:

Stop → Preserve what may be needed → Communicate → Follow Guidance → Reflect

Contact the appropriate faculty member, mentor teacher, clinical supervisor, Program Manager, or other designated professional based on the circumstances.

Depending upon the nature of the concern, applicable College, school, district, program, or legal processes may apply.

Concerns involving professional judgment may also be addressed through the department's Support and Accountability Process.

As with other areas of professional practice, support and accountability can exist together.

Related Resources

- SCF technology and student conduct expectations
- Clinical partner social media policies
- School and district technology policies

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Chapter 6: Professional Conduct
- Chapter 8: Building Your Professional Identity
- Chapter 14: Artificial Intelligence
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 23: Confidentiality
- Chapter 38: Career Services
- Chapter 40: FERPA and Student Privacy
- Chapter 41: Ethics and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 42: Mandatory Reporting

Portfolio Connection

Your Professional Growth Portfolio may eventually become part of your professional digital presence.

That makes the distinction between showcasing your practice and exposing your students particularly important.

Before including any digitally captured clinical evidence, ask:

Do I have authorization to use this?

Is a student identifiable?

Does the artifact reveal confidential information?

Can I demonstrate the same competency another way?

Am I highlighting my professional growth or turning the learner into evidence?

A strong professional portfolio protects the dignity and privacy of the students who helped you learn.

Your portfolio should make your growth visible, not your students vulnerable.

The SCF Education Way

Be human online. Be thoughtful online. Be professional online.

Becoming an educator does not require creating a sanitized version of yourself.

Laugh.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Celebrate.

Connect.

Create.

Share.

Learn.

Have interests beyond education.

Participate in your community.

Use your voice.

But understand that becoming an educator adds another dimension to the decisions you make in public and digital spaces.

A student's story is not automatically yours to share.

Access is not permission.

A private account is not a guarantee of privacy.

Deleting something does not guarantee that it disappeared.

Caring about students does not eliminate the need for boundaries.

And professionalism does not require eliminating your personality.

It asks you to bring **judgment** to it.

The question is not:

“Can teachers have social media?”

Of course they can.

The better question is:

“How does the educator I am becoming show up when I am online?”

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Professional Tip

Use the screenshot test.

Before you post, comment, message, share, or send something connected in any way to your professional role, imagine that someone takes a screenshot.

Now imagine that screenshot appearing tomorrow without the original context.

Would you be comfortable discussing it with:

- The learner?
- Their family?
- Your mentor teacher?
- Your principal • your faculty member?

If the answer gives you pause, the pause is useful information.

Reflection

Look at your digital presence through the eyes of the educator you hope to be five years from now.

What would that future professional be proud to see?

What might they wish you had thought more carefully about?

What boundaries should you establish now?

And where could digital spaces actually help you learn, connect, contribute, and grow professionally?

Your digital footprint is not separate from your professional identity.

It is one of the places where your judgment becomes visible.

44. Appeals and the Support & Accountability Process

"Accountability should be clear, proportionate, documented, and accompanied by a fair process for responding to concerns."

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Purpose

Professional preparation includes both support and accountability.

Throughout the SCF Education Program, faculty work to communicate expectations clearly, provide feedback, address concerns early, and create opportunities for educator candidates to reflect and grow.

Most concerns can be addressed through conversation, coaching, clarification, or additional support.

Sometimes, however, a concern is serious, continues after earlier intervention, or involves academic integrity, professional practice, clinical performance, or professional dispositions in ways that require formal documentation and review.

The SCF Education Department uses a **four-level Support and Accountability Process** to provide a consistent framework for responding to these concerns.

The process is designed around an important principle:

Address concerns at the lowest level appropriate to their severity while maintaining clear pathways for support, documentation, review, and appeal.

Most concerns begin and end at Level 1.

Not every concern progresses through all four levels.

And serious concerns may warrant beginning at a higher level when circumstances require it.

Why This Matters

Accountability should never feel mysterious.

You should know:

- *What is the concern?*
- *What expectation applies?*
- *Who is addressing it?*
- *What is expected of me next?*
- *What support is available?*

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- *What happens if the concern continues?*
- *How can I respond if I disagree with a formal decision?*

Clear processes protect everyone involved.

They help educator candidates understand expectations.

They help faculty respond consistently.

They create documentation when concerns require continued attention.

And they establish a pathway for review when a student believes a formal decision should be reconsidered.

Accountability and fairness belong together.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Department Standard 6.5

Support, Accountability, and Student Appeal

When concerns involving academic integrity, professional practice standards, clinical expectations, or professional dispositions arise, the SCF Education Department uses a graduated Support and Accountability Process.

Concerns are addressed at the lowest level appropriate to their nature and severity whenever possible.

The process includes:

Level 1 — Coaching

Level 2 — Formal Concern: Professional Concern Notice

Level 3 — Professional Fitness Review

Level 4 — Appeal

Educator candidates are expected to participate professionally in the process, respond to communication, engage with identified supports or corrective actions, and meet established expectations.

Students retain access to applicable College processes for reviewing or appealing formal decisions.

The SCF Education Support & Accountability Process

Level 1: Coaching

Notice → Discuss → Reflect → Adjust

For most concerns, coaching is the first and most appropriate response.

An instructor, Program Manager, clinical supervisor, or another appropriate faculty member addresses the concern directly with the educator candidate.

The purpose is to identify what occurred, clarify the professional or academic expectation, listen to the student's perspective, and determine what adjustment is needed.

Examples might include:

- A communication concern.
- An emerging professional disposition concern.
- A pattern of missed responsibilities.

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- A concern about preparation or engagement.
- A professional practice issue that can reasonably be corrected through feedback.
- An early clinical concern.

The emphasis is on growth and correction rather than penalty.

A coaching conversation essentially asks:

What happened, what is expected, and what needs to change moving forward?

Most concerns should be resolved here.

Level 2: Formal Concern

Professional Concern Notice

Document → Clarify → Support → Monitor

If a concern is more serious or persists following coaching, the department may issue a written *Professional Concern Notice*.

The notice formally documents:

- The specific concern.
- The applicable expectation or standard.
- Relevant information regarding what has occurred.
- The change or improvement expected.
- Required next steps.
- Available or required supports when applicable.
- Any timeline associated with improvement or follow-up.
- Possible implications if the concern is not resolved.

The purpose of documentation is not simply to create a record that something went wrong.

Documentation creates **clarity**.

The student should understand:

- Here is the concern.
- Here is the expectation.

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- Here is what needs to happen next.

Level 3: Professional Fitness Review

Review → Consider → Determine → Plan

If a concern is not resolved, demonstrates a continuing pattern, or is sufficiently serious to warrant formal review, the matter may proceed to a *Professional Fitness Review* involving the Department Chair and other appropriate personnel.

The purpose is to consider the concern more comprehensively and determine whether the educator candidate continues to demonstrate the academic, professional, dispositional, and/or clinical fitness necessary to progress within an educator preparation program.

The review may consider:

- The nature and severity of the concern.
- Relevant documentation.
- Previous coaching or intervention.
- Patterns across courses or clinical experiences when applicable.
- The educator candidate's response.
- Evidence of improvement.
- Professional standards or program expectations.
- Student and learner safety.
- Clinical partner expectations.
- Other relevant circumstances.

Possible outcomes may include, as applicable:

- Resolution with no additional action.
- Continued coaching or monitoring.
- A corrective action plan.
- Additional professional learning or support requirements.
- Conditions for continued progression.
- Changes affecting clinical participation.
- Removal from a clinical placement.
- Other actions consistent with College and program requirements.
- Dismissal from the program when warranted.

A Professional Fitness Review is a serious step.

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It should also be a clear and structured one.

Level 4: Appeal

Respond → Review → Resolve

An educator candidate may disagree with the outcome of a Professional Fitness Review or another formal decision subject to an applicable College appeal process.

Level 4 provides the pathway for that decision to be reviewed through the appropriate **SCF Academic Conflict Resolution Process** or other applicable College procedure.

An appeal is not simply:

“I don't like the outcome.”

A meaningful appeal should clearly identify the decision being challenged and explain the basis for requesting review.

Depending upon the applicable College process, relevant considerations may include questions such as:

- *Was the applicable process followed?*
- *Is relevant information missing or inaccurate?*
- *Is there information that should be considered?*
- *Does the student believe a policy or procedure was applied incorrectly?*
- *Is another recognized basis for appeal applicable?*

Students should follow the specific requirements, timelines, documentation expectations, and procedural steps established by SCF for the applicable appeal.

An Important Distinction: Appeal Is Not Restart

An appeal does not erase everything that occurred before it.

It provides a process for reviewing a decision.

Likewise, an appeal does not guarantee that an outcome will change.

The review may result in the original decision being upheld, modified, returned for further consideration, or otherwise addressed according to the applicable College process.

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This distinction is important because due process protects the opportunity for appropriate review, not a particular result.

You Have a Voice Throughout the Process

Level 4 should not be the first time an educator candidate believes they can speak.

At every appropriate stage, professional accountability should include communication.

At Level 1, participate in the conversation.

At Level 2, read the concern carefully and ask questions when expectations are unclear.

At Level 3, provide relevant information and participate professionally in the review.

At Level 4, use the established process if you believe formal review is warranted.

Having a voice does not mean controlling the outcome.

It means participating responsibly in the process.

Support Does Not Eliminate Accountability

This distinction has appeared throughout the handbook because it is central to our philosophy.

We can support you **and** maintain expectations.

We can understand circumstances **and** examine their impact.

We can provide coaching **and** document a persistent concern.

We can believe in your capacity to grow **and** determine that a particular behavior must change.

We can provide an appeal process **and** uphold a decision after review.

These ideas are not contradictory.

Professional education requires both:

High Support + High Accountability

That combination communicates something important:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

We believe your development matters enough to support and the profession matters enough to maintain its expectations.

Not Every Concern Begins at Level 1

Although coaching is the default starting point for most concerns, the levels should not be understood as automatic steps that must always occur sequentially.

The nature or severity of a concern may require immediate formal action.

Concerns involving matters such as significant safety issues, serious breaches of confidentiality, substantial ethical concerns, serious academic integrity violations, mandatory reporting responsibilities, or other significant professional conduct may warrant beginning at the level appropriate to the circumstances.

This is why the framework is graduated rather than mechanical.

The response should match the concern.

Your Responsibilities

If you become involved in the Support and Accountability Process, you are expected to:

- Read communications carefully.
- Respond within requested or required timelines.
- Attend scheduled meetings.
- Participate professionally.
- Listen to the concern being communicated.
- Ask questions when expectations are unclear.
- Provide relevant information honestly.
- Complete required next steps.
- Engage with identified supports.
- Maintain appropriate documentation.
- Demonstrate improvement when a corrective action is required.
- Continue meeting other program responsibilities.
- Follow established procedures if requesting review or appeal.
- Maintain professional communication even when you disagree with an outcome.

Disagreement does not remove the expectation for professional conduct.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

In fact, how you navigate disagreement is itself part of professional practice.

How We Support You

At different stages, support may come from:

- Course faculty.
- Faculty advisors.
- Program Managers.
- Clinical supervisors.
- The Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- The Department Chair.
- Appropriate College offices and personnel.

The nature of support will depend upon the concern.

Sometimes support means clarification.

Sometimes it means coaching.

Sometimes it means identifying resources.

Sometimes it means creating a structured improvement plan.

Sometimes it means ensuring you understand your procedural options.

Our goal is not to shield educator candidates from accountability.

It is to make accountability understandable, developmental when appropriate, and consistent with established processes.

If You Disagree

Professional disagreement is allowed.

If you disagree with feedback, documentation, or an outcome:

Read first.

Make sure you understand what is actually being communicated.

Ask questions.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Clarify facts, expectations, and procedures.

Respond professionally.

Separate disagreement with the decision from your communication with the people involved.

Use evidence.

Identify relevant information rather than relying solely on frustration.

Follow the process.

Use established review and appeal procedures rather than attempting to resolve a formal concern through informal pressure, repeated messaging, or avoidance.

You can advocate for yourself strongly and still communicate professionally.

Those are not opposing skills.

Related Resources

- SCF Academic Conflict Resolution Process
- Applicable SCF student complaint and appeal procedures
- Education Department Professional Concern Notice
- Professional Fitness Review procedures
- Chapter 4: Professional Dispositions
- Chapter 6: Professional Conduct
- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 26: Removal from Placement and Support & Accountability
- Chapter 40: FERPA and Student Privacy
- Chapter 41: Ethics and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 42: Mandatory Reporting
- Chapter 43: Social Media and Digital Professionalism
- Department Chair
- Program Manager

Portfolio Connection

A Professional Concern Notice, Professional Fitness Review, or appeal is not automatically a Professional Growth Portfolio artifact.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The portfolio is not intended to become a repository for disciplinary or confidential documentation.

However, professional growth resulting from feedback may eventually become visible through later evidence.

Perhaps you:

Received feedback → Reflected → Changed practice → Demonstrated growth

That later evidence can tell an important professional story.

Growth does not require pretending a challenge never occurred.

It requires demonstrating what you did with what you learned.

The SCF Education Way

Accountability should never be a guessing game.

You should understand what is expected.

If a concern arises, you should understand what the concern is.

You should know what needs to change.

You should have an opportunity to participate in the process.

You should know what happens next.

And when a formal decision is eligible for review, you should know that an established pathway exists for doing so.

That is why our process begins with coaching whenever appropriate and ends with appeal when formal review is warranted.

The goal is not to move students through four levels.

The goal is to resolve concerns at the lowest appropriate level, support growth whenever possible, protect the integrity of educator preparation, and maintain fair processes when difficult decisions must be made.

Professional accountability ultimately asks all of us, students and faculty alike, to do something important:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Be clear.

Be fair.

Be responsive.

Document appropriately.

Listen.

Take responsibility.

Follow the process.

That is how accountability can protect both **professional standards and professional trust.**

Professional Tip

Respond to the concern, not just the emotion it creates.

Receiving difficult feedback can feel personal.

Before responding, ask:

- *What specifically is being communicated?*
- *What evidence is being referenced?*
- *What expectation applies?*
- *What response or action is being requested?*
- *What do I need clarified?*
- *What information do I have that is relevant?*

Then respond to *those* questions.

Professional self-advocacy is strongest when it is specific, evidence-informed, and process-aware.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Think about accountability from both sides.

As an educator candidate, you deserve expectations and processes that are clear and fair.

As a future educator, you will also be responsible for communicating expectations, providing feedback, documenting concerns, listening to perspectives, and making decisions that affect other people.

So ask:

What makes an accountability process feel fair even when the outcome is difficult?

Clarity?

Consistency?

An opportunity to be heard?

Evidence?

Documentation?

Proportionality?

A pathway for review?

Now consider the professional you are becoming.

How will you create those same conditions when you eventually hold responsibility for others?

Accountability is not simply what happens when someone makes a mistake.

Done well, it is one of the ways professional communities protect growth, fairness, standards, and trust.

45. Professional Concern Process

"A professional concern is not simply documentation of what happened. It is a clear invitation to understand the concern, respond, and demonstrate what happens next."

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Purpose

Throughout educator preparation, you will receive feedback about your academic work, professional dispositions, clinical practice, communication, reliability, collaboration, and developing professional judgment.

Most feedback is part of the ordinary learning process.

Sometimes, however, a concern requires more explicit attention.

When a concern is significant, persists after coaching, reflects a pattern, or requires formal documentation, the SCF Education Department may use a *Professional Concern Notice*.

The Professional Concern Notice is Level 2 of the *Support and Accountability Process* introduced in Chapter 44.

Its purpose is to make the concern clear, identify the professional expectation involved, document what needs to change, establish appropriate next steps, and create an opportunity for the educator candidate to demonstrate growth.

A Professional Concern Notice should answer:

- *What is the concern?*
- *Why does it matter?*
- *What expectation applies?*
- *What needs to happen next?*
- *What support is available?*
- *How will improvement be demonstrated?*
- *What may happen if the concern is not resolved?*

Clarity is the starting point for meaningful accountability.

Why This Matters

Becoming an educator involves more than successfully completing assignments.

Educator preparation also requires demonstrating the professional behaviors and dispositions necessary to work responsibly with learners, families, colleagues, schools, and communities.

Sometimes a concern develops in an area that cannot be adequately represented by a course grade alone.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

For example, a candidate may demonstrate strong academic knowledge while experiencing difficulty with:

- Professional communication.
- Reliability.
- Responsiveness to feedback.
- Collaboration.
- Professional boundaries.
- Clinical expectations.
- Professional dispositions.
- Ethical judgment.
- Appropriate use of technology.
- Meeting established responsibilities.

A grade may tell you how you performed on an assignment.

A Professional Concern Notice communicates something different:

Professional expectations require your attention.

That distinction is important in educator preparation.

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Department Standard 6.6

Professional Concern Process

When an educator candidate demonstrates a significant or recurring concern involving academic integrity, professional practice, clinical expectations, professional dispositions, communication, ethical conduct, or another established program expectation, the Education Department may initiate the Professional Concern Process.

The process is intended to:

- Clearly identify the concern.
- Connect the concern to an applicable professional, academic, clinical, or program expectation.
- Provide the educator candidate an opportunity to understand and respond.
- Identify required changes or next steps.
- Establish supports when appropriate.
- Document expectations and timelines.
- Monitor whether sufficient improvement occurs.
- Determine whether additional review is necessary.

A Professional Concern Notice represents a formal opportunity to address a concern before it becomes a larger barrier to successful program progression whenever circumstances allow.

From Coaching to Formal Concern

As established in Chapter 44, most concerns begin with Level 1: Coaching.

A faculty member, Program Manager, clinical supervisor, or another appropriate professional may first discuss what they have noticed with you.

The conversation might sound like:

- *“I want to talk about something I’ve noticed.”*
- *“Let’s look at what happened.”*
- *“Here’s the professional expectation.”*
- *“What are you noticing from your perspective?”*
- *“What needs to change moving forward?”*

Often, that is enough.

You receive feedback.

You reflect.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You adjust.

The concern is resolved.

When that happens, the support and accountability process has done exactly what it was intended to do.

When a Professional Concern Notice May Be Used

A Professional Concern Notice may become appropriate when: A concern continues after coaching.

You received feedback, but sufficient improvement has not occurred.

A pattern develops.

Individual incidents that might seem minor in isolation begin demonstrating a larger professional concern.

The concern has greater significance.

The nature of the issue warrants formal documentation even if previous coaching has not occurred.

The expectation needs to be explicitly documented.

The student and department need a shared written understanding of what must change and what happens next.

The decision to use a Professional Concern Notice should reflect the nature, severity, frequency, and professional implications of the concern.

Not every concern requires one.

Not every Professional Concern Notice requires previous coaching.

The response should be proportionate to the circumstances.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

What the Professional Concern Notice Should Communicate

A strong Professional Concern Notice should not leave an educator candidate wondering what they did wrong.

It should identify several essential elements.

1. The Concern

What specifically occurred?

Documentation should focus on observable information rather than vague character judgments.

Not:

“You are unprofessional.”

But rather:

What behavior, action, pattern, communication, or circumstance created the concern?

2. The Expectation

What professional, program, clinical, academic, ethical, or dispositional expectation applies?

The candidate should be able to understand the connection between the concern and the standard.

3. The Impact

Why does this matter?

How could the concern affect:

- Learners?
- Colleagues?
- Clinical partners?
- Professional trust?
- Program progression?
- Your own readiness?

Understanding impact moves the conversation beyond compliance.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

4. The Required Change

What needs to happen differently?

Expectations should be sufficiently clear that both the educator candidate and faculty can recognize whether improvement has occurred.

5. Support

What resources, coaching, guidance, or professional learning may assist?

Support will depend upon the nature of the concern.

6. Timeline and Follow-Up

When will progress be reviewed?

What evidence will demonstrate that the concern has been addressed?

7. Possible Next Steps

What may occur if sufficient improvement does not happen?

Students should understand that unresolved concerns may move to Level 3: Professional Fitness Review.

The Conversation Matters as Much as the Form

The *Professional Concern Notice* should not simply appear in your inbox without context whenever a conversation can appropriately occur.

The form documents the concern.

The conversation creates the opportunity for understanding.

During the meeting, you should be prepared to:

Listen.

Understand what is being communicated before preparing your response.

Ask.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

If an expectation is unclear, seek clarification.

Share.

Provide relevant information or context.

Reflect.

Consider the concern from the perspective of your developing professional role.

Plan.

Identify what needs to happen next.

The purpose is not for everyone to leave the conversation agreeing about every detail.

The purpose is for everyone to leave understanding the concern, the expectation, and the next step.

Context Matters. Impact Matters Too.

There may be important context surrounding a professional concern.

You should have an appropriate opportunity to share it.

Perhaps something was misunderstood.

Perhaps circumstances affected what occurred.

Perhaps there is relevant information faculty did not have.

Perhaps you recognize the concern but experienced the situation differently.

That information matters.

At the same time, professional reflection asks you to consider more than intention.

Two things can be true:

“That was not what I intended.”

and

“I understand that my action had an impact.”

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Learning to hold both ideas is an important professional capacity.

Context helps us understand.

It does not automatically eliminate impact or responsibility.

A Professional Concern Is Not a Label

This is important enough to say explicitly.

Receiving a Professional Concern Notice does not define who you are as a student or determine the educator you will become.

It identifies a concern that needs attention.

The most important question becomes:

What happens next?

Do you engage?

Reflect?

Ask questions?

Use support?

Change the behavior?

Demonstrate growth?

Professional preparation is developmental.

We expect educator candidates to grow.

Formal concern processes exist in part because some learning requires more explicit attention than ordinary feedback provides.

Demonstrating Growth

A Professional Concern Process should ultimately move toward observable evidence.

It is not enough to say:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

“I understand.”

The next question is:

What will demonstrate that understanding in practice?

Depending upon the concern, evidence of growth might include:

- Consistent professional communication.
- Meeting established deadlines or responsibilities.
- Improved preparation.
- Appropriate professional boundaries.
- Successful clinical performance.
- Responsiveness to feedback.
- Improved collaboration.
- Completion of required professional learning.
- Demonstrated changes in behavior.
- Meeting expectations identified in a corrective action plan.
- Sustained improvement over time.

The strongest evidence of reflection is often **changed practice**.

When the Concern Is Resolved

Resolution should matter.

If the educator candidate demonstrates sufficient improvement and meets the established expectations, the concern may be considered resolved.

That does not mean the documentation never existed.

It means the process achieved its developmental purpose:

Concern → Clarity → Action → Growth

An educator candidate should not be expected to remain indefinitely defined by a concern that has been appropriately addressed.

Growth deserves to be recognized.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

When the Concern Is Not Resolved

If sufficient improvement does not occur, a concern persists, additional concerns emerge, or the matter is sufficiently serious, the process may move to:

Level 3: Professional Fitness Review

As described in Chapter 44, the Professional Fitness Review provides a more comprehensive examination of the educator-candidate's readiness to continue progressing within the program.

Possible outcomes may include additional support or monitoring, a corrective action plan, conditions for progression, changes to clinical participation, removal from a placement, or other outcomes permitted by applicable program and College requirements.

This is why the Professional Concern Process should be taken seriously.

It is both:

an opportunity for growth

and

formal documentation that a professional expectation requires attention.

Your Responsibilities

If you receive a Professional Concern Notice, you are expected to:

- Read the entire notice carefully.
- Attend requested meetings.
- Listen to the concern being communicated.
- Ask questions when something is unclear.
- Provide relevant information honestly.
- Review the expectation or standard identified.
- Participate in developing or understanding next steps.
- Complete required actions within established timelines.
- Use available supports.
- Communicate when circumstances affect your ability to complete a requirement.
- Demonstrate improvement through practice.
- Maintain professional communication throughout the process.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Retain relevant documentation.
- Follow established procedures if you disagree with a formal outcome.

The most productive first question is usually not:

“How do I get this removed?”

It is:

“What do I need to understand and demonstrate moving forward?”

How We Support You

Support should be connected to the nature of the concern.

Depending upon the circumstances, support may include:

- Faculty coaching.
- Additional feedback.
- Program Manager consultation.
- Clinical supervision.
- Mentoring.
- Academic support.
- Accessibility resources when applicable.
- CARE Team referral when appropriate.
- Professional learning.
- Structured reflection.
- Practice opportunities.
- A corrective action plan.
- Regular progress check-ins.

Support is not designed to remove the professional expectation.

It is intended to help you develop the capacity to meet it successfully.

If You Believe the Concern Is Inaccurate

You may disagree with some or all of a Professional Concern Notice.

Professional disagreement is permitted.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Respond with specificity.

Identify what information you believe is inaccurate.

Provide relevant evidence or context.

Ask for clarification.

Avoid responding through personal attacks, broad accusations, social media, repeated informal messaging, or refusal to participate.

Your professional response can communicate:

“I understand the concern being raised, and I would like this information to be considered as part of the record.”

If a concern ultimately results in a formal decision eligible for review, Chapter 44 describes the appropriate appeal pathway.

Self-advocacy and accountability can coexist.

Related Resources

- Education Department Professional Concern Notice
- Support and Accountability Process
- Professional Fitness Review procedures
- SCF Academic Conflict Resolution Process
- Chapter 4: Professional Dispositions
- Chapter 5: Communication Expectations
- Chapter 6: Professional Conduct
- Chapter 12: Professional Responsibility
- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 26: Removal from Placement
- Chapter 41: Ethics and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 44: Appeals and the Support & Accountability Process
- Course Faculty
- Program Manager
- Department Chair

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Portfolio Connection

The Professional Concern Notice itself does not belong in your Professional Growth Portfolio unless a specific program requirement directs otherwise.

Your portfolio is not intended to function as a disciplinary file.

What may eventually belong there is evidence of what came next.

Perhaps the concern involved collaboration, and later evidence demonstrates stronger collaborative practice.

Perhaps feedback identified professional communication as an area for growth, and later clinical evaluations demonstrate sustained improvement.

Perhaps a corrective action led to meaningful changes in your practice.

Then your portfolio can help demonstrate:

Where I was → What I learned → What I changed → Who I am becoming

Professional growth does not require a story in which you never experienced difficulty.

Sometimes the strongest evidence of professional development is that your practice changed because you took feedback seriously.

The SCF Education Way

We document concerns because clarity matters.

A student should not reach the end of a program and discover that faculty have quietly accumulated concerns they never clearly communicated.

When something matters, we should talk about it.

When a concern requires formal attention, we should document it.

When change is required, we should explain what that change looks like.

When support can help, we should identify it.

When improvement occurs, we should recognize it.

And when a concern persists, we should be willing to take the next appropriate step.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

That is not punitive practice.

That is responsible professional preparation.

The Professional Concern Process communicates:

We see the concern.

We are going to name it.

We are going to listen to you.

We are going to clarify what is expected.

We are going to support growth when appropriate.

And we are going to expect you to demonstrate what happens next.

Because the purpose of feedback, formal or informal, is not simply to describe where you are.

It is to help clarify what becoming requires next.

Professional Tip

Turn the concern into a plan.

After a Professional Concern meeting, you should be able to complete this sentence:

“Going forward, I need to _____, and we will know I have demonstrated growth when _____.”

If you cannot complete that sentence, ask for clarification.

You cannot intentionally demonstrate growth toward an expectation you do not understand.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Receiving formal feedback can be uncomfortable.

Imagine receiving a Professional Concern Notice about an area you believed was a strength.

- *What would your first reaction be?*
- *Defensiveness?*
- *Confusion?*
- *Embarrassment?*
- *Disagreement?*
- *Concern?*

Those reactions are human.

Now consider the professional response that comes **after** the reaction.

- *Can you listen?*
- *Can you examine evidence?*
- *Can you distinguish intention from impact?*
- *Can you advocate for your perspective while remaining open to another one?*
- *Can you turn feedback into changed practice?*

Those capacities will matter long after college.

Throughout your career, you will receive observations, evaluations, coaching, family feedback, colleague feedback, and sometimes difficult professional conversations.

Learning how to receive, examine, respond to, and grow from a professional concern is itself part of becoming an educator.

46. Professional Fitness Review

"Professional readiness is not defined by perfection. It is demonstrated through the capacity to meet the responsibilities entrusted to educators."

Purpose

Educator preparation carries responsibilities that extend beyond completing courses and earning grades.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

To progress toward certification and entry into the profession, educator candidates must demonstrate the knowledge, skills, professional dispositions, ethical judgment, and clinical practices necessary to work responsibly with learners, families, colleagues, and school communities.

Most concerns that arise during this development can be addressed through feedback, coaching, reflection, and adjustment.

Some require a *Professional Concern Notice* and more formal support.

When a concern remains unresolved, demonstrates a significant pattern, or is sufficiently serious that the educator candidate's continued progression requires formal consideration, the matter may proceed to a *Professional Fitness Review*.

The Professional Fitness Review is Level 3 of the *SCF Education Department's Support and Accountability Process*.

Its purpose is not to determine whether someone is a “good person” or whether they possess a particular personality.

It asks a professional question:

Is the educator candidate currently demonstrating the readiness and professional fitness necessary to continue progressing within an educator preparation program and toward responsibilities involving learners?

That distinction matters.

Why This Matters

Educator preparation programs have responsibilities to individual candidates.

They also have responsibilities to:

- P–12 learners.
- Families.
- Clinical partner schools.
- Mentor teachers.
- School districts.
- The College.
- The education profession.
- The standards governing educator preparation.

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A candidate's academic progress is therefore only one dimension of readiness.

A student may successfully complete coursework while a significant concern exists related to professional judgment, ethical conduct, dispositions, reliability, clinical practice, communication, boundaries, responsiveness to feedback, or another expectation essential to professional practice.

When concerns reach that level, continuing as though nothing has happened does not serve the student or the profession.

A Professional Fitness Review creates a structured opportunity to examine the concern comprehensively, consider relevant information, determine what the concern means for progression, and identify the appropriate next step.

Department Standard 6.7

Professional Fitness Review

The SCF Education Department may initiate a Professional Fitness Review when an educator candidate demonstrates an unresolved, recurring, significant, or serious concern involving academic integrity, professional dispositions, professional conduct, ethical practice, clinical performance, student safety, program expectations, or other responsibilities associated with educator preparation.

A Professional Fitness Review may consider:

- The nature and severity of the concern.
- Relevant documentation.
- Previous coaching or intervention.
- Professional Concern Notices, when applicable.
- Patterns across courses or clinical experiences, when relevant.
- Clinical performance.
- Professional dispositions.
- Ethical and professional judgment.
- Responsiveness to feedback.
- Evidence of growth or continued concern.
- The educator candidate's perspective and relevant information.
- Applicable program, College, clinical partner, and professional expectations.
- Potential impact on learners and professional responsibilities.

The review is intended to determine the educator candidate's continued readiness for program progression and any actions necessary to support, condition, pause, or discontinue that progression.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

When a Professional Fitness Review May Occur

A Professional Fitness Review may occur when:

A Professional Concern Has Not Been Resolved

Coaching and formal intervention have occurred, but sufficient or sustained improvement has not been demonstrated.

A Pattern Has Developed

Multiple concerns across time, courses, settings, or clinical experiences collectively raise questions about professional readiness.

A Concern Is Significant

A single incident may be serious enough to require formal review without progressing sequentially through Levels 1 and 2.

Clinical Practice Raises a Readiness Concern

Performance or conduct within a clinical environment may raise concerns about the candidate's ability to continue participating safely, ethically, responsibly, or effectively.

Professional Expectations Are Not Being Met

Concerns involving dispositions, integrity, boundaries, communication, judgment, reliability, confidentiality, safety, or other professional responsibilities may require more comprehensive review.

The Support and Accountability Process is graduated, not mechanical.

Level 3 does not always mean Levels 1 and 2 must have occurred first.

The response should be appropriate to the nature and seriousness of the concern.

What “Professional Fitness” Means

The term *professional fitness* should be understood carefully.

It does not mean:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- *Do faculty like this student?*
- *Does this student have the “right” personality?*
- *Does this candidate teach exactly like someone else?*
- *Has this student made no mistakes?*

Professional fitness refers to whether the educator candidate demonstrates the capacities and responsibilities necessary to continue preparation for professional practice.

That may include:

Knowledge and Practice

Can the candidate demonstrate the academic and instructional competencies required by the program?

Professional Dispositions

Does the candidate demonstrate the professional behaviors and dispositions expected of an emerging educator?

Ethical Judgment

Does the candidate protect learners, maintain appropriate boundaries, act with integrity, and exercise responsible professional judgment?

Clinical Readiness

Can the candidate participate appropriately and effectively in authentic educational environments?

Responsiveness to Feedback

Can the candidate receive feedback, reflect, adjust practice, and demonstrate growth?

Reliability and Responsibility

Can others reasonably depend upon the candidate to meet the responsibilities associated with their role?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Professional Communication and Collaboration

Can the candidate work and communicate appropriately with learners, families, colleagues, faculty, mentors, and school partners?

Professional fitness is therefore not a single characteristic.

It reflects the integration of the competencies required for responsible professional practice.

The Review Process

A Professional Fitness Review should provide a structured process for examining the concern.

While specific procedures may vary depending upon the circumstances and applicable College requirements, the process generally centers on four actions:

Review

Relevant information and documentation are examined.

Listen

The educator candidate has an opportunity to provide relevant information and perspective.

Determine

The concern is considered in relation to applicable professional and program expectations.

Plan

An appropriate outcome and any required next steps are identified.

The purpose is not simply to revisit everything that has happened.

It is to determine: Given what we now know, what is the appropriate path forward?

Your Voice Matters in the Review

A Professional Fitness Review is serious, but it should not be a process in which decisions are made based solely upon assumptions about the educator candidate.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You should be prepared to participate.

That may include:

- Reviewing documentation.
- Providing relevant information.
- Clarifying circumstances.
- Responding to identified concerns.
- Describing actions you have taken.
- Providing evidence of growth when applicable.
- Asking procedural questions.
- Listening to perspectives that may differ from your own.

Having an opportunity to provide information does not guarantee a particular outcome.

It helps ensure that the decision is informed by relevant perspectives and evidence.

Looking for Patterns and Looking for Growth

One purpose of a *Professional Fitness Review* is to look beyond an isolated moment when appropriate.

Consider two possible patterns.

Pattern One

Concern → Feedback → Same Concern → Coaching → Same Concern → Professional Concern
Notice → Same Concern

That pattern may suggest that previous interventions have not resulted in sufficient professional growth.

Pattern Two

Concern → Feedback → Reflection → Changed Practice → Sustained Improvement

That pattern communicates something very different.

The original concern still matters.

But so does the candidate's response to it.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Professional readiness is not demonstrated by never needing feedback.

It is often demonstrated by what happens after feedback is received.

Possible Outcomes

A Professional Fitness Review may result in different outcomes depending upon the nature and severity of the concern, the evidence available, applicable policies, and the candidate's demonstrated readiness.

Possible outcomes may include:

- Resolution with no additional action.
- Continued coaching or monitoring.
- Additional professional learning or support.
- A corrective action plan.
- Specific conditions for continued program progression.
- Required demonstration of identified competencies.
- Changes to clinical participation.
- Delay of progression into a subsequent clinical experience or final internship when requirements for readiness have not been demonstrated.
- Removal from a clinical placement.
- Other actions consistent with applicable College and program requirements.
- Dismissal from the educator preparation program when warranted.

Not every Professional Fitness Review results in dismissal.

But dismissal is a possible outcome when the circumstances warrant it.

The seriousness of the review should therefore be understood clearly.

Corrective Action Plans

When continued progression is appropriate but specific improvement must occur, the review may result in a corrective action plan.

A strong corrective action plan should clarify:

The Concern

What requires attention?

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The Standard

What expectation must be met?

The Action

What must the candidate do differently?

The Support

What resources or guidance will be available?

The Evidence

How will improvement be demonstrated?

The Timeline

When must the expectation be met?

The Follow-Up

Who will review progress and what happens next?

The purpose is to turn a broad concern into an actionable pathway.

A corrective action plan is not successful because it was completed on paper.

It is successful when professional practice changes.

Clinical Placement and Professional Fitness

Professional fitness becomes particularly important during clinical practice. Clinical placements are partnerships. SCF educator candidates enter schools as guests and emerging professionals while working with actual learners. Therefore, decisions regarding clinical participation must consider more than course completion.

If a concern affects learner safety, professional boundaries, confidentiality, ethical conduct, clinical performance, school expectations, or the integrity of the partnership, changes to clinical participation may be necessary. As discussed in Chapter 26, removal from a placement does not automatically determine every subsequent program outcome. However, removal may trigger additional review to determine whether, when, and under what conditions clinical progression can continue.

The guiding question remains:

What does responsible preparation require before this candidate assumes greater professional responsibility?

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Support and Accountability Still Coexist

By Level 3, the process has become more formal.

That does not mean support disappears.

Depending upon the outcome, a candidate may still receive:

- Coaching.
- Faculty guidance.
- Academic support.
- Clinical supervision.
- Professional learning.
- Structured reflection.
- Progress monitoring.
- Referral to appropriate College resources.
- Opportunities to demonstrate improvement.

But support cannot mean lowering essential professional expectations.

There are responsibilities educator candidates must be able to meet before being entrusted with increasingly independent practice.

The department's responsibility is therefore twofold:

Support the candidate's development.

and

Protect the integrity and responsibilities of professional preparation.

Both matter.

Your Responsibilities

If you participate in a *Professional Fitness Review*, you are expected to:

- Read all communication carefully.
- Respond within required timelines.
- Attend scheduled meetings.
- Participate professionally.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

- Review relevant documentation.
- Provide accurate and relevant information.
- Ask questions when procedures or expectations are unclear.
- Listen to the concerns being considered.
- Avoid altering, withholding, or misrepresenting relevant information.
- Complete any required corrective actions.
- Use identified supports.
- Demonstrate required changes through practice.
- Maintain professional communication even when the process is difficult.
- Follow applicable procedures if you wish to challenge an eligible outcome.

How you participate in a difficult professional process can, in itself, provide information about your developing professional readiness.

How We Support You

Depending upon the circumstances, individuals involved in supporting or reviewing your professional progress may include:

- Course faculty.
- Faculty advisors.
- Program Managers.
- Clinical supervisors.
- The Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator.
- The Department Chair.
- Appropriate College personnel.
- Appropriate clinical partner personnel when relevant.

The Department Chair has a formal role when a concern reaches the *Professional Fitness Review* level.

The goal is to ensure that significant decisions regarding professional progression receive appropriate consideration rather than resting solely within an informal conversation.

If You Disagree With the Outcome

You may disagree with the determination of a *Professional Fitness Review*.

That does not remove your responsibility to communicate professionally.

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Review the written outcome carefully.

Understand what was decided and why.

Ask appropriate procedural questions.

Identify relevant information.

Then use the established review process.

As described in Chapter 44:

Level 4: Appeal

A student may appeal an eligible outcome through the applicable *SCF Academic Conflict Resolution Process* or other appropriate College procedure.

The appeal process provides a pathway for formal review.

It does not guarantee that the original decision will change.

Knowing how to use an established process, even when you strongly disagree, is part of professional self-advocacy.

Related Resources

- Education Department Support and Accountability Process
- Professional Concern Notice
- Professional Fitness Review procedures
- Corrective Action Plan, when applicable
- SCF Academic Conflict Resolution Process
- Applicable College student policies
- Chapter 4: Professional Dispositions
- Chapter 6: Professional Conduct
- Chapter 13: Academic Integrity
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 26: Removal from Placement
- Chapter 31: Professional Readiness
- Chapter 41: Ethics and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 44: Appeals and the Support & Accountability Process
- Chapter 45: Professional Concern Process

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- Department Chair
- Program Manager

Portfolio Connection

Professional Fitness Review documentation does not ordinarily belong in your Professional Growth Portfolio.

The portfolio is designed to demonstrate your developing professional competencies, not to serve as a repository for formal concern documentation.

But, as with the *Professional Concern Process*, growth following a review may eventually become visible through your practice.

A corrective action plan might identify an area requiring development.

Later evidence may demonstrate that development.

The meaningful professional story becomes:

Concern → Reflection → Action → Evidence → Sustained Growth

You do not need to make the concern itself the centerpiece of your portfolio.

Let the quality of your later practice demonstrate what you learned.

The SCF Education Way

Professional fitness is not professional perfection.

Educator candidates are learning.

You will make mistakes.

You will receive feedback.

You may experience difficult moments.

You may discover that something you believed was a strength still needs development.

None of those experiences automatically means you are unfit for the profession.

The more important questions are:

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- *Can you recognize the responsibility involved?*
- *Can you listen when concerns are raised?*
- *Can you reflect honestly?*
- *Can you accept responsibility?*
- *Can you change your practice?*
- *Can you demonstrate that change consistently?*

And ultimately:

- *Can learners, families, colleagues, schools, and communities trust you with the responsibilities of an educator?*

When a concern becomes significant enough to place that question in doubt, the department has a responsibility to examine it carefully.

Not because we have stopped believing in growth.

But because the work you are preparing to do matters.

Supporting educator candidates and protecting the trust placed in educators are not competing responsibilities. They are both part of preparing professionals well.

Professional Tip

Do not prepare for a *Professional Fitness Review* by preparing a defense. Prepare by preparing to participate.

Bring relevant information.

Understand the concern.

Review previous feedback.

Identify changes you have made.

Be ready to discuss where growth has occurred and where it may still be needed.

You can advocate for yourself without closing yourself to reflection.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

Consider the word *readiness*.

Not perfection.

Not personality.

Not whether someone is liked.

Readiness.

What should a preparation program be able to expect before sending an educator candidate into a classroom with greater independence?

What should a family reasonably expect?

What should a mentor teacher expect?

What should students be able to trust?

And what evidence would demonstrate that you are ready for those responsibilities?

Now turn the question inward:

If someone reviewed the full pattern of my preparation, not simply my grades, what evidence would demonstrate the professional I am becoming?

That is the deeper purpose of professional fitness.

The goal is not merely to progress through an educator preparation program. It is to become ready for the trust that comes after it.

47. Behavioral Escalations

"In a moment of escalation, the goal is not to win the interaction. The goal is to protect safety, preserve dignity, and help create the conditions for regulation and learning."

Purpose

Classrooms are human environments.

Students arrive with different experiences, communication styles, developmental needs, strengths, stressors, abilities, sensory needs, coping strategies, and capacities for regulation.

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At times, a learner may become overwhelmed, dysregulated, distressed, agitated, or behaviorally escalated.

How an educator responds in those moments matters.

An adult's response can help reduce the intensity of a situation, or unintentionally increase it.

Professional practice therefore requires educators to recognize signs of escalation, understand established student and school supports, respond calmly, maintain appropriate boundaries, protect safety and dignity, and seek assistance when a situation exceeds their role or preparation.

For educator candidates, one principle is especially important:

You are not expected to independently manage a crisis simply because you are in the classroom.

Know your role.

Know the student's established supports when appropriate.

Know the school's procedures.

Know who to call.

And when safety becomes a concern, seek assistance.

Why This Matters

Behavior communicates.

That does not mean every behavior has a simple explanation.

Nor does it mean unsafe or disruptive behavior should be ignored.

It means professional educators look beyond:

“How do I make this behavior stop?”

and consider:

“What is happening, what does this learner need, and what response is appropriate right now?”

A learner may be experiencing:

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- Frustration.
- Confusion.
- Sensory overload.
- Fear.
- Conflict.
- Communication difficulty.
- Academic challenge.
- Fatigue.
- An unexpected change.
- Difficulty with regulation.
- A perceived loss of control.
- An unmet need.
- Other circumstances the educator may not immediately understand.

The educator may not know the cause in the moment.

The immediate responsibility is not necessarily to figure everything out.

Sometimes the immediate responsibility is simply:

Reduce escalation. Protect safety. Preserve dignity. Get appropriate support.

Analysis can come later.

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Department Standard 6.8

Behavioral Escalation, De-escalation, and Student Safety

Educator candidates are expected to respond to behavioral escalation in ways consistent with student safety, dignity, established classroom supports, applicable student plans, school and district procedures, their level of training, and the scope of their assigned role.

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Recognize early signs that a learner may be becoming dysregulated or escalated.
- Maintain a calm and professional presence.
- Use proactive and de-escalation strategies appropriate to the learner and setting.
- Follow established classroom expectations and student-specific supports when authorized and appropriate.
- Protect the learner's dignity and privacy.
- Avoid escalating a situation through confrontation, humiliation, threats, sarcasm, argument, or unnecessary power struggles.
- Seek assistance when a situation exceeds the candidate's role, training, or ability to respond safely.
- Follow school and district procedures during behavioral or safety incidents.
- Never independently use physical intervention, restraint, seclusion, or other crisis procedures unless specifically trained, authorized, and permitted to do so within the applicable setting and role.
- Follow appropriate reporting and documentation procedures after an incident.
- Participate in reflection and follow-up when appropriate.

Student safety takes priority over proving that an educator is in control.

Behavior Is Not Identity

One of the most important professional habits you can develop is separating a learner from a behavior.

There is a difference between:

“He is aggressive.”

and

“He hit another student during the transition.”

Between:

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“She is disrespectful.”

and

“She raised her voice and left the instructional area after being redirected.”

Between:

“That student is out of control.”

and

“The student appears increasingly dysregulated and needs additional support.”

The first statements label the person.

The second describe what occurred.

Professional educators learn to describe *observable behavior* rather than *assigning identity, intention, or character*.

That distinction influences how we think about learners and how we respond to them.

Notice Before the Crisis

Behavioral escalation does not always begin at its most visible point.

Sometimes there are early indicators.

A learner may:

- Withdraw.
- Become unusually quiet.
- Increase movement.
- Repeat a behavior.
- Change tone or volume.
- Stop engaging.
- Begin arguing.
- Seek escape from a task or environment.
- Demonstrate increasing frustration.
- Cover their ears or show signs of sensory discomfort.
- Pace.

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- Cry.
- Become verbally reactive.
- Communicate that they need space or help.

Not every behavior means escalation is coming.

The goal is not to become hypervigilant.

It is to learn your students well enough to notice:

Something has changed.

Early recognition may create more options for support.

Regulation Before Reasoning

When a learner is highly escalated, that may not be the moment for:

- A lecture.
- A lengthy explanation.
- A debate.
- A demand for reflection.
- A conversation about consequences.
- A requirement that the learner explain why they behaved a certain way.
- An insistence that you have the final word.

The student may not yet be ready for those conversations.

During escalation, the immediate focus may need to be:

Safety → Space → Calm → Support

Once the learner is regulated and the environment is safe, there may be opportunities for reflection, problem-solving, instruction, restoration, or consequences consistent with established expectations.

Timing matters.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Teach when the learner is available for learning.

Your Regulation Matters Too

De-escalation begins with the adult.

- A student's raised voice does not require yours to become louder.
- A student's frustration does not require you to match it.
- A student's refusal does not automatically require an immediate power struggle.

In a difficult moment, notice yourself.

- *Am I becoming frustrated?*
- *Am I speaking faster or louder?*
- *Am I taking the behavior personally?*
- *Am I trying to prove authority?*
- *Am I adding demands that are not necessary right now?*
- *Do I need another adult to step in?*

Professional regulation does not mean you never experience emotion.

It means you develop the capacity to prevent your emotion from unnecessarily escalating the interaction.

Dignity During Escalation

A student experiencing behavioral escalation is still a learner deserving dignity.

Avoid:

- Public humiliation.
- Sarcasm.
- Mockery.
- Threats.
- Crowding the learner unnecessarily.
- Turning the incident into a spectacle.
- Inviting peers into the conflict.
- Discussing the learner afterward where others can hear.
- Recording an incident on a personal device.
- Using the event as a story for social media.

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- Characterizing the learner by their worst moment.

When possible and consistent with safety procedures, reduce the audience.

Preserve privacy.

Use respectful language.

A student may remember very little of what you said during an escalation.

They may remember how you made them feel when they were struggling.

Know the Learner's Established Supports

Some students may have established supports, plans, procedures, accommodations, behavior intervention plans, safety plans, or other individualized guidance relevant to responding to behavior.

Educator candidates should follow the direction of the mentor teacher and other authorized professionals regarding information they need to implement appropriate supports within their role.

Do not independently:

- Invent a behavior plan.
- Modify an established plan.
- Remove an accommodation.
- Create consequences inconsistent with classroom or school procedures.
- Disregard individualized supports because you believe another approach would work better.

Observe.

Learn.

Ask.

Follow established practice.

As your professional knowledge develops, you will increasingly understand why particular supports have been selected and how data inform those decisions.

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When Safety Becomes the Priority

Sometimes escalation creates an immediate safety concern.

- The student may be at risk.
- Other learners may be at risk.
- Staff may be at risk.

At that point, your role as an educator candidate becomes especially important to understand.

- Follow the school's established procedures.
- Seek the appropriate trained personnel.
- Follow directions.
- Help maintain safety within the responsibilities assigned to you.
- Do not assume that because you are preparing to become a teacher, you are authorized to physically intervene.

Physical intervention is not an improvised classroom management strategy.

Restraint, seclusion, physical crisis intervention, or other specialized procedures are governed by laws, policies, training requirements, and specific circumstances.

If you are not trained and authorized for an intervention, **do not attempt it simply because the situation feels urgent.**

Get appropriate help.

De-escalation Is Not “Letting Students Get Away With It”

This misconception deserves direct attention.

Reducing escalation does not mean eliminating expectations.

Preserving dignity does not mean ignoring harmful behavior.

Providing space does not mean there will never be follow-up.

Waiting until regulation returns does not mean consequences disappear.

De-escalation answers:

“What does this learner and environment need right now?”

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Accountability answers:

“What learning, repair, restoration, support, or consequence needs to occur next?”

Those questions may need to be addressed at different times.

Effective educators understand the difference.

After the Escalation

Once immediate safety has been restored, the professional work is not necessarily finished.

Depending upon the situation and your role, follow-up may include:

- Checking on the learner.
- Restoring the learning environment.
- Following school procedures.
- Communicating with appropriate personnel.
- Completing required documentation.
- Reviewing what occurred with your mentor teacher.
- Examining antecedents and environmental factors.
- Considering whether established supports were implemented.
- Identifying what helped reduce escalation.
- Reflecting on your own response.
- Participating in planning for future support.

The question should not only be:

“What did the student do?”

Also ask:

“What can we learn from what happened?”

Documentation: Describe, Don't Diagnose

If you are asked to document an incident, use objective and observable language.

Document what you:

Saw.

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Heard.

Did.

Observed afterward.

Avoid speculation.

Instead of:

“The student became violent because he didn't want to work.”

document the observable sequence according to established procedures.

Professional documentation should distinguish between:

What I observed

and

What I think it meant

That distinction supports more accurate professional decision-making.

Your Responsibilities

As an educator candidate, you are expected to:

- Learn behavioral and safety procedures for your clinical setting.
- Follow mentor teacher and school guidance.
- Understand your role during behavioral escalation.
- Recognize early indicators of dysregulation when possible.
- Maintain a calm professional presence.
- Protect learner dignity.
- Avoid unnecessary confrontation and power struggles.
- Use authorized and appropriate de-escalation approaches.
- Follow established student supports.
- Seek help when a situation exceeds your preparation or role.
- Never improvise physical intervention.
- Follow directions during emergency or crisis situations.
- Protect confidentiality following an incident.
- Complete authorized documentation accurately when required.

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- Participate in reflection and follow-up.
- Examine your own response without centering blame.

Knowing when you need assistance is professional judgment, not professional failure.

How We Support You

You are learning.

You should not be expected to enter a classroom already knowing how to navigate every behavioral situation.

Your mentor teacher can help you understand:

- Classroom expectations.
- Established routines.
- Student supports.
- Early indicators.
- De-escalation practices.
- School procedures.
- When additional assistance is needed.

Faculty can help you connect behavioral experiences to what you are learning about development, learner variability, classroom environment, disability, behavior, instruction, relationships, and professional practice.

Clinical supervisors can help you reflect on your response.

Program Managers and the Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator can assist when a situation raises broader clinical concerns.

Use those people.

Behavioral support is team work.

If Challenges Occur

If a behavioral incident occurs and you are uncertain whether you responded appropriately, communicate with your mentor teacher or clinical supervisor.

If you:

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- Used a strategy you were not authorized to use.
- Had physical contact with a learner during an escalation.
- Believe someone was injured.
- Failed to follow a safety procedure.
- Shared confidential information.
- Recorded or photographed an incident.
- Believe your actions may have contributed to escalation.
- Witnessed conduct that concerns you.
- Are unsure whether additional reporting is required.

Do not conceal the concern.

Seek guidance immediately.

Depending upon the circumstances, school, district, College, clinical, legal, mandatory reporting, or other procedures may apply.

Professional accountability means being willing to examine *our own actions*, not only the student's.

Related Resources

- School and district behavior and safety procedures
- Student-specific plans and supports, when authorized
- Clinical placement requirements
- Chapter 21: Mentor Teachers
- Chapter 22: Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice
- Chapter 23: Confidentiality
- Chapter 24: Safety
- Chapter 26: Removal from Placement
- Chapter 31: Professional Readiness
- Chapter 41: Ethics and Professional Judgment
- Chapter 42: Mandatory Reporting
- Chapter 45: Professional Concern Process
- Chapter 46: Professional Fitness Review
- Mentor Teacher
- Clinical Supervisor
- Program Manager
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Portfolio Connection

A student's behavioral escalation is not a portfolio artifact.

Do not include identifiable incident reports, photographs, videos, confidential plans, or detailed student crisis narratives simply to demonstrate your professional learning.

The student's difficult moment belongs to the student.

Your professional growth belongs to you.

What may eventually become visible in your portfolio is evidence that you have developed greater capacity to:

- Design supportive learning environments.
- Anticipate learner variability.
- Establish routines.
- Build relationships.
- Use proactive supports.
- Respond to behavior professionally.
- Reflect on instructional and environmental decisions.
- Collaborate with other professionals.
- Protect learner dignity.

The professional story is not:

“Look at the behavior I handled.”

It is:

“Here is how my understanding of supportive, responsive learning environments has grown.”

That distinction matters.

The SCF Education Way

See the learner before the behavior.

Behavior can be challenging.

It can interrupt instruction.

It can frustrate you.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

It can concern you.

And sometimes it can create genuine safety risks.

None of that changes the humanity of the learner in front of you.

Your responsibility is not to prove that you are more powerful.

It is to bring professional judgment to the moment.

Notice.

Regulate yourself.

Reduce unnecessary demands.

Preserve dignity.

Use established supports.

Get help when you need it.

Protect safety.

Then, when the learner is ready, return to relationship, learning, reflection, repair, and growth.

Because the measure of professional practice is not whether your classroom never experiences difficult moments.

It is how you respond when those moments arrive.

Professional Tip

Lower the temperature before you try to teach the lesson.

When escalation begins, ask yourself:

What can I reduce right now?

Your volume?

Your words?

The audience?

The demand?

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The proximity?

The pace?

Sometimes effective de-escalation begins not by adding another strategy, but by removing something that is increasing the pressure.

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Reflection

Picture a learner at their most dysregulated.

Now imagine that moment becoming the story everyone uses to describe them.

- *Would that be fair?*
- *Would it tell you who that learner really is?*
- *Would it help you teach them tomorrow?*

Now turn the lens toward yourself.

When a student escalates:

- *What happens inside you?*
- *Do you become louder?*
- *More rigid?*
- *Anxious?*
- *Defensive?*
- *Do you feel pressure to demonstrate control?*

Or can you recognize the moment and think:

Protect. Pause. Check. Ask. Act. Reflect.

That is the Professional Trust Lens in one of its most practical forms.

And perhaps one of the most important shifts in becoming an educator is realizing:

Sometimes the most powerful person in the room demonstrates that power by refusing to turn the moment into a power struggle.

Protect the learner.

Protect the classroom.

Preserve dignity.

Seek support.

Then return to learning.

That is professional practice.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

48. Acknowledgement of Professional Responsibilities

"Professional responsibility begins with knowing what is expected—and continues through the choices you make because of that understanding."

Purpose

Throughout this section, you have examined responsibilities that accompany the trust placed in educators.

You have considered:

- Student privacy and FERPA.
- Ethics and professional judgment.
- Mandatory reporting.
- Social media and digital professionalism.
- Appeals and the Support and Accountability Process.
- The Professional Concern Process.
- Professional Fitness Review.
- Behavioral escalations and student safety.

These responsibilities are different, but they share a common foundation:

Educators are entrusted with people, information, relationships, access, authority, and responsibility.

That trust requires more than awareness.

It requires action.

The purpose of this chapter is to acknowledge your responsibility for understanding and following the professional, academic, clinical, ethical, safety, and program expectations associated with educator preparation.

Why This Matters

Policies are useful only when people understand how they apply to practice.

A handbook can explain expectations.

Faculty can teach them.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Mentor teachers can model them.

Clinical supervisors can reinforce them.

Program Managers can clarify them.

But ultimately, you must make professional decisions.

There will be moments when someone is not standing beside you telling you what to do.

You will need to recognize:

- *This information is private.*
- *This situation needs to be reported.*
- *This interaction requires a professional boundary.*
- *This student needs additional support.*
- *I am not trained or authorized to do this.*
- *I need to stop before I post this.*
- *I made a mistake and need to tell someone.*
- *I do not understand this expectation, so I need to ask.*

Acknowledgement therefore means more than:

“I received the handbook.”

It means:

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“I understand that knowing and meeting these expectations is part of my responsibility as an educator candidate.”

Department Standard 6.9

Acknowledgement of Professional Responsibilities

Educator candidates are responsible for reviewing, understanding, and following applicable Education Department expectations; SCF policies and procedures; clinical partner requirements; professional standards; and applicable legal and ethical responsibilities throughout their educator preparation program.

Educator candidates are expected to:

- Review required program information and updates.
- Ask questions when expectations are unclear.
- Complete required trainings and acknowledgements.
- Follow applicable College, program, school, and district requirements.
- Maintain professional conduct in academic, clinical, digital, and community settings connected to their educator preparation.
- Protect student privacy, dignity, rights, safety, and well-being.
- Understand that expectations may differ across clinical settings and seek clarification when needed.
- Respond to concerns and feedback professionally.
- Report situations when required.
- Take responsibility for professional decisions and actions.
- Remain informed when policies, procedures, or professional requirements change.

Acknowledgement of expectations does not replace the responsibility to continue learning about them.

Professional responsibility is ongoing.

Knowing Where to Look Is Part of Knowing

You will not memorize every College policy, district procedure, professional standard, legal requirement, or program expectation.

You are not expected to.

Professional competence also means knowing:

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- *Where can I find the information?*
- *Who should I ask?*
- *Which policy governs this situation?*
- *Whose authority applies here?*
- *When should I stop and seek guidance?*

An educator who knows everything is unrealistic.

An educator who knows when they do not know enough to proceed independently demonstrates professional judgment.

Policies and Expectations May Change

Education operates within changing legal, professional, institutional, technological, and community contexts.

Policies may be revised.

Certification requirements may change.

Clinical partners may update procedures.

Technology may create situations that did not previously exist.

Professional expectations continue to develop.

Therefore, completing an acknowledgement at one point in your program does not mean:

“I learned the rules once, so I am finished.”

It means you accept responsibility for remaining informed throughout your preparation.

Read communications.

Review updates.

Complete required training.

Ask when something has changed.

Professional learning includes professional updating.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Your Acknowledgement

As an educator candidate in the SCF Education Department, you may be asked to formally acknowledge that you have received and reviewed program expectations and understand your responsibility to follow applicable requirements.

An acknowledgement might include language such as:

I acknowledge that I am responsible for reviewing and following the academic, professional, clinical, ethical, safety, and program expectations applicable to my participation in an SCF educator preparation program.

I understand that educator preparation includes expectations for professional conduct and dispositions in addition to academic performance.

I understand that I am responsible for seeking clarification when an expectation, policy, procedure, or professional responsibility is unclear.

I understand that concerns may be addressed through coaching, formal concern processes, Professional Fitness Review, or other applicable College, program, clinical partner, or legal procedures depending upon the nature and severity of the concern.

I understand that program policies and requirements may be updated and that I am responsible for reviewing official communications and current program information.

See the listing of all Department Standards along with this acknowledgement for review and signature at the end of this section.

Acknowledgement Does Not Mean You Will Never Make a Mistake

This distinction matters.

Acknowledging professional responsibilities is not a promise of perfection.

- You are preparing for a profession.
- You are still learning.
- You may misunderstand something.
- You may make a poor decision.
- You may receive feedback.
- You may need coaching.

The professional expectation is not:

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- Never make a mistake.

It is:

- Learn the expectations.
- Ask when uncertain.
- Use sound judgment.
- Respond when concerns arise.
- Take responsibility when you make a mistake.
- Demonstrate growth.

That is a much more meaningful professional commitment.

Your Responsibilities

Throughout the program, you are responsible for:

- Reading official Education Department communications.
- Maintaining access to your SCF communication systems.
- Reviewing current handbook and program information.
- Completing required trainings.
- Understanding clinical partner expectations.
- Asking questions before acting when expectations are unclear.
- Maintaining required documentation.
- Responding to faculty and program communication.
- Keeping yourself informed about requirements affecting progression.
- Applying professional expectations consistently across academic and clinical environments.
- Recognizing when your actions affect learners or others.
- Accepting responsibility for your professional decisions.

Professional responsibility is active.

It cannot be delegated to:

“No one told me.” When information was reasonably available and you were responsible for reviewing it.

At the same time, the department has a corresponding responsibility to make important expectations clear, accessible, and reasonably available to you.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Accountability works in both directions.

How We Support You

You should never hesitate to ask:

- *“Where can I find that?”*
- *“Can you help me understand this requirement?”*
- *“Which policy applies?”*
- *“Who should I contact?”*
- *“I am not sure whether I am allowed to do this.”*
- *“Something happened, and I need guidance.”*

Depending upon the question, your support network may include faculty, your faculty advisor, Program Manager, mentor teacher, clinical supervisor, Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator, Department Chair, or another appropriate College or clinical partner professional.

You are responsible for seeking information.

We are responsible for helping you navigate toward it.

If Challenges Occur

If you realize that you misunderstood or failed to follow an expectation, communicate promptly.

Do not let embarrassment turn a manageable concern into a larger one.

Explain what occurred.

Ask what needs to happen next.

Follow the appropriate process.

Reflect.

Adjust.

Depending upon the nature of the concern, applicable College, department, clinical partner, legal, or Support and Accountability processes may apply.

Acknowledgement of professional responsibilities means accepting that professional choices can have consequences.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

It also means understanding that responsible response after a concern is part of professional practice.

Related Resources

- SCF Education Student Handbook
- SCF Student Handbook and College policies
- Program-specific requirements
- Clinical partner policies and procedures
- Required trainings and acknowledgements
- Chapters 40–47 of this section
- Education Department Support and Accountability Process
- Faculty Advisor
- Program Manager
- Educator Preparation & Field Experience Coordinator
- Department Chair

Portfolio Connection

You do not need to place a signed handbook acknowledgement in your Professional Growth Portfolio. A signed handbook acknowledgement will be kept in your student files.

Instead, evidence of your acknowledgement should become visible through your practice.

Do you:

- Protect confidentiality?
- Meet responsibilities?
- Communicate professionally?
- Ask appropriate questions?
- Respond to feedback?
- Follow clinical procedures?
- Demonstrate ethical judgment?
- Protect learners?
- Use technology responsibly?
- Take responsibility when something goes wrong?

Those behaviors demonstrate something a signature alone cannot:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You are moving from acknowledging professional expectations to living them.

The SCF Education Way

A signature can acknowledge a responsibility. Only practice can demonstrate it.

We want you to know the expectations of this program.

But more importantly, we want you to understand *why they exist*.

FERPA protects privacy.

Ethical standards protect professional trust.

Mandatory reporting protects learners.

Digital professionalism protects boundaries, privacy, and professional relationships.

Accountability processes protect clarity and fairness.

Professional concern and fitness processes protect growth and the integrity of preparation.

Behavioral and safety procedures protect dignity and well-being.

These are not disconnected rules.

Together, they answer the question that began this section:

How do we honor the trust placed in educators?

We learn what has been entrusted to us.

We understand our responsibilities.

We ask when we do not know.

And then, we act like professionals worthy of that trust.

Professional Tip

When you sign an acknowledgement, know what you are acknowledging.

Do not click through.

Do not sign automatically.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Read it.

Ask questions.

Keep access to the document.

Know where to find it again.

Your signature should represent understanding, not simply completion.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Reflection

At the beginning of this section, we asked you to think about professional trust.

Now imagine someone saying:

“I trust you with my child.”

What responsibilities come with that sentence?

Privacy?

Safety?

Dignity?

Fairness?

Ethical judgment?

Boundaries?

Competence?

Honesty?

Accountability?

Probably all of them.

So before leaving this section, consider one final question:

What will your actions need to demonstrate for someone to be able to place that trust in you?

That is the acknowledgement that matters most.

Section VI Conclusion

Worthy of the Trust

Section VI began with a question:

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

How do we honor the trust placed in educators?

We now have an answer.

Not through one policy.

Not through one training.

Not through one signature.

And not by never making a mistake.

We honor trust through the pattern of our professional decisions.

We protect information entrusted to us.

We exercise ethical judgment.

We act when learner safety requires action.

We maintain appropriate boundaries in physical and digital spaces.

We participate responsibly in systems of accountability.

We respond to concerns.

We demonstrate professional fitness.

We protect dignity during difficult behavioral moments.

And we acknowledge that becoming an educator means accepting responsibilities that extend beyond ourselves.

From Rules to Responsibility

At the beginning of educator preparation, policies can feel external:

- *What am I allowed to do?*
- *What am I not allowed to do?*
- *What does the handbook say?*
- *What happens if I break the rule?*

Professional development gradually changes those questions.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

You begin asking:

- *Who am I responsible for?*
- *What has been entrusted to me?*
- *What impact could my decision have?*
- *What is the most responsible action?*
- *Who should I ask when I am uncertain?*

And eventually:

- *What would a trustworthy educator do?*

That shift, from compliance to judgment, is part of becoming a professional.

Trust Does Not Require Perfection

You will make mistakes.

Every educator does.

Professional trust is not built by pretending otherwise.

It is strengthened when professionals can:

Recognize → Communicate → Take Responsibility → Repair → Learn → Change

That is why support and accountability have remained connected throughout this handbook.

Growth without accountability can become avoidance.

Accountability without support can become merely punitive.

Our goal is neither.

High Support + High Accountability = Professional Growth

We believe in your capacity to develop.

And because we believe the profession matters, we maintain expectations for the responsibilities you are preparing to assume.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

The SCF Education Way

You began this program as a student.

But throughout your preparation, the questions have changed.

Not only:

- *What do I need to know?*

But:

- *What do I need to notice?*
- *What do I need to protect?*
- *When do I need to speak?*
- *When do I need to listen?*
- *When should I act?*
- *When should I ask for help?*
- *How do my choices affect someone else?*

Those are professional questions.

And they lead us back to the central idea of this section:

Trust is something educators are given and something we continually earn.

Earn it in the classroom.

Earn it in your communication.

Earn it with confidential information.

Earn it online.

Earn it when something goes wrong.

Earn it when no one is watching.

Earn it through the way you treat the learner having the hardest moment of their day.

And earn it through your willingness to say:

“I don't know. I need to ask.”

That is not uncertainty to hide.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

That is professional judgment at work.

Figure 28 — The Anatomy of Professional Trust



Professional trust is not one competency. It is the pattern created when knowledge, judgment, responsibility, and action become professional practice.

SCF Education Department Professional Standards Acknowledgement

49. Preparing Exceptional Educators

Throughout this handbook, the SCF Education Department has described the academic, professional, clinical, ethical, safety, and program expectations associated with your preparation as an educator.

The Department Standards presented throughout the handbook establish shared expectations for educator candidates and help connect your experience as a college student with the responsibilities of the profession you are preparing to enter.

Before signing this acknowledgement, review the Department Standards below.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

Before You Sign

You have now encountered these Department Standards within the learning, clinical, professional, support, safety, and accountability experiences they represent.

Take a final moment to review each standard. Use the Reviewed column to confirm that you have returned to the expectation and understand where to seek clarification if needed.

Checking “Reviewed” does not indicate that you are perfect in the standard or have nothing left to learn. It indicates that you have reviewed the expectation and recognize your responsibility for continued professional growth.

Section II | Learning Like an Educator

Department Standard	What This Means	Reviewed
2.1 Shared Ownership of Learning	I take active responsibility for preparation, participation, reflection, collaboration, and growth.	☐
2.2 Intentional Course Design	I understand that course experiences intentionally connect standards, learning, practice, feedback, and professional preparation.	☐
2.3 Professional Use of Technology	I use technology responsibly, ethically, purposefully, and professionally.	☐
2.4 Presence and Engagement	I demonstrate preparation, engagement, communication, and active participation.	☐
2.5 Timely Participation and Assignment Submission	I meet published timelines so feedback, collaboration, and subsequent learning can occur as designed.	☐
2.6 Academic Integrity	I demonstrate honesty, originality, ethical decision-making, and professional responsibility.	☐
2.7 Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence	I use AI as a tool without replacing authentic learning, cognitive engagement, or professional responsibility.	☐
2.8 Assessment and Feedback for Growth	I engage with feedback and use it to strengthen future practice.	☐
2.9 Professional Growth Portfolio	I maintain evidence of learning, reflection, competency development, and professional growth.	☐

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

2.10 Academic Progression	I understand that progression requires academic, clinical, professional, dispositional, ethical, and program expectations to be met.	☐
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Section III | Clinical Practice and Professional Experience

Department Standard	What This Means	Reviewed
3.1 Clinical Experiences	I participate actively and professionally in authentic clinical learning.	☐
3.2 Field Placements	I follow established processes and expectations associated with my placements.	☐
3.3 Shared Responsibilities	I recognize clinical preparation as a partnership and fulfill my responsibilities within it.	☐
3.4 Mentor Teacher Partnerships	I approach mentoring relationships with professionalism, initiative, respect, and openness to learning.	☐
3.5 Professional Conduct During Clinical Practice	I demonstrate professional conduct, communication, appearance, boundaries, judgment, and technology use.	☐
3.6 Confidentiality and Professional Privacy	I protect confidential and personally identifiable information.	☐
3.7 Safety and Student Well-Being	I place learner safety and well-being at the center of professional decisions.	☐
3.8 Attendance and Professional Reliability During Clinical Experiences	I demonstrate the attendance, punctuality, preparation, communication, and reliability expected of educators.	☐
3.9 Support and Accountability	I understand that concerns may require support, intervention, documentation, accountability, and demonstrated growth.	☐

Section IV | Certification and Program Progression

Department Standard	What This Means	Reviewed
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Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

4.1 Degree Progression and Candidate Responsibility	I actively monitor and complete requirements associated with my progression.	☐
4.2 Certification Examination Progression	I complete required certification examinations according to established milestones.	☐
4.3 Graduation Requirements	I understand that all applicable requirements must be satisfied before graduation and program completion are confirmed.	☐
4.4 Final Internship Eligibility and Successful Completion	I understand the eligibility and successful-completion requirements associated with final internship.	☐
4.5 Professional Readiness	I understand that program completion represents demonstrated readiness for professional practice.	☐

Section V | Support for Your Success

Department Standard	What This Means	Reviewed
5.1 Faculty Advising and Candidate Ownership	I use faculty advising while maintaining ownership of my program progression.	☐
5.2 Accessible Learning and Student Support	I understand how accessibility and approved support can provide equitable access while maintaining essential outcomes.	☐
5.3 Academic Support and Certification Preparation	I use academic and certification support proactively when needed.	☐
5.4 Care, Connection, and Student Well-Being	I recognize when support may be helpful and know that College resources are available.	☐
5.5 Well-Being and Sustainable Professional Practice	I develop relationships, habits, boundaries, and support systems that contribute to sustainable professional practice.	☐
5.6 Financial Planning and Resource Awareness	I take responsibility for exploring financial resources that may support successful completion.	☐

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

5.7 Career Preparation and Professional Transition	I prepare intentionally for the transition from educator candidate to professional educator.	☐
5.8 Professional Engagement and Student Leadership	I recognize opportunities to extend my development through leadership, service, organizations, and professional communities.	☐

Section VI | Policy, Safety, and Accountability

Department Standard	What This Means	Reviewed
6.1 Student Privacy, Confidentiality, and FERPA	I protect student information and privacy.	☐
6.2 Ethical Practice and Professional Judgment	I exercise ethical conduct and professional judgment.	☐
6.3 Mandatory Reporting and Protection of Learners	I understand my responsibility to report appropriately when mandatory reporting requirements apply.	☐
6.4 Social Media and Digital Professionalism	I understand that professional judgment and boundaries extend into digital spaces.	☐
6.5 Support, Accountability, and Student Appeal	I understand the four-level process and the pathways for support, accountability, and appeal.	☐
6.6 Professional Concern Process	I understand that significant or recurring concerns may require formal documentation and demonstrated improvement.	☐
6.7 Professional Fitness Review	I understand that serious or unresolved concerns may result in formal review of professional readiness.	☐
6.8 Behavioral Escalation, De-escalation, and Student Safety	I respond within my training and role while protecting learner safety and dignity and seeking assistance when needed.	☐
6.9 Acknowledgement of Professional Responsibilities	I accept responsibility for remaining informed about and following applicable professional expectations.	☐

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.

My Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I am responsible for reviewing and following the academic, professional, clinical, ethical, safety, and program expectations applicable to my participation in an SCF educator preparation program.

I understand that educator preparation includes expectations for professional conduct and dispositions in addition to academic performance.

I understand that I am responsible for seeking clarification when an expectation, policy, procedure, or professional responsibility is unclear.

I understand that concerns may be addressed through coaching, formal concern processes, Professional Fitness Review, or other applicable College, program, clinical partner, or legal procedures depending upon the nature and severity of the concern.

I understand that program policies and requirements may be updated and that I am responsible for reviewing official communications and current program information.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received access to the SCF Education Student Handbook, have had the opportunity to review the Department Standards and expectations contained within it, and understand my responsibility to seek clarification when I have questions about their application.

Educator Candidate Name (Print): _____

SCF Student ID (last four digits): _____

Education Program: _____

Educator Candidate Signature: _____

Date: _____

Your signature marks an acknowledgement. Your practice demonstrates the commitment.

Welcome to the responsibility, possibility, and privilege of becoming an educator.

Welcome to the SCF Education Way.

Every exceptional educator was once a learner who chose to keep growing.