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# Professional Ethics, Decision-Making, and Interdisciplinary Collaboration: An Exploration of Teacher Preparation Programs and Practice

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Professional Ethics, Decision-Making, and Interdisciplinary Collaboration:  
An Exploration of Teacher Preparation Programs and Practice

By

Brittany McCreary, M.A.

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
In Partial Fulfilment  
Of the Requirements

For the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2019

Professional Ethics, Decision-Making, and Interdisciplinary Collaboration: An  
Exploration of Teacher Preparation Programs and Practice

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore the prevalence, methods of instruction, and perceived value of professional ethics, ethical decision-making, and interdisciplinary collaboration in teacher preparation programs throughout the U.S. These factors were addressed using the Ethics Training and Curriculum Survey (ETCS). Participants for the ETCS included teacher educators ( $n = 977$ ) from CAEP accredited preparation programs. Survey results suggest that professional ethics is widely addressed throughout CAEP accredited programs, but that instruction in ethical decision-making varies considerably. To connect these findings with practice, a second purpose of this study was to explore how educators make ethical decisions, using the Inventory of Ethical Decision-Making and Collaboration (IEDMC), and, following this investigation, to identify meaningful clusters of educators. Participants for the IEDMC survey were certified teachers ( $n = 482$ ), Pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Two meaningful clusters were found, based on differences between training, use of ethical decision-making models, years of experience, presence of a school psychologist, and accreditation status of preparation programs. Further, many practicing teachers reported feeling unprepared to make ethical decisions, despite training and access to codes of ethics. The culmination of results illustrates a continued gap between preparation and practice. Discussion and implications follow.

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## CHAPTER I

### **Introduction**

Ethics and education are inseparable concepts, in that they both describe, improve, and contribute to the human condition (Campbell, 2008). Ethical decision-making within schools often involves a complex interplay between context, experience, and personal beliefs and values (O'Neill & Bourke, 2010), so that one must decide what to do to achieve the most good for all systems involved (Atjonen, 2012; Colnerud, 2006; Snook, 2003). To attend to the ethical dimensions of education, educators must "...hold together several perspectives simultaneously. They need the capacity to synthesize and analyze, to integrate under a general idea, and to break things down into their separate particulars" (Husu & Tirri, 2003, p. 355). Yet, complex factors in the modern classroom and added administrative pressures on school-based professionals may lead to an increase in ethical dilemmas (Dempster & Berry, 2003). These dilemmas are not readily solvable and must simply be managed rather than resolved. Ethical training can aid in this process, by increasing ethical sensitivity and the ability to make ethical decisions (Cummings, Maddux, Maples, & Torres-Rivera, 2004; Nucci, Drill, Larson, & Browne, 2005). Researchers contend that ethics education is paramount in student success, professionalism, and ethical conduct (Jacob & Hartshorne, 2003).

## **Statement of the Problem**

Educational researchers assert that it is unfair to generalize ethical perspectives from other professions to that of teaching, as teaching differs fundamentally from other professions. School psychologists, too, hold a unique role within both education and the practice of psychology. Within the educational environment, educators and school psychologists may struggle to maintain both a clear sense of duty and the best interest of children. An emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration in professional training may help alleviate common barriers to ethical practice and build upon existing strengths between professions. Yet, educational research is rife with criticism regarding teaching as a profession. For example, a major point of contention lies in the usefulness and enforceability of professional codes of ethics for educators (Freeman, 2000). Further, researchers contend that preparation programs lack consistent training in professional ethics and ethical decision-making (Boon, 2011; Glanzer & Ream, 2007; Lovat & Toomey, 2007; Revell & Arthur, 2007). As a result, educators may lack specific models for ethical decision-making, compared to other disciplines (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).

Despite decades of research suggesting that professional ethics training is absent from teacher preparation programs, it remains unclear the extent to which ethics training is included in the curriculum (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016). The available research on ethics education in preservice teacher preparation seems to confirm this widely held notion, but not without limitations. With a few recent exceptions (i.e., Blumenfeld-Jones, Senneville, & Crawford, 2013; Boon, 2011; Campbell, 2008), there is also a lack of

outcome research examining the link between ethics education and ethical-decision making in practice. In contrast, the extent of ethical training received by school psychologists demonstrates little association with perceived preparedness to manage ethical challenges arising on the job (Dailor & Jacob, 2011; Tryon, 2000; 2001). This information is important, as preparation programs are often the first exposure future educators and school psychologists have to the ethical and moral dimensions of their chosen professions.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is multifaceted. The first purpose was to determine what extent (a) professional ethics training is included in teacher preparation program curriculum throughout the U.S., (b) teacher educators include information regarding ethical decision-making within program curriculum, and (c) teacher educators approach interdisciplinary collaboration within program curriculum. In addition, information gained from this study was intended to provide insight into the perceived value of professional ethics education, instruction in ethical decision-making, and interdisciplinary collaboration within teacher preparation programs. Following this, the second purpose of this study was to explore how educators throughout the U.S. make ethical decisions in daily practice, according to level of training and experience, professional and personal perspectives, and available resources. From this investigation, meaningful clusters were created, based on survey factors and demographic information.

## Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Is professional ethics instruction provided in teacher preparation programs throughout the U.S., and, if so, using what methods?
2. Are teacher educators including in their instruction information regarding ethical decision-making, such as use of decision-making or problem-solving models?
3. Are teacher educators including information on or opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration within program curriculum?
4. How often do teacher educators feel that they should include ethics instruction, ethical decision-making models, and interdisciplinary collaboration within program curriculum?
5. How do educators make ethical decisions in daily practice?
6. What meaningful clusters will emerge when using educator demographics and response patterns as factors?

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### Overview of Ethics

Ethics is multiply defined as the philosophical study of morality (O'Neill & Bourke, 2010; Wiggins, 2006); a measure of human conduct (Colnerud, 2006); personal, moral, and societal responsibilities that individuals have to act in a specific way (Atjonen, 2012; Freeman, Engels, & Altekruise, 2004); and the broad human capacity to consider moral values and direct actions toward those values. Plainly speaking, ethics refers to the standards for knowing right from wrong (Campbell, 2008). These standards differ from both law and moral sensibilities (Ehrich, Kimber, Millwater, & Cranston, 2011; Freeman et al., 2004; Weston, 2006). Although law and ethics may share roles in defining and codifying human conduct, laws are enforceable, punitive, and provide external incentives (i.e., avoidance of punishment) for upholding the lowest acceptable standard of functioning in society and basic observance of human rights (Remley & Herlihy, 2016).

Minor distinctions are made between morality and ethics, as there is no universal agreement in research as to the operational definitions of each term (Colnerud, 2006; Gartin & Murdick, 2000; Husu & Tirri, 2007; O'Neill & Bourke, 2010); however, researchers argue that it is important to maintain these distinctions. Morality is effectively used in place of ethics to describe common reactions to behaviors found

heinous or abhorrent versus empathetic, prosocial, or humanitarian (O'Neill & Bourke, 2010). Morality, then, functions as a measure of an individual's implicit and instinctive behaviors and dispositions, plus salient culture and environmental factors (Fiedler & Van Haren, 2008; Freeman, 1999). Yet, in this interpretation, morality only describes the outward display, through daily, observable conduct, of the rules or values held by individuals. Such behaviors are often unconscious and generally not reflected upon (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001; Colnerud, 2006; Gartin & Murdick, 2000).

In contrast, ethics involves *understanding* personal beliefs, thus leading to a rationale for one's own moral actions, expressing the "combined knowledge and wisdom borne of careful study and collaboration" (Freeman, 1999, p. 33). Oftentimes, morality may conflict with ethical decision-making: Where morality is an affective process that may lead individuals *away* from desired courses of actions, ethical action demands that individuals either constrain emotional responses or override prohibited actions in the moment (O'Neill & Bourke, 2010). In sum, ethics supersedes personal morality and values, requiring individuals to first interpret situations and then to engage in decision-making and reasoning processes. As such, the study of ethics is not only concerned with morality but also with the reasoning for moral actions and questioning of moral judgements.



## **Professionalism**

The term *professional* has evolved considerably in its meanings since the turn of last century (Freeman, 2000). Between the 1930s and 1950s, professionals were assumed to serve society by “combining the virtues of rationality, technique, control, and codes of ethics and only incidentally reaping pecuniary and other rewards” (Soder, 1990, p. 39). Major changes in American attitudes toward professional institutions occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s, due to social unrest. Specifically, professionals were seen less as experts providing services to society, and more as “elite, self-serving protectors of the status quo” who only contribute to further social and economic disparity in the U.S. (Freeman, 1996, p. 130). This perception shifted once again, from the 1980s onward. For example, in popular culture, professionals were portrayed as having loyalty to a lifelong career, a measure of detachment and studied determination, and excellence and desirability above other types of workers. Concurrently, the work of Barber (1988) led to the identification of four main attributes of professionals: Professionals maintain (a) an extensive body of knowledge, (b) a primary interest in community over personal gain, (c) a system of financial and honorary awards possessing intrinsic value, and (d) autonomy within the profession, including independent codes of ethics and professional organizations. O’Neill and Bourke (2010) expanded the work of Barber (1988), by noting that professionalism includes the adherence to desirable standards of behavior, with processes designed to hold members accountable and to create a commitment to what the profession regards as morally right or good.

## **Professional Ethics**

Where the philosophical study of ethics is concerned with aspects of morality, professional ethics is prescriptive, applied, and concerned with actions related to “the character and social mandate of institutions and professions” (Colnerud, 2006, p. 372). Professional ethics impart the “core values and beliefs designed to provide guidance to the behavior of a group of professionals in relation to their interactions with clients, consumers, and colleagues” (Fiedler & Van Haren, 2008, p. 160). As such, ethical behavior within a profession can be defined as acting based on judgements of obligation, via an established relationship with a social institution or related individuals, and in accordance with well-justified ethical principles (Coombs, 1998; Green, Johnson, Kim, & Pope, 2007). Whether a behavior is ethical or unethical within a profession depends upon the level of consistency between that behavior and the profession’s obligations and principles. It is the responsibility of the individual to strive continuously to reduce this gap in practice, through the process of ethical decision-making. Ethical decision-making refers to actively perceiving, evaluating, and selecting the best ethical alternative, in a manner that is both consistent with ethical principles and that eliminates the possibility of harm. Husu and Tirri (2003) describe ethical decision-making as a cognitive exercise—requiring simultaneous mental processes to synthesize, analyze, break-down, and integrate information—based upon well-defined and teachable concepts, e.g. due process and confidentiality.

At times, professional obligations and principles may create conflict or contradictions in ethical decision-making or may engender multiple solutions to a problem, each carrying a strong moral justification or potential unintended ramifications—i.e., ethical dilemmas (Freeman, 1999). To ease conflicts in ethical decision-making and to prevent unethical behavior, professional institutions continue to generate proactive internal mechanisms for self-policing, socialization, and education. These mechanisms also create a shared culture within a profession and maintain a hierarchy or continuum of expertise preventing practice by those without specific qualifications, certification, and training. Further still, a crucial indicator of the independence, maturity, and legitimacy of a profession is the existence of a professional code of ethics (Barrett, Casey, Visser, & Headley, 2012; Campbell, 2000; Freeman, 2000).

### **Professional Codes of Ethics**

Common throughout Western countries, professional codes of ethics serve three general purposes: (a) to ensure high standards of practice, (b) to protect the public, and (c) to guide practitioners in their decision making in licensed professions organizations (Atjonen, 2012; Barrett, Headley, Stovall, & Witte, 2006; Barrett et al., 2012; Burant, Chubbuck, & Whipp, 2007). Most professional codes of ethics are principle-based, prescriptive, and enforceable; use language and concepts specific to the profession; reflect both internal professional norms and explicit fundamental qualities of the profession; provide clear descriptions of behaviors that exemplify ethical positions; and

can be uniformly applied to the profession (Barrett et al., 2006; 2012; Burant et al., 2007). Further, ethical codes describe professionals' responsibilities to clients, each other, and society, while offering the public an assurance that practitioners' behavior will live up to their high expectations (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016; O'Neill & Bourke, 2010). Ethical codes articulate higher-than-required standards of practice which embody professional ideals and aspirations and articulate for the profession an intent to do good and to avoid harm.

Notable examples of professional codes of ethics include the American Psychological Association's (APA) *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (2017), the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) *Code of Ethics* (2017), the American Medical Association's (AMA) *Code of Medical Ethics* (2016), and the American Bar Association's (ABA) *Model Rules of Professional Conduct* (2016). These codes tend to begin with a preamble describing the broad principles that guide professional practice, followed by lists of decision rules delineating examples of how each principle might be enacted in daily practice, with regard to common ethical issues. These explicit standards of behavior, although not exhaustive, are viewed as guidelines for enforceable rules of conduct within the profession. Most importantly, the content of professional ethics codes is often enforceable at both the state and national level—with some states incorporating language from professional codes of ethics into statutes and regulations. Further, reciprocity often exists between state boards of practice,

professional organizations, and national data banks (e.g., Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards, 2004).

### **Teaching as a Profession**

Teaching is inarguably “one of the oldest expressions of human interaction” (Campbell, 2008, p. 357), long understood as a moral activity with a history rich in philosophy (Burant et al., 2007; Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990; Hansen, 2001a, 2001b; Sockett, 2006; Strike, 1996). In Western cultures, education is a “social good” (De Ruyter & Kole, 2010, p. 207), wherein instruction is intended to encourage students to think and act in ways deemed worthwhile by society. In fulfilling this role, educators must uphold a duty of care and act in the best interests of all students (Bull, 1993; Mahony, 2009), while balancing the compulsory, pervasive, and imbalanced nature of their role as “possessor[s] and transmitter[s] of sanctioned forms of knowledge” (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001, p. 874). Given this, proponents against furthering the professionalization process assert that it is unfair to generalize ethical perspectives from other professions to that of teaching, as teaching differs fundamentally from other professions (Colnerud, 1997; Colnerud, 2006).

Colnerud and Granstöm (2002) attribute four characteristics to higher status academic professions:

- 1). Systematic theory: The profession operates from a common scientific knowledge base and uses a professional language pertaining to the content and practice of teaching.

2). Authority: Members of the profession are made formally legitimate by the public and overseeing agencies.

3). Professional autonomy: Members of the profession have the right and responsibility alone to select which tools and methods to use in practice.

4). Self-governed professional ethics: The profession has developed an ethical code regarding professional practice.

Given these characteristics, Colnerud and Granstöm (2002) conclude that teaching has not yet gained tract as a higher status profession but is instead semi-professional. These conclusions are echoed elsewhere in educational research. For example, in a study by Thornberg (2008), 13 teachers were interviewed about their role in values education and degree of professionalism in this matter. Thornberg found that the teachers' responses lacked reference to a common formal ethical language and to behavioral science and educational research or theories. Instead, the teachers used personal anecdotes, common sense notions, worldviews, and emotions to describe conduct. Both Colnerud and Granstöm (2002) and Thornberg (2008) concluded that teachers lack the professional "meta-language" needed to set education apart from routinized occupations.

Concern for ethical conduct of teachers is predicated upon increased evidence of ethical misconduct (Barrett et al., 2012; Davenport, Thompson, & Templeton, 2015), the apparent absence of ethics education from teacher preparation programs compared to other professions (Davenport et al., 2015; Glanzer & Ream, 2007; Warnick & Silverman, 2011), and the reported lack of teacher awareness, demonstrated in studies, of both the

moral dimensions of teaching and of relevant codes of conduct (see Colnerud, 1997; 2006). For instance, Fiedler and Van Haren (2008) sought to determine the extent to which special education administrators and teachers possess similar or different levels of knowledge and application of the Council for Exceptional Children's *Professional Standards* and the professional advocacy responsibilities articulated within. Results of a statewide survey revealed that 46% of special education administrators and teachers claim minimal or no knowledge of the code. Newman and Pollnitz (2005) investigated Australian teachers' knowledge of the Early Childhood Association's *Code of Ethics*, with results indicating that only one-half of the participants were aware of the existence of the code. Further still, a major point of contention and concern among educational researchers is the lack of a single, unified, and enforceable professional code of ethics for educators, as a key determiner of the professional status of teaching.

### **Professional Codes of Ethics for Educators**

In general, educators in the U.S. abide by sets of ethical concepts that define and frame responsible conduct (Burant et al., 2007; Freeman, 2000); however, there is no universal, formalized professional code of ethics that applies to all practicing or preservice teachers, across all levels of teaching, in the U.S. (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Davenport et al., 2015). Instead, national and state professional organizations, state departments of education, and even school districts have adopted separate policies for the ethical practice of teaching. Despite the existence of these codes, researchers (e.g., Cartledge, Tillman, & Johnson, 2001; Glanzer & Ream, 2007; Warnick &

Silverman, 2011), maintain that compliance with any one ethical code is not universally mandated for practicing teachers. In other words, teachers may comply with the mandates of state agencies and/or may follow the aspirational statements of a professional association, but content may vary from organization to organization, state to state, and sometimes even district to district. Further, existing professional codes of ethics are described by critics as “inadequate, bureaucratic, and legalistic” (Watras, 1986, p. 13). For example, the National Education Association’s (NEA) *Code of Ethics* (1975) is often criticized for being overly brief, general, cliché, and unable to assist teachers in ambiguous dilemmas (Barrett et al., 2006; Barrett et al., 2012; Freeman, 2000). Moreover, a review of statutes conducted by Barrett et al. (2006) reveals much variability among states regarding the clarity and enforceability of regulations, with some states (e.g., Texas) clearly identifying behaviors that are acceptable and unacceptable, and others (e.g., New York) providing only broad generalizations about the professional responsibilities of teachers.

Further complicating this issue, there has been considerable debate over the past thirty years regarding the purpose, scope, and creation of a potential unified, binding, specific, universal, and formalized code of professional ethics for educators (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Campbell, 1997; Campbell, 2000; Lovat, 1998; Soltis, 1986; Strike & Ternasky, 1993; Watras, 1986). Those who support the development of a singular, formalized code of professional ethics anticipate its use in (a) improving the overall status of teaching as a profession, (b) increasing the public’s confidence in teachers and



in public education, (c) helping local and state boards of education regulate the practice of teaching in their jurisdictions, (d) making explicit fundamental qualities of ethics to the professional practice of teaching, (e) providing clear descriptions of behaviors that would or would not exemplify ethical positions, and (f) ensuring uniform application to the profession (Burant et al., 2007; Lovat, 1998; Warnick & Silverman, 2011). Yet, criticism of the formation of such a code abounds—with the pervading opinion that ethical codes alone are not an adequate resource for preparing and sustaining ethical professionals (see Campbell, 2008). Critics maintain that a code of conduct and a set of principles will provide some broad guidelines for ethical conduct but are unlikely to provide answers to complex, multi-layered situations where there are competing responsibilities at hand. As Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse, and Kouzmin (2003, p. 478) state: “...there is not always a clear-cut answer and what constitutes ethical behavior is likely to lie in a ‘grey zone’. It is in the grey zone that teachers’ morality is tested in their everyday work.”

Still, researchers, professional organizations, and leaders in the field of education have proposed initial steps in the creation of a professional code of ethics for educators resembling that of other professions, by identifying explicit ethical standards and foundational principles that also reflect the unique role of educators (e.g., Burant et al, 2007; Freeman, 2000; Fredriksson, 2004; Socket, 2006). For instance, Campbell (2000) published a theoretical process for developing a professional code of ethics for educators, based on her work with the Ontario College of Teachers, which includes a proposed set of universal core values, how to present them in a code, and how these values may

conflict or lead to dilemmas. In the same vein, Barrett et al. (2006) and Barrett et al. (2012) asked teachers to judge the frequency and seriousness of different unethical or inappropriate behaviors of educators. Factors underlying the transgressions were identified using a factor loading analysis. Results indicated that personal harm, violating public/private boundaries, carelessness in behavior, subjectivity in grading and instruction, and grade inflation were among the most commonly reported ethical violations in education (Barrett et al., 2006). In their conclusions, Barrett et al. (2006) and Barrett et al. (2012) contrasted ethical violations with potential guiding principles, to use in the creation of an overarching professional code of ethics for educators (e.g., “respect for community standards” is a principle that would counter “violating public/private boundaries”). Notwithstanding, a description of the most prominent professional codes of ethics for educators follows.

**National Education Association’s *Code of Ethics* (NEA, 1975).** The NEA is the largest professional organization and labor union in the U.S. In 1975, the NEA adopted a code of ethics intended to guide the profession of teaching. The NEA *Code of Ethics* includes two Principles: Commitment to the Student and Commitment to the Profession. As set forth by these Principles, educators should strive to help students realize their potential and develop an intrinsic desire to learn, while maintaining public trust and ideals of professional service that will “attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education” and promote collegiality (NEA, 1975; Principle II).

**Council for Exceptional Children's *Ethical Principles and Professional Practice Standards for Special Educators* (CEC; 2015).** Informed by IDEA (2004) and case law, the CEC's *Ethical Principles and Professional Practice Standards for Special Educators* consists of twelve principles and eight standards for ethical conduct. Special educators must maintain "challenging expectations for individuals with exceptionalities to develop the highest possible learning outcomes and quality of life potential in ways that respect their dignity, culture, language, and background" (CEC, 2015, Principle 1). Also included is a provision for professional competence and integrity, with the intent of benefiting individuals and families. Like the NEA *Code of Ethics*, special educators must remain collegial with other educators and professionals. Fostering relationships with families and using "evidence, instructional data, research, and professional knowledge to inform practice" are at the forefront of CEC's Principles, as is protecting and supporting the physical and psychological safety of the populations served (i.e., nonmaleficence, CEC, 2015, Principle 6). Further, the CEC (2015) suggests that special educators (a) practice ethically and uphold relevant state and federal laws and regulations that influence professional practice, (b) advocate for the improvement of conditions and resources that will improve learning outcomes for students, and (c) engage in professional organizations and continuing education.

**Association of American Educators *Code of Ethics for Educators* (AAE; 2013).** The AAE is the largest national non-profit and non-union teacher organization. The AAE *Code of Ethics for Educators* is comprised of four Principles: (a) Ethical

Conduct Towards Students, (b) Ethical Conduct Towards Practices and Performance, (c) Ethical Conduct Towards Professional Colleagues, and (d) Ethical Conduct Towards Parents and Communities. Regarding Principle I, the AAE states that:

“The professional educator accepts personal responsibility for teaching students character qualities that will help them evaluate the consequences of and accept the responsibility for their actions and choices...The professional educator, in accepting his or her position of public trust, measures success not only by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her personal potential, but also as a citizen of the greater community of the republic” (2013).

Following Principle I, educators are urged to resolve problems according to law and school policy and must continually strive to demonstrate competence by maintaining “the dignity of the profession by respecting and obeying the law and by demonstrating personal integrity” (AAE, 2013). Principle III requires that educators treat colleagues with equitability, preventing interference with “freedom of choice” through coercion that would force colleagues to “support actions and ideologies that violate individual professional integrity” (AAE, 2013). Lastly, Principle IV states that educators must pledge to “protect public sovereignty over public education and private control of private education” (AAE, 2013).

**National Association for the Education of Young Children’s *Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment* (NAEYC; 2011).** The NAEYC *Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment* (hereafter referred to as the NAEYC *Code of*

*Ethical Conduct*) is comprehensive, directive, and provides both detailed examples of behavior and the moral obligations of the education professional in early childhood education. Its structure and contents mirror those researchers feel are needed in a formalized, enforceable, and unified code of professional ethics for all teachers; however, the NAEYC *Code of Ethical Conduct* is intended as a tool for educators of early learners. Additionally, a *Glossary of Terms* explains the intended meaning of terms such as *ethics*, *values*, *ethical dilemmas*, *codes of ethics*, and *morality*. The NAEYC *Code of Ethical Conduct* identifies core values of importance to the profession, and presents an adopted conceptual framework, a list of ideals, various principles that direct the practice of professional educators, as well as a Personal Commitment Statement, which serves as a “personal acknowledgement of an individual’s willingness to embrace the distinctive value and moral obligations of the field of early childhood care and education” (NAEYC, 2011, p. 6). Further, the NAEYC *Code of Ethical Conduct* adopts an ecological perspective (i.e., simultaneous consideration of the student, family, school system, and the wider community and the reciprocal effect between each level or system) of professional practice for educators to use in decision-making practices. Principle 1.1 states: “Above all, we shall do no harm to children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this code” (NAEYC, 2011, p. 3). This Principle is the foundation of the NAEYC *Code of Ethical Conduct*, from which the remaining sections of the Code discuss the ethical

responsibilities of professionals educating young children, with focus on responsibilities toward families, colleagues, community, and society.

### **Professional Ethics Training for Preservice Educators**

Although scholarly interest in the role of ethics in education began much earlier, discussion surrounding the delivery of ethics instruction in teacher preparation programs began in the 1980s, continued extensively throughout the late 1990s (e.g., Campbell, 1997; Soltis, 1986; Watras, 1986), and remains a considerable topic of interest in recent literature (Alexander, 2009; Campbell, 2006; Snook, 2003; Warnick & Silverman, 2011). In general, empirical evidence suggests that ethics training can raise the ability of preservice teachers to make ethical decisions (Cummings et al., 2004), to increase ethical sensitivity and facilitate development of moral understanding (Bullough, 2011), and to create the self-efficacy needed to impart values to students in practice (Nucci et al., 2005). When taught, ethics instruction in education is typically integrated with professional standards or taught as a standalone subject (Boon, 2011; Bruneau, 1998; Campbell, 2013; Soltis, 1986; Warnick & Silverman, 2011), using explicit and direct instruction of ethical principles, ethical content, and professional norms (Campbell, 2013; Cummings et al., 2004, Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016; Nucci et al., 2005; Reiman & Peace, 2002). However, the ethical content emphasized in teacher preparation curricula may vary considerably (Campbell, 2013; Warnick & Silverman, 2011).

For example, early researchers (e.g., Bull, 1993; Campbell, 2013; Soltis, 1986) suggested incorporating a critical understanding of theorists important to education

(Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Dewey, etc.) and the main theories of normative ethics (consequentialism, deontology, pragmatism, care ethics, virtue ethics, etc.) as a component of ethical training. In contrast, other leaders in the field suggested a practical approach to ethics instruction, such as providing education students with realistic scenarios for discussion, to connect practical dilemmas to theory and moral principles (Campbell, 1997; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Strike, 1993). An applied, practical approach to ethics instruction includes analyzing specific codes of ethics or similar relevant public documents (e.g., case law), and introducing students to a common ethical language of the teaching profession as a foundation of ethical training (Strike, 1993). Research suggests that moral reasoning in students from a variety of college majors may be improved by direct instruction in ethical decision-making and discussion of ethical dilemmas (Reiman & Peace, 2002).

Ethical decision-making models provide a step-by-step method of making ethical decisions or solving ethical dilemmas. Researchers often derive these models from theory or philosophy and adapt them for use in a variety of professional populations and settings (Cottone & Claus, 2000; Remley & Herlihy, 2016). However, there are little to no current, widely used models for ethical decision-making specific to the practice of teaching, although some have been proposed (see Ehrich et al., 2011). Rather, available models are borrowed from other disciplines (e.g., business) or are based upon theoretical orientations not easily amendable to pragmatic use and not always sensitive to the challenges of teaching (as discussed in Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). To combat this

issue, the most frequently cited approach to ethics instruction in teacher preparation is the case study method, or the study of ethical dilemmas (Blumenfeld-Jones et al., 2013; Campbell, 1997; Fallona & Canniff, 2013; Johnson, Vare, & Evers, 2013; Stengel, 2013; Warnick & Silverman, 2011). Using the case study method, education students are given scenarios and asked either to (a) analyze them using a set of ethical guidelines, (b) provide alternative courses of action or resolutions to the dilemmas, (c) reflect upon own experiences, or (d) perform a combination of these tasks (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016). The case study approach is considered an effective means of acquainting preservice teachers with the moral and ethical complexities of education within the context of daily, often routine practice (Howe, 1986; Soltis, 1986; Strike, 1993; Strike & Ternasky, 1993) and connecting practical dilemmas with theoretical moral and ethical principles (Clark, 1995; Griffin, 2003; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011). Likewise, the case study method aids the process of ethical decision-making. As such, many interventions aimed at bolstering preservice and practicing teachers' ethical decision-making involve systematic reviewing and reflection upon ethical dilemmas, often in the context of a course or program.

To further enhance the professionalization of teaching and to instill ethical practice in preservice teachers, teacher preparation programs across the U.S. also train and measure the acquisition of professional dispositions (Barrett et al., 2012; Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007; Burant et al., 2007). This movement is in response to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, formally National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, or NCATE; 2007) publication, *Professional*



*Standards for the Accreditation of Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education.*

Within this publication, CAEP identifies the development of professional dispositions as an explicit obligation of teacher educators (Wise, 2006). In addition, federal legislation (e.g., No Child Left Behind Act, 2001, now reauthorized as Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015) and successive accreditation requirements have further led to the systematic collecting and aggregating of data that demonstrate teacher candidate dispositions (Burant et al., 2007). Currently, CAEP defines professional dispositions as the “habits of professional action and moral commitments that underlie an educator’s performance” (2019; Glossary–Dispositions).

Advocates for including professional dispositions as a major component of teacher preparation assert that teachers play a role “not only in facilitating the development of students’ content knowledge and cognitive skills—the official curriculum—but also in shaping the *hidden curriculum* of societal and cultural values and civic responsibility” (Hillman, Rothermel, & Hotchkiss Scarano, 2006, p. 234). However, the implementation of professional dispositions into teacher preparation programs has not escaped critical attention. In general, those opposed to measuring professional dispositions in teacher preparation programs argue that the concept “professional dispositions” is not operationally defined, lacks a literature base, is a borrowed construct from social sciences, cannot yet be measured reliably and validly in research, and is equivalent to political indoctrination (e.g., the use of the term “social justice” in former NCATE definitions, which has since been removed; Barrett et al.,

2012; Schussler, Stooksberry, & Bercaw, 2005; Villegas, 2007). Nonetheless, proponents for dispositions assessment in teacher education programs assert that if dispositions reflect a tendency to act in a certain manner, then they will be predictive of patterns of action outside of supervision and will serve as a long-term indicator of program effectiveness (Borko et al., 2007).

### **Availability of Ethics Instruction in Teacher Preparation Programs**

Despite these advancements in professional ethics training, it is the vast consensus of researchers that teacher preparation programs, both in the U.S. and internationally, have been left out of, if not actively resisted, attempts to adopt and reassert ethics education (e.g., moral themes, values education, and ethics curricula) into preservice undergraduate programs (Boon, 2011; Glanzer & Ream, 2007; Revell & Arthur, 2007; Lovat & Toomey, 2007). One of the earliest studies of the availability of ethics training in teacher preparation programs indicates that, by the early 1900s, teacher education curricula already had either discarded ethics education or neglected it (Bagley, 1911). Bagley (1911) distributed 556 surveys to the heads of various departments in colleges and universities. Although 70% of colleges and universities reported offering an ethics course, only 23.7% of education departments reported having an ethics course in the curriculum and only two of the teachers' colleges required the ethics course.

In her dissertation, Wakefield (1996) surveyed 95 teacher preparation program directors at colleges and universities throughout the U.S. regarding moral education classes and teacher training. Results suggest that 69% of participants agreed that

preparation programs should offer moral education methods instruction and 50% claimed moral education instruction was addressed in their programs' mission statements (Wakefield, 1996). Yet, only 33% indicated that their programs directly taught moral education methods, and only two percent offered such a course. Glanzer and Ream (2007) reviewed the curriculum for professional majors in 156 Christian colleges and universities associated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities and the Lilly Fellows Network. The authors found that 71% in business, 60% of nursing, and 51% of social work programs required a course in ethics, as compared to 9% of teacher preparation programs.

In an examination of the courses offered across a four-year Bachelor of Education teacher preparation program, Boon (2011) found that—although professional standards for teachers were included in discussions and subject descriptors—ethics, as a philosophy, was not taught explicitly during any year and was not included in individual course outlines, learning objectives, assessment descriptions, or rubrics (with the exception of a Health and Physical Education specialization). Further, when polled, preservice teacher candidates reported the need for instruction and training in ethics, and, in the past, found case studies, workshops, reflective journals, and lectures related to ethics as useful learning experiences (Boon, 2011). Campbell (2008, 2011) reviewed courses and programs in teacher preparation and interviewed 60 education students and teacher educators at several Canadian universities. Results suggest that when ethics is taught as integrated curriculum, its delivery is unequal across programs. Lastly,

Davenport et al. (2015) conducted a survey of professional ethics and ethical decision-making instruction in Texas state universities teacher preparation curriculum, as defined by the state's administrative code. The researchers found that 74.8% of the professors surveyed reported including frequent or continuous instruction on the Texas Administrator Code Chapter 247, *Educators' Code of Ethics* in their curriculum; however, these results are not necessarily generalizable to the greater U.S. In sum, data on the inclusion of ethics education in teacher preparation programs remains empirically limited; yet, has led researchers to the conclusion that preservice teacher education programs lack ethics instruction.

### **School Psychology as a Profession**

School psychology arose as an identifiable profession in the 1950s, with the APA-sponsored Thayer Conference, in response to the shortage of psychologists working in schools (see Cutts, 1955). School-based practitioners then formed the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) in 1969 to better represent school psychologists. Within this timeframe, federal legislation and the supreme court recognized the need for more appropriate education for students with disabilities, protection of diverse students, and procedures to safeguard the privacy of student education records. In this context, Kaplan, Crisci, and Farling (1974) and other contributors to NASP's *School Psychology Digest* (now the *School Psychology Review*) addressed emerging ethical and legal issues in school psychology and recognized that

school psychologists needed not only a code of ethics specific to school psychology, but also further definition of the emergent practice.

This is because the professional practice of school psychology has unique characteristics, when compared to other areas of psychology. Unlike private practitioners and other field psychologists, school psychologists work within the education legal system, meeting legal requirements such as those for special education due process and equal access to educational opportunities. Further, school psychologists often function in an ecological capacity, in that they work within and between systems, delivering services to a wide range of clients (i.e., students, families, schools, and the community). As a result of working within several systems and performing multiple roles therein, school psychologists frequently encounter ethical conflicts that may not arise in other settings and when working with adult clients (Jacob, Decker, & Hartshorne, 2011; Knauss, 2001; Lasser & Klose, 2007; McNamara, 2011). Because the practice of school psychology is highly influenced and determined by state and federal law, professional ethical standards, and institutional contexts (i.e., district policies), the culture and expectations of school districts may be at odds with school psychologists' professional conduct and roles (Jacob et al., 2011; McNamara, 2011; Williams & Armistead, 2011). Therefore, school psychologists must be knowledgeable, sensitive, and capable of reconciling the complex range of stakeholder requirements with legal and ethical duties (Fagan & Wise, 2007; Flanagan & Miller, 2010).

Like other professions, professional codes of ethics and mandated graduate and ongoing training are available to support school psychologists in ethical decision-making and conduct, to increase the ability of school psychologists to anticipate and prevent ethical dilemmas and transgressions from occurring, and to make ethical decisions when the need arises (Jacob et al., 2011). Multiple studies have explored ethical issues characteristic of school psychology (Dailor & Jacob, 2011; Jacob-Timm, 1999; Pettifor & Sawchuk, 2006; Pope & Vetter, 1992). For instance, Pope and Vetter (1992) surveyed 670 APA members on ethical dilemmas encountered, resulting in a total of 703 incidents that were then classified into one of 23 categories. Only 2% of the incidents described fell into the “school psychology” category, and these reflected school psychologists’ struggle to maintain the best interests of children under administrative pressure. This study was replicated in eight countries for the purposes of comparison. Pettifor and Sawchuk (2006) combined data from each of these studies and found that the percentage of ethical dilemmas within the “school psychology” category was low for all countries surveyed, highlighting the nascent nature of the school psychology field across countries. Jacob-Timm (1999) explored the ethical dilemmas faced by a sample of 226 National Association of School Psychology (NASP) members (out of 1,035 total members), to develop case studies for use in professional training and research. The author described a total of 222 incidents and organized them into 19 categories. The most frequent dilemmas included: administrative pressure to behave unethically (22%), assessment and diagnostic procedures (14%), confidentiality (14%), and unsound educational practices

(13%). However, 27% of respondents reported not having experienced any ethical dilemmas within the specified timeframe.

Dailor and Jacob (2011) used the results of this study to develop an 88-item survey for further investigation. The survey was distributed to 400 randomly selected NASP members employed in public schools and investigated the frequency with which school psychologists witnessed the ethical transgressions and dilemmas identified in Jacob-Timm (1999). In addition, the survey gathered information about respondents' level of formal ethical training, perceived readiness to handle ethical dilemmas, and ethical decision-making strategies. Dailor and Jacob (2011) found that, 86% of school psychologists had witnessed ethical transgressions related to assessment, 79% related to intervention practices, and 76% related to administrative pressure. Further, common ethical dilemmas included whether to report suspected child abuse (28%), whether to disclose students' risky behaviors to parents (25%), handling colleagues' unethical conduct (25%), and balancing parents' rights to access test protocols while maintaining test security (23%). Dailor and Jacob (2011) also asked participants to report their top three areas of ethical concerns, which were administrative pressure to act unethically, unsound educational practices, and assessment-related issues.

In regard to the roles held by school psychologists, Thielking and Jimerson (2006) surveyed principals, teachers, and school psychologists and found that each group shared a mutual understanding of many aspects school psychology (e.g., conducting assessments, providing counseling, conducting research, etc.); however, the authors

found differences between respondents in their understanding of ethical considerations related to role boundaries, dual relationships, confidentiality, and informed consent. Thielking and Jimerson (2006) concluded that ethical dilemmas may arise when the roles and responsibilities of school psychologists are misunderstood. Further, the group of stakeholders with whom school psychologists work are likely to have their own directives or goals, so that ethical challenges are omnipresent (Dailor & Jacob, 2011; Helton & Ray, 2009; Helton, Ray, & Biderman, 2000). In sum, it is necessary that school psychologists remain informed of relevant legislation and professional ethics and standards and aware of actual and perceived roles, actions, and the consequences of their work within complex and rapidly changing systems (Helton & Ray, 2009; Jacob & Hartshorne, 2007).

### **Professional Codes of Ethics for School Psychologists**

School psychologists are guided by and beholden to both APA *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (2017), regardless of professional membership, Nationally Certified School Psychologists and professional members must uphold the NASP *Principles for Professional Ethics* (2010a). In addition, scholarly publications and state guidelines guide school psychologists in their ethical conduct and ethical decision-making. The International School Psychology Association (2011) also provides its *Code of Ethics* for international practitioners. Both the APA and NASP professional codes of ethics are periodically revised, in accordance with the association's policies and in accordance with concerns voiced by association members and by the public (Joyce & Rankin, 2010). In general, adherence to ethical codes means that school psychologists,



regardless of type, location, and extent of practice, do not harm or deny children access to appropriate educational services (Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai, & Monsen, 2009).

Sufficient levels of preparation for practice are essential and, in many places, evidence of ongoing professional development is required.

***APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (APA, 2017).***

The *APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (hereafter referred to as the *Code of Conduct*) consists of an Introduction, a Preamble, five General Principles (Beneficence and Nonmaleficence, Fidelity and Responsibility, Integrity, Justice, and Respect for People's Rights and Dignity), and ten Ethical Standards specific to each Principle (Resolving Ethical Issues, Competence, Human Relations, Privacy and Confidentiality, Advertising and Other Public Statements, Record Keeping and Fees, Education and Training, Research and Publication, Assessment, and Therapy). The Introduction discusses the intent, organization, procedural considerations, and scope of application of the *Code of Conduct*. The Preamble and General Principles are aspirational goals to guide psychologists toward the highest ideals of psychology. Although the Preamble and General Principles are not themselves enforceable rules, this literature should be considered in ethical decision making. The Ethical Standards set forth enforceable rules for conduct and are meant to address the various practices of psychology, including school psychology. The Ethical Standards are not exhaustive, and psychologists are still responsible for behaviors not specified in the *Code of Conduct*. Complaints about the unethical behavior of a member or nonmember may result in

communication with the psychologist's state psychological association, psychology boards, or other state or federal agencies. The *Code of Conduct* is enforceable at both the state and national level and is incorporated into statutes and regulations. Psychologists are advised in the Introduction to use the *Code of Conduct* during ethical decision-making, in conjunction with applicable laws, psychology board regulations, other relevant materials and guidelines, professional consultation, and in addition to the "dictates of their own conscience (*Introduction, APA, 2017*)."

Further, if the *Code of Conduct* establishes a standard above that of the law, psychologists must meet the higher ethical standard; however, if the *Code of Conduct* conflicts with law, regulations, or other legal authority, psychologists are urged to make known their commitment to the *Code of Conduct* and take steps to resolve the conflict.

**NASP *Principles for Professional Ethics* (NASP, 2010a).** Professional ethics in school psychology is emphasized not only in the *NASP Principles for Professional Ethics* (*NASP Principles* hereafter), but also in several influential documents on training and practice: The NASP (2010b) *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services* (i.e., *NASP Practice Model*), the *NASP Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists* (2010c), and the *NASP (2010d) Standards for the Credentialing of School Psychologists*. Each of these supporting documents are to be used in conjunction with the *NASP Principles* to provide "a unified set of national principles that guide graduate education, credentialing, professional practices, and ethical behavior of effective school psychologists" (NASP, 2010a, *Introduction*). The NASP

*Principles* includes an Introduction, which states the guiding mission of NASP and outlines how school psychologists are to accomplish the mission, through the use of best practices when providing services to students, families, schools, and the community. Those with the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential must comply with the NASP Principles, in accordance with NASP's Ethical and Professional Practices Committee Procedures (Williams & Adams, 2008). The Ethics and Professional Practices Board (EPPB) has the responsibility to accept, investigate, and settle complaints about the professional conduct of NASP members and school psychologists who hold the NCSP. The NASP *Principles* are reviewed every five years and revised as necessary, partially in response to comments and concerns voiced by NASP members in published documents (e.g., Communiqué; Williams & Adams, 2008).

The Introduction reiterates the three key foundations found in the NASP Practice Model (Diversity in Development and Learning; Research and Program Evaluation; and Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice), followed by credentialing information and the intent of policy and position documents published by NASP, at the level of stakeholders, policy makers, and other professional groups at the national, state, and local levels. School psychologists are deemed "state actors" when employed in public schools, meaning that knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and federal and state statutory law is of utmost importance, as is the rights of students and families. The NASP *Principles* also highlights and promotes the role of school psychologists in "multidisciplinary problem-solving and intervention" across all ecological contexts (*Introduction*, NASP, 2010a).

Like the APA *Code of Conduct*, NASP recognizes the limitations of codes of ethics in making ethical decisions; therefore, school psychologists are advised to use a systematic problem-solving process to identify the best course of action. In addition, the NASP *Principles* requires a more stringent standard of conduct than law and, when conflicts between ethics and law occur, school psychologists must take steps to resolve conflicts using research and consultation. For issues not presented in the NASP *Principles*, school psychologists are advised to consult APA's *Code of Conduct*. The body of the NASP *Principles* contains four broad and aspirational ethical themes (Respecting the Dignity and Rights of All Persons; Professional Competence and Responsibility; Honesty and Integrity in Professional Relationships; and Responsibility to School, Families, Communities, the Profession, and Society) with 17 corollary ethical principles, and numerous standards of conduct per principle.

### **Professional Ethics Training for School Psychology Students**

The NASP (2010c) *Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists* require that knowledge and skills in legal, ethical, and professional practice be one of ten domains that a graduate preparation program must address in its curriculum. Likewise, both NASP and APA accredited programs require demonstration that graduate students have attained competence in professional standards and ethics. For these reasons, NASP recommends that professional ethics instruction begin early in the course sequence and continue throughout the program (NASP, 2010c; Williams, Sinko, & Epifanio, 2010). When interspersed throughout each course, ethical issues that represent different domains

of school psychology practice (e.g., assessment, consultation, counseling) can be examined, as each of these areas produce separate ethical challenges. Research suggests that continuous, integrated ethics training over the course of graduate preparation offers school psychologists distinct advantages over standalone classes (Armistead, Williams, & Jacob, 2011; Jacob et al, 2011; Tryon, 2000).

Specifically, Tryon (2001) surveyed school psychology doctoral students' beliefs concerning their preparation for, and concern about, dealing with 12 ethical issues, based on one year in graduate school and attendance in an ethics course. Two hundred thirty-three doctoral students from APA accredited programs in school psychology participated. Results showed that students who had taken an ethics course and those with more years of graduate education reported feeling more prepared to deal with ethical issues than students who had not taken an ethics course and who had fewer years of graduate education. Further, concern about dealing with ethical issues was negatively related to number of internship hours. Dailor and Jacob (2011) found that school psychologists who received continuous ethical training (i.e., formal coursework over multiple courses and during practicum/internship) felt better prepared to deal with ethical dilemmas and were more likely to use a formal problem-solving or ethical decision-making model when determining how to resolve ethical dilemmas. At minimum, many school psychology programs require a single course solely dedicated to the discussion of the ethical and legal mandates of the profession, while other programs choose to reserve a significant portion of an introductory course to coverage of ethical codes and case law (Williams et

al., 2010). Continued discussion and modeling of ethical behavior on the part of faculty is especially important during field experiences, such as during practica and internships; however, school psychology programs cannot always ensure uniform standards in ethical training and practice in the applied settings needed for practicum and internship experience (Tryon, 2001).

Overall, the usefulness of professional ethics training in school psychology programs depends upon graduate students' ability to uphold and practice in accordance with ethical principles (Tryon, 2000; 2001). In addition, personal qualities and characteristics may influence how well students adhere to the principals, beliefs, and attitudes reflected in the professional ethics of school psychology (i.e., dispositions). As such, many school psychology programs employ Kitchener's (1986) four goals for professional ethics training, which include sensitizing students to major issues in professional ethics, improving critical thinking and ethical reasoning abilities of students, engendering the sense of moral responsibility and resilience needed for ethical decision-making, and assisting students developing tolerance for ambiguous situations.

The use of ethical decision-making models in school psychology is recommended, to guide the process of resolving ethical dilemmas in ways that are both formal and systematic, to encourage legally defensible and logical ethical decision-making practices, and to help with the application of professional ethical principles (Armistead et al., 2011; Jacob et al., 2011; Klose & Lasser, 2010; Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1998; Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 2008). An example includes Koocher and

Keith-Spiegel (1998) and Koocher and Keith-Spiegel's (2008) nine-step ethical decision-making model for mental health professionals:

1. Determine if the matter is an ethical one;
2. Consult available ethical guidelines that might apply, as a way of possible resolution;
3. Consider, as best as possible, all factors that might influence the kind of decision that will be made;
4. Consult with a trusted colleague;
5. Evaluate the rights, responsibilities, and vulnerability of all affected parties;
6. Generate alternative decisions;
7. Enumerate the consequences of making each decision;
8. Make the decision;
9. Implement the decision. Revisit steps as needed.

Armistead et al. (2011) also offer a multi-step model for problem-solving: (1) Describe the problem situation; (2) Define the potential ethical–legal issues involved; (3) Consult available ethical and legal guidelines, (4) Confer with supervisors and colleagues, (5) Evaluate the rights, responsibilities, and welfare of all affected parties; (6) Consider alternative solutions and the likely consequences of each; (7) Select a course of action and assume responsibility for this decision. McNamara (2008) proposes additional factors to be considered during ethical decision-making, such as the likelihood that one would recommend this same course of action to a colleague and whether or not one is

comfortable with the decision being made public. Lastly, Bashe et al. (2007) caution that “ethics training is not over when a degree or license is granted” (p. 61). Instead, credentialing bodies place emphasis on ongoing best practice recommendations in ethical school psychological practice (Klose & Lasser, 2010), such as the three-hour continuing professional development requirement for the renewal of the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential (issued through NASP). In addition, some states require that a portion of continuing professional development activities address professional ethics.

### **Conclusion**

Preparing teachers and school psychologists to recognize and solve ethical dilemmas is paramount to success in future practice; however, research demonstrates that teacher preparation programs may pay insufficient attention to ethics (Mahony, 2009) and that ethics training in school psychology preparation programs may not be enough to ensure ethical conduct or ethical decision-making in practice (Martis, 2017). Goodlad et al. (1990) describe ethics instruction in teacher preparation programs as akin to “filling a large handbag with discrete bits and pieces of know-how” (p. 225), leaving teachers unprepared to reflect upon and engage in ethical actions. Further, Anderson et al. (2007), maintain that it is difficult to know exactly what attempts universities are making to teach ethics, because institutions are “loath to specify what values they are targeting for fear of appearing to ‘indoctrinate’ pre-service teachers and because research in this area is difficult” (p. 149), leading to the conclusion that teacher preparation programs have



resisted the ethics movement in higher education (Boon, 2011; Bruneau, 1998; Bull, 1993; Campbell, 2008; Glanzer & Ream, 2007; Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016). Previous studies (e.g., Boon, 2011; Campbell, 2008; 2011), have found that while educators desire professional ethics and guidance in ethical decision-making, professional ethics may not be taught in this capacity.

Likewise, research has demonstrated that the extent of ethical training received by school psychologists demonstrates little association with the perceived preparedness to deal with ethical challenges arising on the job and that the predominant strategy employed by school psychologists when faced with ethical dilemmas is to consult with other school psychologists or relevant professionals, in lieu of consulting ethical codes, laws, and other guidelines or ethical decision-making models (Dailor & Jacob, 2011; Tryon, 2000; 2001). Preparation programs are often the first exposure future teachers and school psychologists have to the ethical and moral dimensions of their chosen profession. As such, ethical considerations need to be explored in depth and in the context of the educational systems and ethical climate these professionals will encounter (Mergler, 2008). To reduce the influence of administrative and other systemic pressures on ethical action, strong collaborative relationships should develop between school-based professionals. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, schools will be in a better position to make judicious use of interdisciplinary knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide a comprehensive and ethically driven service to the school community. Such relationships may also encourage dialogue between school districts and professional

bodies representing both teachers and school psychologists, which could include the exploration, identification, and remediation of educational practices that are of concern.

## CHAPTER III

### Method

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study is multifaceted. The first purpose was to determine what extent (a) professional ethics training is included in teacher preparation program curriculum throughout the U.S., (b) teacher educators include information regarding ethical decision-making within program curriculum, and (c) teacher educators approach interdisciplinary collaboration within program curriculum. In addition, information gained from this study was intended to provide insight into the perceived value of professional ethics education, instruction in ethical decision-making, and interdisciplinary collaboration within teacher preparation programs. Following this, the second purpose of this study was to explore how educators throughout the U.S. make ethical decisions in daily practice, according to level of training and experience, professional and personal perspectives, and available resources. From this investigation, meaningful clusters were created, based on survey factors and demographic information.

#### Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Is professional ethics instruction provided in teacher preparation programs throughout the U.S., and, if so, using what methods?

2. Are teacher educators including in their instruction information regarding ethical decision-making, such as use of decision-making or problem-solving models?
3. Are teacher educators including information on or opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration within program curriculum?
4. How often do teacher educators feel that they should include ethics instruction, ethical decision-making models, and interdisciplinary collaboration within program curriculum?
5. How do educators make ethical decisions in daily practice?
6. What meaningful clusters will emerge when using educator demographics and response patterns as factors?

### **Research Design**

This study used two designs: (a) a descriptive quantitative/qualitative, measured with the Ethics Training and Curriculum Survey (ETCS) and (b) an exploratory, cross-sectional survey research design, measured with the Inventory of Ethical Decision-Making and Collaboration (IEDMC). A descriptive quantitative research design is one of the most basic forms of research, meant to answer informational questions (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Additional qualitative answers are included to address multiple issues. A cross-sectional design allows data to be collected from a specific point in time (Creswell, 2014). However, these non-experimental methods do not suggest causality and are dependent on perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of others that are subject to bias (Fink,

2013). Survey methods allow for data collection from a large group of respondents (Heppner et al., 2008).

The raw survey data received from Qualtrics were exported into and analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 26 (SPSS-26). For the ETCS, descriptive statistics are presented and interpreted for each item in the survey. Responses to open-ended questions were aggregated by response content. Responses to the IEDMC were analyzed using an exploratory two-step cluster analysis, to identify groups of teachers who are similar in some way (Field, 2013). A two-step cluster analysis on SPSS v.26 pre-clusters larger data sets and then runs hierarchical methods to determine the best number of clusters. This method is ideal for larger data sets (> 200) that would take significant time to compute with hierarchical cluster methods. In addition, two-step clustering procedures do not require the researcher to identify clusters upfront and will automatically select the number of clusters needed. The best number of clusters was derived from the auto-clustering technique of SPSS v.26. Then, independent samples *t*-tests or Chi-Square analyses were conducted, where appropriate, to determine differences between the resulting clusters and demographic variables. A descriptive and qualitative analysis of IEDMC data is also included.

## **Participants**

**Ethics Training and Curriculum Survey (ETCS).** Teacher education programs accredited by CAEP were selected, using the current database of programs ( $N = 684$ ). CAEP accredited programs were selected due to its status as the largest accrediting body

in the U.S. and its role in determining whether the education programs of universities, colleges, and departments of education meet national standards for teacher preparation. The sample included online and campus-based programs, undergraduate and graduate degree programs, private and state-funded institutions, and colleges and universities both affiliated and unaffiliated with a religious denomination. Total participants for the ETCS was  $n = 977$ .

**Inventory of Ethical Decision-Making & Collaboration (IEDMC).** Certified teachers, Pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, ( $n = 482$ ; ten participants were excluded due to either certification status or lack of teaching experience) were recruited to participate through contacting either the administrative staff (i.e., superintendents, assistant superintendents, or administrative assistants) or Research and Accountability departments at the top ten largest school districts in each state, as determined by the U.S. Department of Education and where public contact information was available. The decision to select from the largest school districts is predicated upon several factors. First, the largest percentage of students in the U.S. attend public schools in suburban areas (40%) and urban areas (30%), followed by rural areas (19%) and towns (11%; Glander, 2016, 2017a; 2017b). By sampling from these areas, it is more likely that a diverse sample of teachers throughout the U.S. may be obtained. Lastly, this procedure was selected for reasons of transparency and time management—i.e., turnover rate may be high at participating schools; therefore, directories may not be up to date.

## **Instrumentation**

**ETCS.** The ETCS consists of a set of online, self-administered questions, derived from current literature and designed to collect exploratory information about the prevalence of and preference for professional ethics and ethical decision-making instruction and interdisciplinary collaboration within teacher preparation programs. As such, the ETCS contains 14 questions: eight Likert-type rating scale items (from 1 = Never to 4 = Continuously), four forced choice items (i.e., participants must choose from a set list of responses) with an “Other” option, and two open-ended questions (one optional). Eight optional demographic questions are included at the end of the survey. A rating scale format was used because there was no empirical value in creating a score per respondent. The anchors “never, occasionally, continuously, or frequently” as answer choices provided an interval scale for the rating scale items. The forced choice and open-ended questions offered participants an opportunity to explain practices, resources, and experiences. The full survey is in Appendix C.

**IEDMC.** A review of literature did not reveal a comprehensive instrument that measures not only educator experience with ethics, ethical dilemmas, and ethical decision-making, but also the use of ethical decision-making models and collaboration with interdisciplinary staff in ethical decision-making. In a study by Brown (2017), ethical decision-making in school counselors was assessed, using the School Counselor Ethical Decision-Making Inventory (SCEDMI), which was created for the purpose of the study. The survey contained 39 items and addressed 6 factors: Graduate Training,

Religion and Culture, Decision-Making Models, Ranking of Importance (i.e., choosing what is most important between two considerations), Consult and Brainstorm, and Mandatory/Universal (i.e., consistent, universal processes and mandated actions of codes and supervisors). For the IEDMC, 26 original items were used from the SCEDMI (Brown, 2017). Twelve items were adapted for use with teachers (e.g., “graduate program” changed to “professional training”), and Item 25 from the original survey was omitted and replaced by an additional item, due to its redundancy. Three new items were added to the survey, with the assistance of the dissertation chair, to further address interdisciplinary collaboration and available resources, for a total of 42 questions. Three optional, open-ended questions were included along with a 11-item demographic survey. See Appendix D for the full instrument.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Because the study’s measures were not previously established in research, the researcher conducted piloting and post-hoc procedures to evaluate the validity and reliability of the instruments. The dissertation committee, which included four licensed school psychologists and a teacher educator, reviewed the ETCS and IEDMC for face and content validity (Fink, 2013). Three teachers from the region also reviewed the ETCS. All participants completed survey instruments identical to those of the actual study, via Qualtrics, and provided feedback using the form found in Appendix E. Specifically, participants were asked to provide an overall rating of the instruments (where 1 = Needs Improvement, 2 = Satisfactory, 3 = Very Good), based on formatting,



clarity of instructions, clarity of questions, relevance of questions, and match between items and research questions. Participants were also asked to report the time taken to complete the surveys, technical issues encountered, and to provide any other comments as needed. Participants took an average of 12.5 minutes to complete the ETCS, and responses ranged from Satisfactory to Very Good; however, one participant indicated that the clarity of two questions be improved: "...need to clarify that the interdisciplinary collaboration is related to ethics decisions. From a general education perspective, 'interdisciplinary' refers/relates to integrated content of subject areas." Another participant suggested moving demographic information on separate page. The average response time for the IEDMC was 15 minutes and all ratings ranged from Satisfactory to Very Good. No technical issues were reported.

For the IEDMC, internal consistency reliability was assessed using a sample-specific Cronbach's alpha score, with scores closest to 1 being the most desirable. Cronbach's alpha is a common measure of reliability and is often used to determine whether the intervals of a Likert-type scale are reliable (Field, 2013; Lund & Lund, 2012). According to George and Mallery (2003), the following rules for acceptability should be used for Cronbach's alpha: 0.9 and greater, Excellent; 0.8, Good; 0.7, Acceptable; 0.6, Questionable; 0.5, Poor; and < 0.5, Unacceptable (p. 231). The Cronbach's alpha for the IEDMC sample was 0.79, indicating acceptable reliability. Next, IEDMC items were grouped according to the six factors identified by Brown (2017). A Cronbach's alpha score was obtained per factor, then compared to those found

in Brown (2017). Reliability for the Training factor was slightly higher than that found by Brown (2017); however, reliability for all other factors was lower. It is worth noting that not all factors identified by Brown (2017) had acceptable reliability. Results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*Comparison of Cronbach's alpha levels for reliability across studies.*

Factor Number	Descriptor	Brown (2017)	Current Study
1	Training	0.83	0.87
2	Religion/Culture	0.76	0.61
3	Decision-Making Models	0.77	0.50
4	Ranking of Importance	0.64	0.53
5	Consult/Brainstorm	0.64	0.51
6	Mandatory/Universal	0.52	0.32

### **Data Collection**

After approval from the dissertation committee and the university IRB board, all instruments were uploaded into Qualtrics. Qualtrics automatically aggregates data into a downloadable file, thus limiting data entry error. The account was password protected to ensure security. In addition, Qualtrics uses Akamai's Cloud Security Suite and high-end firewall systems to protect confidential information (Data Isolation and Encryption Methods, 2019). In addition, email and internet-based surveys help reduce sampling bias, allow for flexibility in formatting, help reduce interviewing error, reduce the cost of administration, and allow for wide geographic coverage (Berry, 2005; Fink, 2013).

**ETCS.** A database of CAEP accredited programs and program faculty emails was created, using a Microsoft Excel file. Each state was listed under a tab and every CAEP accredited teacher preparation program was designated a column within its corresponding state tab. Under the name of the university or college, email addresses of each dean/assistant dean, department chair/assistant chair, program chair, professor, associate or assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, adjunct professor, visiting faculty, field supervisor, and coordinator were entered. Email addresses were taken from publicly available contact information found on each respective university website. Only faculty working in their universities' college of education and listed as teaching "teacher education" and/or "curriculum and instruction" courses were included as participants; however, in some cases, this information was difficult to determine with accuracy (e.g., no distinction made between programs), causing the initial list of potential participants to include some who did not meet the above criteria.

Once collected, all faculty email addresses were uploaded into a Qualtrics contact list ( $n = 9844$ ). The Qualtrics contact list and email services allows researchers to email invitations for surveys, send follow-up reminders or thank-you emails, monitor email analytics, and track participants who have or have not responded. Participants from this list were sent an invitation to participate via email, consisting of a Participant Cover Letter and Consent Agreement for an Online Survey (Appendix A). Participants were instructed to follow a link found in the email to complete the questionnaire on the website. Following the link established consent. Participants could opt out from the

study at will and could voluntarily respond to the demographics portion of the survey. One university opted out of participation, due to loss of accreditation status, and a second university asked the researcher to “cease and desist” recruitment efforts, as the study was not approved by their IRB committee. The researcher completed and obtained IRB approval from a third university prior to including responses in the data set. Of the 9,844 email addresses entered into the Qualtrics contact list, 9,476 emails were successfully sent, 368 emails failed to send, and 214 bounced. A reminder email was sent two weeks later to all unfinished respondents (8,916 sent, 367 failed, and 205 bounced), a second reminder was sent two weeks following the first reminder (8,608 sent, 367 failed, and 175 bounced), and a third and final reminder was sent two weeks after the second (8,150 sent, 367 failed, and 178 bounced). In total, 688 participants opted out of participation. Although 1,312 participants began surveys, the final number of responses was  $n = 977$ . Overall response percentage was 9.9%.

**IEDMC.** Initial recruitment was achieved through contacting administrative staff at the top ten largest school districts in each state, using data available from the U.S. Department of Education. The email addresses of administrative staff were retrieved from publicly available sources (e.g., online school directory) and entered into a Microsoft Excel file. All school districts per state were listed in order of population, with accompanying email addresses and research request approval status. Initially, a compilation of emails was to be entered into a Qualtrics contact list for distribution to administrators and other relevant personnel to forward to all teachers in the district;

however, this method could not be used, as Qualtrics creates an individual link unique to the recipient of the email that cannot be reused or successfully shared with others. Instead, school districts were contacted individually, using the researcher's university email account. Administrators received the Participant Cover Letter and Consent Agreement for an Online Study (Appendix B) and a link to the online survey, along with a brief introductory statement asking the administrators to forward the survey along to all certified Pre-K-12 teachers in their employ. This method resulted in multiple denials and referrals to the research request process. Most school districts in the sample required a research request application, along with supporting documents (e.g., letters of approval from a dissertation chair, letters of support from administrators, proof of CITI training and university IRB approval, a prospectus or proposal, confidentiality agreements, etc.), to be approved by the district's research board. Thus, the researcher sent a second invitation to all available school districts, either directly to Research and Accountability departments or to administrators with the intention of submitting a formal research request:

“Greetings,

My name is Brittany McCreary, and I am a school psychology doctoral candidate at Stephen F. Austin State University, in the Department of Human Services. I am under the supervision of Dr. Jillian Dawes and Dr. Luis Aguerrevere. I am working on my dissertation, which explores teachers' attitudes and experiences with ethical decision-making and interdisciplinary collaboration. As part of my

dissertation research, I am asking teachers working in the most populous school districts throughout the U.S. to complete an online survey via Qualtrics, entitled the Inventory of Ethical Decision Making & Collaboration. The survey consists of 42 questions, as well as a short demographic section. The survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes to complete and all responses are anonymous. Please let me know how to proceed with a potential request for research permission.”

In cases where contact information was unavailable, the district declined participation, the deadline for research requests passed, the research board meeting schedules extended significantly past allotted data collection time, or where there was an application fee for research requests, the next largest school district was added to the list. Reasons for school district research request denials included, but are not limited to, teacher survey fatigue, the presence of multiple ongoing surveys in the district, limited teacher availability, research quotas met for the semester or year, a restriction on outside research or on surveys, a lack of resources to accommodate the request (i.e., bandwidth and staff), too many research requests, and preparation for Spring semester state assessments. The final total of school districts contacted for study recruitment was  $n = 632$ . Of these 632 districts, 26 agreed to participate across 19 states (see *Figure 1*). Upon approval, eleven districts agreed to forward the survey as stated, using the district emailing system, while (a) one district agreed to send out the invitation to all principals, with the intent that the principals could individually decide to distribute at their discretion; (b) four districts asked the researcher to contact all principals for individual

approval to distribute the survey; (c) three districts only approved recruitment on the basis that the researcher alone would contact the teachers in the district; (d) three districts incorporated the invitation to participate into a newsletter or flyer; and (e) four districts approved the study but did not respond to follow-up correspondence regarding distribution. In any case, all participants received the Participant Cover Letter and Consent Agreement for an Online Survey before participation. Interested participants were asked to follow the anonymous link, which provided consent, and completed the survey on the Qualtrics webpage. No opt out link was provided, because the invitation was not sent through Qualtrics.

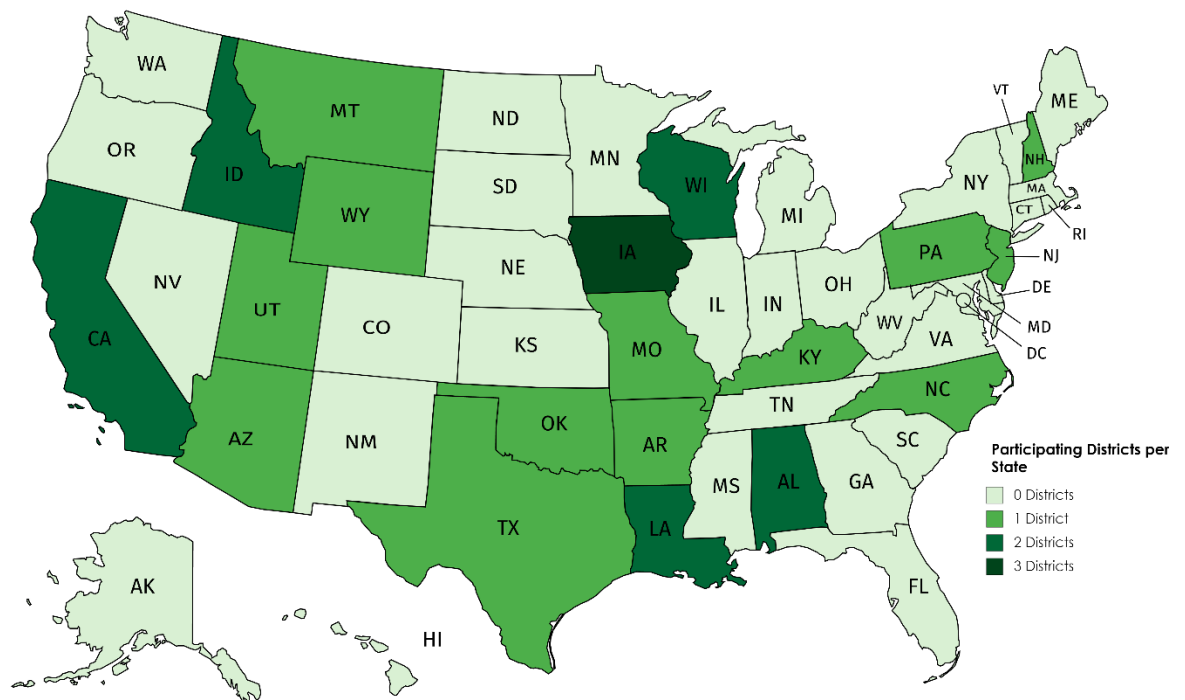


Figure 1. Number of districts per state that approved recruitment.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

#### ETCS Descriptive Statistics Analysis

**Demographics.** The demographic section of the ETCS was optional; therefore, the following statistics reflect only available information. Further, for race/ethnicity, participants were invited to select more than one answer choice if needed. The overall sample was 70% ( $n = 682$ ) female, 27% ( $n = 271$ ) male, and 0.21% other ( $n = 2$ ).

Twenty participants (2.05%) declined to answer. The table below provides information regarding race/ethnicity and Table 3 provides age ranges.

Table 2

*Race/ethnicity of participants.*

Caucasian	African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian	Native American	Other	Declined
80.10%	6.83%	2.81%	1.81%	1.41%	1.31%	5.73%
797	68	28	18	14	13	57
Total respondents = 100%, $n = 995$						



Table 3

*Age ranges of sample.*

Range	Percentage of responses	Count
20-30	0.51%	5
31-40	13.89%	135
41-50	26.65%	259
51-60	30.55%	295
60+	28.60%	278
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 972$		

The majority of respondents were Caucasian (80%,  $n = 797$ ), followed by African American (7%,  $n = 68$ ) and Hispanic/Latino (3%,  $n = 28$ ). Although there were participants in every age category, 86% of the sample reported being 41 to 60 years of age and older. Table 4 summarizes years taught at the collegiate level.

Table 4

*Years taught at the collegiate level.*

Range	Percentage of responses	Count
Less than 5 years	15.88%	155
5-10 years	22.75%	222
11-15 years	21.31%	208
16-20 years	15.16%	148
Over 20 years	24.90%	243
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 976$		

Results indicate that the majority of respondents have taught at the collegiate level for at least five years, with 44% ( $n = 430$ ) having 5-15 years of experience in the field and 25%

( $n = 243$ ) having over 20 years of experience. Table 5 displays the position titles of the teacher educators sampled.

Table 5

*Position titles.*

Position	Percentage of responses	Count
Dean/Assistant Dean	3.40%	47
Department Chair/Assistant Chair	7.30%	101
Program Director/Chair	6.58%	91
Professor	15.47%	214
Associate Professor	20.46%	283
Assistant Professor	18.15%	251
Instructor	4.12%	57
Lecturer	2.39%	33
Adjunct Faculty	3.76%	52
Visiting Faculty	0.36%	5
Field Supervisor	7.38%	102
Coordinator	6.22%	86
Other	4.41%	61
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 1383$		

The most frequent titles include Associate Professor (20%,  $n = 283$ ), Assistant Professor (18%,  $n = 251$ ), and Professor (15%,  $n = 214$ ), followed by Field Supervisor (7%,  $n = 102$ ) and Department Chair/Assistant Chair (7%,  $n = 101$ ). Respondents had the opportunity to choose an “Other” option, in which they specified their position if not included in the list. Answers included: CEO/Principal of a university charter school, assessment and accreditation coordinator, director of a center (e.g., STEM center, early

childhood laboratories), special assistants, endowed professor, clinical professors, and professors Emeritus.

Forty-two percent of respondents ( $n = 823$ ) report teaching at the undergraduate level, 40% ( $n = 772$ ) report teaching at the graduate level, 17% ( $n = 330$ ) report overseeing certification, and 1.13% ( $n = 22$ ) selected Other; however, participants did not have a “both undergraduate and graduate” option, and were instead able to select multiple items. As a result, there were  $n = 1947$  responses, indicating that the participants teach in more than one capacity. “Other” answers included: In-service education for teachers, endorsements, retirement, not teaching currently, and working full-time within schools. Of the teacher educators surveyed, 21% ( $n = 205$ ) are employed in a university or college affiliated with a religion, while 79% ( $n = 771$ ) are not. Lastly, participants were asked about their specializations. The most frequent responses include:

- ***Subject specific specializations***—E.g., STEM education, English language arts, music education, physical education, etc.
- ***Leveled specializations***—Early childhood education, elementary education, middle education, secondary education, generalist.
- ***Social justice and diversity***—Education reform, multicultural education, urban education, equity in education, improvement and transformation, at-risk children, social class and poverty issues, culturally responsive teaching, critical race theory, advocacy, controversial issues.

- ***Special education***—Differentiation; inclusion practices; learning disabilities; orientation and mobility; deaf education; gifted education, classroom management, applied behavior analysis.
- ***Language acquisition***—English as a second language (ESL)/ESOL, multilingual education, dual language, etc.
- ***Educational psychology and child development***—Learning and cognition, neuroscience, child and adolescent development, social development, school counseling, etc.
- ***Higher education***—Critical pedagogy, administration, accreditation, etc.
- ***Teacher preparation and support***—Teaching, teacher education, certification preparation, collaboration, co-teaching, professional development, teacher retention, initial and advanced certification, clinical experiences.
- ***Leadership***—Coaching, mentoring, supervision, service-learning, community-based learning.
- ***Research***—Assessment, statistics, measurement, data analysis, program evaluation, quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- ***Philosophy of education***—Social foundations of education, history of education, comparative education, global education, religious education, etc.
- ***Curriculum, instruction, and technology***—Library science, online learning, Response to Intervention, technology research, etc.

- *Family and community relationships*—School choice, out-of-school learning, family engagement.
- *Ethics and law*—Educational law, public policy, accountability, reform.

**ETCS response patterns.** Responses to ETCS Likert-type items are presented in Table 6. According to the data, 79% of teacher educators included frequent or continuous instruction in professional ethics, whereas 95% indicated that professional ethics should be included in the curriculum. Next, most of the teacher educators surveyed (72%) occasionally or frequently provided information regarding ethical decision-making in their curriculum. In contrast, 90% responded that information regarding ethical decision-making should frequently or continuously be included in the curriculum. Further, 73% of teacher educators report including occasional or frequent information about interdisciplinary collaboration as a means of solving problems, with 84% indicating that interdisciplinary collaboration as a means of problem solving should be frequently or continuously included in the curriculum. Lastly, 74% occasionally or frequently provided opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration; yet, 82% report that activities using interdisciplinary collaboration should be frequently or continuously included in the curriculum.

Table 6

*Percentages per ETCS Likert-type item.*

ETCS Likert-Type Items	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Continuously
<b>Professional ethics instruction</b>				
Item 1: To what extent do you include professional ethics instruction to students in your teacher preparation program curriculum?	0.41% 4	20.78% 203	43.50% 425	35.31% 345
Item 2: To what extent <i>should</i> professional ethics instruction be included in your teacher preparation program curriculum?	0.0% 0	4.71% 46	34.49% 337	60.80% 594
<b>Inclusion of ethical decision-making</b>				
Item 6: To what extent do you include information regarding ethical decision-making (e.g., problem-solving models, steps, brainstorming alternative actions, etc.) in your teacher preparation program curriculum?	4.61% 45	35.52% 347	36.85% 360	23.03% 225
Item 7: To what extent <i>should</i> professors include information regarding ethical decision-making in their teacher preparation program curriculum?	0.10% 1	9.42% 92	46.78% 457	43.71% 427

Table 6 (continued)

<b>Inclusion of interdisciplinary collaboration</b>				
Item 9: To what extent do you include information regarding interdisciplinary collaboration (i.e., various school professionals working together as a team to solve a problem) into your teacher preparation program curriculum?	4.30%	35.01%	38.18%	22.52%
	42	342	373	220
Item 10: To what extent <i>should</i> professors include information regarding interdisciplinary collaboration into their teacher preparation program curriculum?	0.31%	15.25%	50.26%	34.19%
	3	149	491	334
Item 11: To what extent do you include opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration into your teacher preparation program curriculum?	5.53%	42.48%	31.63%	20.37%
	54	415	309	199
Item 12: To what extent <i>should</i> professors include opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration in their teacher preparation program curriculum?	0.51%	17.71%	52.20%	29.58%
	5	173	510	289

Responses to additional ETCS Items are addressed in this section. ETCS Item 3 (Table 7) provided the opportunity to add other information, if needed. There were 137 written responses to the “Other (please specify)” prompt. The most common responses include seminars, orientations, workshops, professional development, special speakers (e.g., from a state agency, attorneys, Human Resources Officers from districts), implicit provision, online modules or courses, supervision or advising, dispositions ratings, practicum and field experience, interviews, portfolios, signed agreements, research requirements (e.g., Human Subjects research modules prepared by the CITI collaborative), and access to or review of the program or department’s ethics policy. Several respondents explained state requirements for professional ethics training or coursework, for example:

“Georgia has a requirement for all teaching candidates to take an interactive online course or module using scenarios based on the state code of educator ethics. Teacher candidates must pass a test and earn a certificate of completion that serves as a condition for admission into any teacher education program in Georgia.”

Other states, such as Alabama and Pennsylvania, may require pre- and post-tests and interviews as measures of ethical knowledge and conduct. Interestingly, some responses allude to the implicit, hidden curriculum for ethical behavior found in teacher preparation programs. For instance, one respondent stated, “We’re a private, Christian university. Ethics instruction is sort of embedded into everything we do...” Still other



respondents report that professional ethics is not addressed in teacher preparation until candidates enter field experience. Multiple responses referred to disposition guidelines and the direct, repeated measurement of dispositions through self-evaluations and teacher ratings. Lastly, several respondents state that professional ethics will be integrated into curriculum as the result of a mandate to be placed into effect in Fall 2019.

Table 7

*ETCS Item 3: How do you deliver professional ethics instruction in your teacher preparation program curriculum?*

Curriculum Delivery	Responses	Count
A standalone course	3.09%	35
Integrated throughout courses	71.64%	811
Both a standalone course and integrated throughout courses	13.16%	149
Other	12.10%	137
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 1132$		

As presented in Table 8, the data for ETCS Item 4 show that while teacher educators used more than one specific method, the two largest percentages were group discussions (25%,  $n = 859$ ) and lectures (20%,  $n = 668$ ). This survey question also provided the opportunity to add other information. There were 178 total written responses to the “Other (please specify)” prompt. The most common responses that were unrelated to other answer choices included: One-on-one discussions; self-reflection; projects or other planned activities (e.g., role playing, creation of “public service

announcement” videos, capstone reports, etc.); and application of ethics in fieldwork; signed state codes, statements, or syllabi.

Table 8

*ETCS Item 4: How do you introduce professional ethics into your teacher preparation program curriculum?*

Method	Responses	Count
Textbook readings	13.96%	476
Lectures	19.59%	668
Case Studies	16.95%	578
Discussions (in-class or online)	25.19%	859
Examinations or quizzes	4.93%	168
Student research papers	4.78%	163
Presentation on ethical topics	9.38%	320
Other	5.22%	178
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 3410$		

Responses ETCS Item 5 (Table 9) indicate that, although teacher educators may pull from various resources, the most commonly cited are organization/professional codes of ethics (30%,  $n = 791$ ), state codes of ethics (26%,  $n = 682$ ), and educational theory (24%,  $n = 672$ ). An examination of “Other (please specify)” text results reveals that, in addition to the above sources of ethics curriculum, teacher educators may also use personal anecdotes, school district policies, Christian ideology and the bible, current news stories or court cases, research studies, common sense or personal opinion, regional mores, and professional development to guide teaching of professional ethics.

Table 9

*ETCS Item 5: From what source(s) do you derive information to teach about professional ethics?*

Source	Responses	Count
State codes	26.10%	682
Organization/professional codes	30.27%	791
Philosophy	13.55%	354
Educational theory	24.00%	627
Other	6.08%	159

Total Respondents = 100%;  $n = 2613$

ETCS Item 8 was the open-ended answer item: “What types of decision-making models or activities do you provide, if any, when teaching ethics?” As this was a forced-response item, an informal analysis of response content was conducted on all 977 responses<sup>1</sup>, using the Text IQ function in Qualtrics, to determine the most commonly used ethical decision-making models or activities in teacher preparation curriculum. Topics are grouped by theme and frequency of response below.

- **Case study method** (600 results)—A review of scenarios, court cases, news stories, critical incidents, personal experiences, etc. that are then either discussed as a group and/or analyzed using a conceptual framework, problem-solving model, template, or other method of critical analysis.

<sup>1</sup> Note: Multiple topics are present in a single participant response.

- ***General or unspecified decision-making models, frameworks, or theory*** (174 results)—Respondents report using the Blanchard-Peale Framework, Markkula Center Framework, risk versus benefit ratios, PLUS Ethical Decision-Making Model, Rational or Classical Models, the “Five Ws” (i.e., what, when, where, why, and who), Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, heuristic models of decision-making, Potter's Box, the TARES test, and Recognition-Primed Decision Model. A number of additional ethical decision-making and problem-solving frameworks specific to leadership, science, counseling, business, and instructional technology were included in this topic. Many respondents simply answered, “I use an ethical decision-making model.”
- ***None*** (163 results)—This category represents instances in which respondents report no use of ethical decision-making models or activities or provide no response (e.g., “.” or “n/a”).
- ***Collaborative problem-solving*** (100 results)—Teacher educators report using critical friends, cohorts or panels, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), mentoring, debriefing, consensus building, conflict mediation, and restorative justice circles, to increase collegiality and effective ethical decision-making. This topic also includes team-based problem-solving, shared decision-making, the Concerns-Based Adoption Model, and collaboration with stakeholders as concepts related to ethical decision-making in educational settings.

- ***Informal activities*** (96 results)—Informal activities include role playing, brainstorming, incidental teaching, and sharing anecdotes.
- ***Formal activities*** (88 results)—In contrast, Socratic seminars and questioning; review of codes, policies, and procedures of state and national law, or organizations, standards, or college's conceptual framework and mission statements; textbook readings; concept mapping; decision trees; worksheets; checklists; and completion of online modules (e.g. ProEthica, IRIS Center, CEEDAR, CADRE, FERPA, etc.).
- ***Dispositions*** (67 results)—Character education, social justice, multicultural competency, equity, personal development, use of particular pedagogy to build skills, common sense and moral compass, use of professionalism or disposition contracts, and portfolios.
- ***Research and application*** (61 results)—Literature reviews, action research, field experience, writing papers, advocacy, and civic engagement.
- ***Reflection*** (42 results)—Use of critical reasoning, reflective judgment, self-assessment, student-directed inquiry, reflective thinking, and traditional moral dilemmas (e.g., Heinz dilemma), and values clarification.
- ***Educational theory*** (41 results)—Forty-one respondents report using educational theory as a reference for ethical decision-making, e.g., Noddings' ethic of care, critical theory, feminist theory, Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral

development, Erik Erikson's psychosocial development, Vygotsky, Dewey, and Banks' theory of multiculturalism.

- ***Education-specific decision-making models or frameworks*** (40 results)—professional resources found in NAEYC publications, data-driven or evidence-based decision making, equity literacy framework, Sirotnik and Oakes' (1986) critical inquiry questions about policies and practices, Teacher as Decision Maker framework (contains eight domains that address ethical issues), and Stockall and Dennis' (2015) *Seven Basic Steps to Solving Ethical Dilemmas in Special Education: A Decision-Making Framework* (citations included).
- ***Philosophy*** (22 results)—Deontology, consequentialism, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, constructivism, biblical principles.

ETCS Item 13 (Table 10) also provided an “Other (please specify)” option.

Because participants could choose multiple options, there is a total of 2520 responses. “Other” responses frequently included: Teachers of other content (e.g. science, math, humanities, physical education), school or guidance counselors, community stakeholders (e.g., local businesses, school boards, representatives, local politicians), related service providers (e.g., occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, physical therapists, behavioral analysts), community and culture groups or workers (e.g., liaisons, advocacy groups, YMCA, afterschool programs, non-profit organizations, translators), social services (e.g., child protective services, crisis teams, social workers, early intervention specialists, resource centers, outside agencies, resource officers), support personnel (e.g.,

paraprofessionals, aides, co-teachers), mental health professionals, legal representatives (e.g., lawyers, police officers, probation officers), medical professionals (e.g., nurses, outside professionals), specialists within schools (e.g., reading, curriculum coaches, team members, interventionists, librarians, ESL/ESOL teachers, coaches, gifted and talented teachers), and researchers (grant writers and research boards). Lastly, ETCS Item 14 was an optional solicitation to add any comments not covered by the survey. Responses are too numerous to include as a discussion. A selection of pertinent comments, organized by theme, is included in Appendix F.

Table 10

*ETCS Item 13: What professions do you refer to when discussing or using interdisciplinary collaboration in your classroom?*

Profession	Responses	Count
School psychologists	19.21%	484
Administrators	27.10%	683
Special educators	32.42%	817
Other	21.27%	536
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 2520$		

### **IEDMC Descriptive Statistics Analysis**

**Demographics.** The overall sample was 79% ( $n = 379$ ) female, 19% ( $n = 91$ ) male, with 2.50% declining to answer ( $n = 12$ ). As shown in Table 11, most respondents were Caucasian (86%,  $n = 412$ ), followed by Other/Multi (3.30%,  $n = 16$ ), and African American (2.70%,  $n = 13$ ). Six percent declined reporting ( $n = 31$ ). Nearly half (47%,  $n$

= 227) teach in a suburban district, followed by 38% ( $n = 183$ ) in an urban district and 15% ( $n = 74$ ) in a rural district. Over half reported belonging to a teacher organization (62%,  $n = 297$ ). It is important to note that teacher organization in this case was defined as a professional organization and not a union. Table 12 represents the percentage and number of respondents who graduated from an accredited teacher preparation program.

Table 11

*Race/ethnicity of participants.*

Caucasian	African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian	Native American	Other/Multi	Declined
85.50%	2.7%	1.2%	0.2%	0.6%	3.3%	6.4%
412	13	6	1	3	16	31
Total respondents = 100%, $n = 482$						

Table 12

*Participant EPP accredited by a regional and/or national accreditation agency.*

Yes – Reg.	Yes – Nat'l	Yes – Both	No – Neither	No EPP	Unsure
12.70%	24.50%	34.00%	0.8%	3.3%	24.70%
61	118	164	4	16	119
Total respondents = 100%, $n = 482$					

Note: Educator preparation program (EPP) is the same as teacher preparation program. Reg. = regional; Nat'l = national.

Age was distributed across given ranges, with 31% ( $n = 150$ ) between the ages of 41-50, 26% between the ages of 51-60 ( $n = 124$ ), and 23% between the ages of 31-40 ( $n$



= 110; Table 13). Eleven percent ( $n = 51$ ) reported being between ages 20-30 and 10% ( $n = 47$ ) reported being over the age of sixty. Table 14 summarizes years of teaching practice. Results are commensurate with age, i.e., the older the teacher, the longer reported experience teaching.

Table 13

*Age ranges of sample.*

Range	Percentage of responses	Count
20-30	10.60%	51
31-40	22.80%	110
41-50	31.10%	150
51-60	25.70%	124
60+	9.80%	47
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 482$		

Table 14

*Years of teaching experience.*

Range	Percentage of responses	Count
Less than 5 years	11.00%	53
5-10 years	19.70%	95
11-15 years	15.10%	73
16-20 years	22.60%	109
Over 20 years	31.50%	152
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 482$		

Most respondents reported currently teaching at either the Elementary (33%,  $n = 161$ ) or Secondary level (31%,  $n = 150$ ; Table 15). Teachers had the opportunity to

choose an “Other” option, in which they could specify alternative answers. These answers included: College, transitional, and special education services (e.g., co-teaching) across grades and instructional coaching/specialist. Fifty-two percent ( $n = 248$ ) of respondents have experience teaching grades exclusive to one level (i.e., elementary, middle, and secondary grades only; Table 16). Interestingly, respondents who reported teaching experience across all grades also tended to be certified in special education.

Table 15

*Level(s) of school currently taught.*

Range	Percentage of responses	Count
Pre-kindergarten	2.7%	13
Elementary	33.40%	161
Middle	21.00%	101
Secondary	31.10%	150
Multiple levels	8.90%	43
Other	2.90%	14
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 482$		

Table 16

*Grades taught in the past.*

Range	Percentage of responses	Count
Elementary only	24.90%	120
Elementary and middle	16.20%	78
Elementary and secondary	1.50%	7
Middle only	10.60%	51
Middle and secondary	18.00%	87
Secondary only	16.00%	77
All grades	12.70%	61
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 481$		

Note: One participant was excluded from this frequency table, due to failure to report grades.

Of the sample, 31% ( $n = 150$ ) held a level-specific certification (e.g., elementary education), 21% ( $n = 103$ ) held a special education certification, and 16% ( $n = 79$ ) held specialist certifications (e.g., ELL, gifted and talented, etc.). Table 17 provides more details. “Other: please specify” answers included: administration/leadership degree (30 respondents), counseling (13 respondents), and the remaining 17 entries were either reiterations of existing answer choices or unrelated certifications or degrees (e.g., ROTC, social work, etc.). Lastly, participants were asked whether a school psychologist is present on their campus or campuses. Half of the respondents ( $n = 242$ ) reported having a school psychologist on campus and 42% ( $n = 201$ ) reported not having a school psychologist on campus. Eight percent ( $n = 39$ ) were uncertain.

Table 17

*Respondent certifications.*

Range	Percentage of responses	Count
Special education	21.40%	103
Level specific	31.10%	150
Subject specific/alternative	8.30%	40
Level and subject specific	10.40%	50
Specialist degree	16.40%	79
Other	12.40%	60
Total Respondents = 100%; $n = 482$		

**IEDMC response patterns.** Factor 1, Training, refers to the professional ethics and ethical decision-making training gained while attending teacher preparation

programs, as well the influence of coursework on current ethical decisions. Table 18 contains aggregated percentages and counts per item (i.e., strongly agree/disagree options were combined with agree/disagree options to best represent perspectives). In general, most respondents (63%;  $n = 302$ ) indicated reliance on professional training when making ethical decisions; however, nearly half of the sample (46%;  $n = 220$ ) reported that coursework left them unprepared for making ethical decisions in practice and that ethical concerns and ethical decision-making were not addressed throughout professional training (49%;  $n = 236$ ). Although most responses on Items 9, 12, and 15 are also in disagreement, it is worth noting that a sizable portion of the sample remained in agreement regarding the use of real-world dilemmas in professional training (38.80%;  $n = 187$ ) and the use of ethical decision-making models (37.10%;  $n = 179$ ).

Table 18

*Responses to Factor 1 IEDMC items by percentage (%) and number (n).*

	Disagreement	Neutral	Agreement
5. I rely on what I learned in my professional training to make ethical decisions.	18.90% 91	18.50% 89	62.60% 302
9. My course work prepared me to use ethical decision-making models.	47.70% 230	21.00% 101	31.30% 151
12. Real world dilemmas were addressed in my professional training.	43.20% 208	18.00% 87	38.80% 187
15. I learned about ethical decision-making models in my professional training.	47.7% 230	15.10% 73	37.10% 179
29. I felt prepared to make ethical decisions after graduating from my professional training program.	45.70% 220	23.20% 112	31.10% 150
38. Ethical concerns and decision-making were addressed throughout my professional training.	49.00% 236	19.9% 96	31.10% 150

Factor 2 is labeled Religion and Culture because the items included reflect the influence of both the student and educator's religion and other personal beliefs on ethical decision-making. Additionally, three items are specific to how educators consider the student, school, and community and the relationships between these systems when making ethical decisions (Table 19). Overall, 14% ( $n = 69$ ) agree that the religion of the student plays a primary role in daily ethical decision-making, 53% ( $n = 257$ ) agree that the culture of the student plays a primary role in ethical decision-making, and 67% ( $n =$

323) agree that the culture of the school and community play a primary role in ethical decision-making. Likewise, most respondents consider how ethical decisions will affect relationships with school staff (50%;  $n = 244$ ). Participants did not agree that their religion (43%;  $n = 206$ ) or that religious issues (45%;  $n = 215$ ) play a significant role in ethical decision-making; yet, most respondents agreed that religious factors commonly affect ethical issues (46%;  $n = 221$ ). Lastly, responses were mixed for the Item “I rely more on my professional organization or state’s code of ethics to make ethical decisions than I do on my personal beliefs”, with 42% ( $n = 201$ ) in disagreement, 26% ( $n = 124$ ) neutral responses, and 33% ( $n = 157$ ) in agreement.

Table 19

*Responses to Factor 2 IEDMC items by percentage (%) and number (n).*

	Disagreement	Neutral	Agreement
6. The religion of the student plays a primary role in my ethical decision-making.	67.40% 325	18.30% 88	14.30% 69
10. The culture of the school and community play a role in my ethical decision-making.	19.5% 94	13.5% 64	67.00% 323
14. The culture of the student plays a role in my ethical decision-making.	27.80% 134	18.90% 91	53.30% 257
22. I rely more on my professional organization or state's code of ethics to make ethical decisions than I do on my personal beliefs.	41.70% 201	25.70% 124	32.60% 157
26. I consider how my decision will affect my relationship with school staff (teachers, coaches, etc.) when making ethical decisions.	31.50% 152	17.8% 86	50.60% 244
30. My religion plays a role in my ethical decision-making.	42.80% 206	19.10% 92	38.20% 184
32. Religious issues play a role in my ethical decision-making.	44.60% 215	23.2% 112	32.10% 155
35. Religious factors commonly affect ethical issues.	28.60% 138	25.50% 123	45.90% 221

Factor 3, Decision-Making Models, describes familiarity with or use of ethical decision-making models. As shown in Table 20, 48% ( $n = 230$ ) do not report using a formal ethical decision-making model and 43% do not rely on the use of an ethical

decision-making model in practice ( $n = 208$ ). In contrast, 55% ( $n = 226$ ) report using a professional or state code of ethics when making ethical decisions. When asked about familiarity with ethical decision-making models, 40% ( $n = 191$ ) endorsed unfamiliarity with ethical decision-making models, while 37% ( $n = 180$ ) endorsed familiarity.

Table 20

*Responses to Factor 3 IEDMC items by percentage (%) and number (n).*

	Disagreement	Neutral	Agreement
28. I don't use a formal model. I have my own method for making ethical decisions.	27.00% 130	25.30% 122	47.70% 230
31. I refer to my professional organization or state's code of ethics when making an ethical decision.	24.70% 119	21.10% 97	55.20% 226
34. I rely on an ethical decision-making model when faced with an ethical dilemma.	43.20% 208	27.80% 134	29.10% 140
36. I am familiar with ethical decision-making models.	39.6% 191	23.00% 111	37.40% 180

Factor 4, Ranking of Importance, signifies having to choose what is most important between two considerations. Significant disagreement (79%;  $n = 380$ ) was obtained for Item 8 (“I make ethical decisions based more on feeling than I do on a conscious thought process.”), but when the Item is rephrased (i.e., Item 23, “I use intuition more than a conscious process when making ethical decisions”), disagreement—while still strong—dropped to 56% ( $n = 268$ ; Table 21). This may be an issue of semantics, i.e., *feelings* may be interpreted as either an emotional state or reaction or a



vague and irrational belief, while *intuition* may relate more to instincts derived from expertise. Responses to Item 1 (“My own beliefs of right and wrong are more important when making ethical decision than referring to a code of ethics”) were mixed: 43% ( $n = 209$ ) disagreed and 30% ( $n = 188$ ) agreed with this statement. Half of the sample (51%;  $n = 244$ ) reported focusing more on the developmental age of the student when making ethical decisions.

Table 21

*Responses to Factor 4 IEDMC items by percentage (%) and number (n).*

	Disagreement	Neutral	Agreement
1. My own beliefs of right and wrong are more important when making ethical decision than referring to a code of ethics.	43.40% 209	17.60% 85	30.00% 188
2. My ethical decisions focus more on the issue than on the developmental age of the student.	50.60% 244	22.00% 106	27.40% 132
8. I make ethical decisions based more on feeling than I do on a conscious thought process.	78.8% 380	13.5% 65	7.7% 37
23. I use intuition more than a conscious process when making ethical decisions.	55.60% 268	25.10% 121	19.20% 93

Factor 5, Consult and Brainstorm, represents the act of consultation and collaboration in ethical decision-making. According to the results presented in Table 22, the overwhelming majority of respondents were in agreement regarding the use of brainstorming during ethical dilemmas (67%;  $n = 332$ ), discussing ethical decisions with

other educators (80%;  $n = 383$ ), and seeking consultation when faced with ethical decisions (81%;  $n = 388$ ).

Table 22

*Responses to Factor 5 IEDMC items by percentage (%) and number (n).*

	Disagreement	Neutral	Agreement
7. I often brainstorm solutions to ethical dilemmas.	15.00% 72	18.30% 88	66.80% 332
16. I discuss ethical decisions with colleagues in my profession.	9.80% 47	10.80% 52	79.50% 383
20. I seek consultation when faced with ethical decisions.	4.90% 24	14.5% 70	80.50% 388

Factor 6, Mandatory/Universal, relates to consistent, universal processes and mandated actions of codes and supervisors. Eighty-five percent ( $n = 410$ ) of educators in the sample report familiarity with their professional organization or state's code of ethics and 70% ( $n = 336$ ) agree that their personal values align with those presented in such codes. Responses were mixed for Items 12, 24, and 27 (Table 23). Most respondents reported considering the effects of ethical decisions upon relationships with administrators (47%;  $n = 228$ ), resolving every ethical dilemma using a similar process (45%;  $n = 218$ ), and that the same ethical dilemma in different contexts would still have a similar solution (45%;  $n = 219$ ).

Table 23

*Responses to Factor 6 IEDMC items by percentage (%) and number (n).*

	Disagreement	Neutral	Agreement
4. I am familiar with my professional organization or state's code of ethics.	7.80% 38	7.10% 34	85.10% 410
11. My personal values align my professional organization or state's code of ethics.	8.70% 42	21.60% 104	69.70% 336
13. I consider how my decision will affect my relationship with my principal when making ethical decisions.	35.70% 172	17.0% 82	47.30% 228
24. The same ethical dilemma at a different school would have a similar solution.	31.40% 151	23.2% 112	45.40% 219
27. I resolve every ethical dilemma using a similar process.	33.00% 159	21.8% 105	45.20% 218

Items 3, 17, 19, 21, 33, 37, and 39 were omitted from the factor analysis by Brown (2017), as these items did not meet communality standards; however, the items were still included in the final survey and are included in the current IEDMC (Table 24). Items 3 and 19 asked about student safety as a primary and equal concern above all others, to which 83% ( $n = 398$ ) and 78% ( $n = 376$ ) of participants endorsed agreement. Item 17 states "I consider case law when making an ethical decision." Thirty-one percent ( $n = 151$ ) indicated disagreement, 27% ( $n = 128$ ) were neutral, and 42% agreed ( $n = 203$ ) with this item. Eighty-four percent ( $n = 406$ ) agreed that moral principles play a large part in ethical decision-making and 48% ( $n = 231$ ) agreed that all ethical dilemmas have

cultural factors. Further, 63% percent ( $n = 303$ ) reported not consulting with a cultural expert when faced with an ethical dilemma and 52% ( $n = 251$ ) reported not document ethical decisions and reasoning behind them. Table 24 also presents items included by the researcher (i.e., Items 25, 40, 41, 42) to address variables of interest. Item 25 states, “There is no right way to make ethical decisions”, which garnered 65% ( $n = 314$ ) disagreement. Forty-eight percent ( $n = 230$ ) reported discussing ethical dilemmas with professionals outside of the teaching discipline, 50% ( $n = 239$ ) report having the resources needed to resolve ethical dilemmas as they occur, and 61% ( $n = 294$ ) report accepting help from interdisciplinary professionals when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Table 24

*Responses to additional IEDMC items by percentage (%) and number (n).*

	Disagreement	Neutral	Agreement
3. I weigh student safety equally with other concerns when making ethical decisions.	14.10% 68	3.30% 16	82.50% 398
17. I consider case law when making an ethical decision.	31.40% 151	26.60% 128	42.10% 203
19. My primary concern is student safety when making an ethical decision.	7.60% 37	14.30% 69	78.00% 376
21. Moral principles play a large part in my ethical decision-making.	3.90% 19	11.80% 57	84.30% 406
33. All ethical dilemmas have cultural factors.	25.80% 124	26.30% 127	47.90% 231
37. When faced with an ethical dilemma, I consult with a cultural expert.	62.80% 303	24.70% 119	12.40% 60
39. I always document my ethical decisions and the reasons behind them.	52.00% 251	19.10% 92	28.80% 139
25. There is no right way to make ethical decisions.*	65.10% 314	19.90% 96	14.90% 72
40. I discuss ethical dilemmas with professionals outside of my discipline.*	33.60% 162	18.70% 90	47.70% 230
41. I have the resources that I need to resolve ethical dilemmas as they occur.*	27.40% 132	23.00% 111	49.60% 239
42. I accept help from other professionals who are not in my field when faced with an ethical dilemma.*	17.80% 86	21.20% 102	61.00% 294

Note: \*Researcher items not found in Brown (2017).

### **IEDMC Exploratory Cluster Analysis**

Before running the cluster analysis, survey items were grouped into six factors, based on the factor analysis completed by Brown (2017): Training, Religion and Culture, Decision-Making Models, Ranking of Importance, Consult and Brainstorm, and Mandatory/Universal. Only the 31 items belonging to the six factors were used, excluding the additional four items that had not undergone a factor analysis and the seven unincorporated items. Yet, reliability statistics for the full IEDMC was  $\alpha = 0.79$  and  $\alpha = 0.77$  when these additional items were removed. Next, an evaluation of the assumptions of normality was conducted. The distributions presented in Table 25 show acceptable levels of skewness and kurtosis for each factor (skewness and kurtosis  $< +$  or  $- 2.0$ ; George & Mallery, 2010).

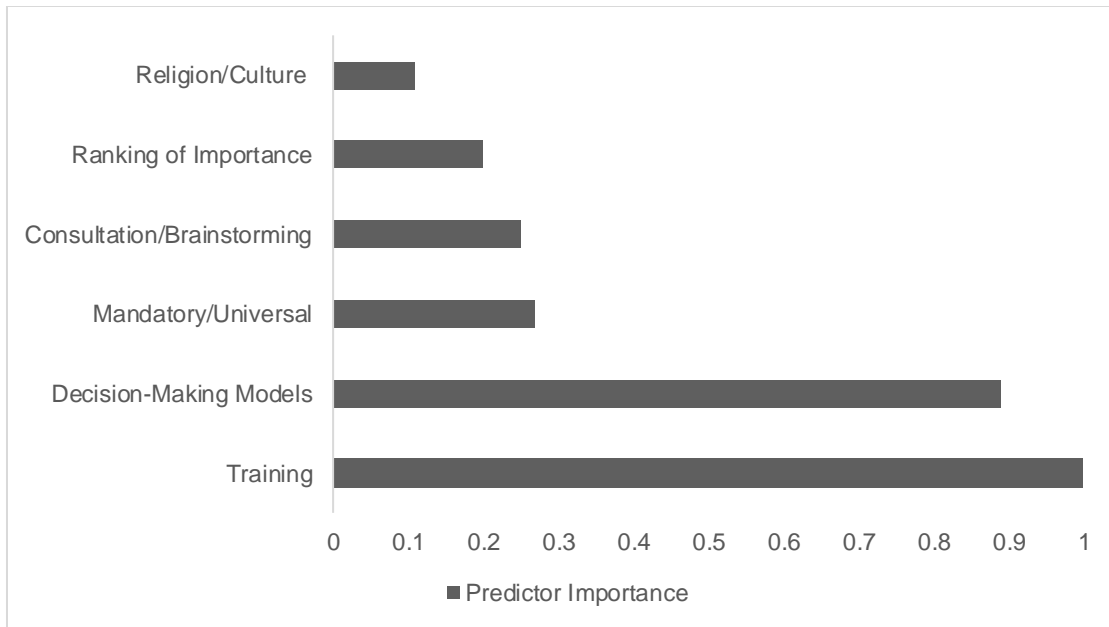
Table 25

*Normality statistics for IEDMC factors.*

Factor	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Standard Error	Statistic	Standard Error
1	0.02	0.11	-0.68	0.22
2	-0.16	0.11	-0.27	0.22
3	-0.24	0.11	-0.14	0.22
4	0.15	0.11	-0.05	0.22
5	-0.60	0.11	0.88	0.22
6	0.10	0.11	0.35	0.22

Note: Factor 1 = Training, Factor 2 = Religion/Culture, Factor 3 = Decision-Making Models, Factor 4 = Ranking of Importance, Factor 5 = Consultation/Brainstorming, and Factor 6 = Mandatory/Universal.

**Defining the number of clusters.** An exploratory two-step cluster analysis was completed using the means of six factors: Training, Religion and Culture, Decision-Making Models, Ranking of Importance, Consult and Brainstorm, and Mandatory/Universal. The SPSS auto-clustering solution was used to select clusters with the lowest information criterion measure (i.e., Schwarz Bayesian Information Criterion; BIC) and the highest ratio of distance measures. Because the order of the data affects the auto-clustering solution, the full data set was first ordered ascendingly by participant number, then in descending order by participant number, and ascendingly once more using a random item number (Milligan & Hirtle, 2003). Results showed that the optimal number of clusters was the two-cluster solution for each sorting method. In support of the two-cluster solution, there was a change in variance explained from the one (BIC = 2075.7) to two (BIC = 1849.7; RDM = 2.1) cluster solution with only minimal increases when three (BIC = 1783.0; RDM = 1.1) and four-cluster (BIC = 1775.5; RDM = 1.1) solutions were isolated. Cluster 1 was composed of 208 (43%) participants and Cluster 2 was composed of 274 (57%) participants. Predictor importance is illustrated in *Figure 2* below.



*Figure 2.* Importance of input dependent variables as predictors in two-step cluster analysis.

**Characterization of clusters.** The mean, standard deviations, and statistical differences by Cluster are provided in Table 26. When considering Centroid percentages, participants in Cluster 1 provided “higher” (i.e., Agree/Strongly Agree) endorsement of IEDMC items than did Cluster 2, especially in the factors Training and Decision-Making. Cluster 2 consistently provided “lower” (i.e., Disagree/Strongly Disagree) endorsement of IEDMC items. This is also reflected in histogram data for survey items in the Training and Decision-Making factors, wherein multiple responses have strong bimodal distributions. In general, respondents in Cluster 1 reported feeling prepared by coursework to make ethical decisions, whereas respondents in Cluster 2 generally did not report feeling prepared. Further respondents in Cluster 1 were more inclined to use



ethical decision-making models when faced with dilemmas and were more familiar with a particular model; however, participants in both clusters reported using a code of ethics when making ethical decisions. Further, an independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the six IEDMC factors using Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 as grouping variables.

There were significant differences between the means of each Cluster for each factor (see Table 27), implying that there are variables that make Cluster 1 fundamentally different from Cluster 2.

Table 26

*Mean, standard deviations, and statistical differences by cluster.*

Factor	Cluster 1 <i>M(sd)</i>	Cluster 2 <i>M(sd)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i> <
1	3.60(0.64)	2.38(0.69)	1.54	< 0.01
2	3.13(0.55)	2.85(0.57)	0.53	< 0.01
3	3.51(0.40)	2.73(0.51)	12.85	< 0.01
4	2.75(0.56)	2.35(0.58)	0.23	< 0.01
5	4.08(0.47)	3.62(0.65)	20.34	< 0.01
6	3.68(0.43)	3.29(0.50)	2.64	< 0.01

Note: Factor 1 = Training, Factor 2 = Religion/Culture, Factor 3 = Decision-Making Models, Factor 4 = Ranking of Importance, Factor 5 = Consultation/Brainstorming, and Factor 6 = Mandatory/Universal.

Table 27

*Results of t-tests and descriptive statistics per Factor.*

Factor	Cluster						<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	1			2				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>		
1	3.60	0.64	208	2.38	0.69	274	19.87*	480
2	3.13	0.55	208	2.85	0.57	274	5.45*	480
3	3.51	0.40	208	2.73	0.51	274	18.35*	480
4	2.75	0.56	208	2.35	0.58	274	7.58*	480
5	4.08	0.47	208	3.62	0.65	274	8.59*	480
6	3.68	0.43	208	3.29	0.50	274	8.91*	480

\* $p < 0.05$ .

**Demographics.** Differences between Clusters were tested using an independent samples *t*-test or Chi-Square analysis where appropriate. Age, years practiced, and levels currently taught were entered as testing variables, with the grouping variables Clusters 1 and 2. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances found a significant difference for years practiced between Clusters 1 and 2 ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 0.43$  and  $M = 3.60$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ , respectively), but not age ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 1.16$  and  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ , respectively) or levels currently taught ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ;  $M = 3.16$ ;  $SD = 1.19$ , respectively),  $t(480) = -2.97$ ,  $p = < 0.01$ . Participants in Cluster 2 tended to have practiced teaching longer and were older than those in Cluster 1. Crosstabulation analyses were performed to

determine associations between demographic variables per Cluster. Demographic variables included gender, race/ethnicity, grades taught, district location, certification area, membership in a teacher organization, school psychologist presence on campus, and accreditation status of the respondents' preparation program. Overall, results show comparable Cluster characteristics, in the areas of gender, race/ethnicity, grades taught, district location, certifications, and professional organization membership; however, significant differences were found between Clusters 1 and 2 in the variables school psychologists present,  $6.46(2)$ ,  $p = 0.04$ , and teacher preparation program accreditation status,  $17.40(2)$ ,  $p = <0.01$  (see Table 35). In Cluster 1, nearly 60% reported the presence of a school psychologist on campus, whereas 55% of educators in Cluster 2 reported no presence of a school psychologist or uncertainty. Seventy-nine percent of the educators in Cluster 1 came from teacher preparation programs that had regional, national, or both regional and national accreditation, versus 65% in Cluster 2. Thirty-five percent of respondents in Cluster 2 either did not graduate from an accredited preparation program or were uncertain as to the accreditation status of their programs.

Table 28

*Results of Chi-Square analysis per variable and cluster.*

	Cluster		$X^2$	$p$
	1	2		
<b>Gender</b>			2.16	0.34
Male	21.60%	16.80%		
Female	75.50%	81.00%		
No response	2.90%	2.20%		
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>			2.68	0.91
Caucasian	85.60%	85.40%		
African American	3.40%	2.20%		
Hispanic/Latino	1.40%	1.10%		
Asian	0.0%	0.40%		
Native American	1.0%	0.40%		
Multi/other	2.90%	3.70%		
No answer	5.80%	6.90%		
<b>Grades taught</b>			2.78	0.90
Elementary only	24.00%	25.50%		
Elementary/middle	17.30%	15.30%		
Elementary/secondary	1.40%	1.50%		
Middle only	10.60%	10.60%		
Middle/secondary	16.30%	19.30%		
Secondary only	15.90%	16.10%		
All grades	13.90%	11.70%		
<b>District location</b>			0.89	0.64
Urban	39.90%	36.50%		
Suburban	44.20%	48.50%		
Rural	15.90%	15.00%		
<b>Certifications</b>			7.24	0.20
SpEd	24.00%	19.30%		
Level specific	28.80%	32.80%		
Subject specific/alt.	6.30%	9.90%		
Subject/level	11.10%	9.90%		
Specialist	14.40%	17.90%		

Table 28 (continued)

	Other/Multi	15.40%	10.20%		
<b>Membership</b>				2.22	0.33
	Yes	62.00%	61.30%		
	No	36.50%	35.00%		
	Not sure	1.40%	3.60%		
<b>School psychologist</b>				6.46	0.04*
	Yes	56.70%	45.30%		
	No	35.60%	46.40%		
	Don't know	7.70%	8.40%		
<b>Accreditation status</b>				17.40	<0.01*
	Yes	79.30%	65.00%		
	No	5.30%	3.30%		
	Don't know	15.40%	31.80%		

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

### Qualitative Analysis of the IEDMC

Participants had the option to complete three open-ended questions. An informal analysis of response content was conducted on all responses, to determine the most common themes in these answers. The first question asked respondents to briefly describe professional preparation for making ethical decisions. Responses varied and were influenced by additional certifications or graduate training either within (e.g., leadership or special education) or outside the field of education. For example, 35 respondents received specific training in teacher preparation programs and an additional 19 received specific training in professional ethics during graduate education or administration degree. Yet, 61 respondents claimed “brief”, “minimal”, or “no preparation” for ethical decision-making, with 12 respondents stating that they have

independently read or researched ethics or law to aid in decision-making in practice, at their own time and expense.

Mentorship and collaboration were important components of professional preparation for at least 17 respondents. For instance, one teacher shared: “I have been fortunate to have colleagues that set great examples of ethical decision-making. My environment is collaborative and safe, making it easier to make decisions as a team.” Collaboration was mentioned in context of consulting with other teachers, administrators, and school counselors. In contrast, 60 respondents received annual mandatory ethics training (in form of a module, video, or course) required by the state (either as an educator or a state employee) and otherwise adhere to either the district or state code of conduct for educators. However, several respondents described district trainings and policy as “vague”, “bureaucratic”, and “left to interpretation” when used to solve ethical dilemmas. An additional six respondents refer to professional organization codes of ethics for decision-making, while 36 others reported the exclusive use of personal or professional experience, reflection, and religious principles as means of ethical decision-making:

“Preparation for making ethical decisions is a life-long process. It stems from childhood with values implied and taught in the home and at school. One is faced with ethical decisions in every aspect of life; learning to make informed and appropriate ethical decisions are a result of broad-based experience, exposure to community and world events, and through observation, and lastly, training. If one

does not have the foundation to make informed ethical decisions, then all the training in the world can't really affect a person's beliefs or actions..."

Further, 23 respondents cited previous careers in outside fields (i.e., law enforcement, military, social work, etc.) as major guiding factors in ethical decision-making: "Nothing in my educational courses...has proven useful when faced with ethical decisions...My work in careers outside of K-12 teaching did more to help than anything. It is my work and studies outside of education that prepared me for this part of my teaching career."

The second optional open-ended question asked participants to briefly describe their personal process for making ethical decisions. Regardless of individual differences in responding, the overarching theme among responses was to consider and reflect upon all factors and possible outcomes involved in the ethical situation. Other frequent processes included: Consulting with colleagues, administration, and outside professionals (63); following or reading law or established procedure (47); referring to personal/religious beliefs or standards (39); maintaining professional/district standards and adhering to codes of ethics/conduct (36); considering the culture/point of view of the student or family (30); following the "golden rule" (28); considering how stakeholders and colleagues will perceive the teacher or be affected by the ethical decision (27); observing student interest/safety above other considerations (26); and relying on experience/common sense (15). Nineteen teachers described a detailed, multistep problem-solving process:

“I first gather information related to the situation. Then I decide whether the situation involves legal or ethical issues. I identify my options and possible consequences. I evaluate my options based on the law, policy, our teaching standards and my understanding of right and wrong. I choose the best option based on the law, policy and the safety of my students, my family and myself. I implement my decision and inform my administrator if necessary.”

Seven respondents reported lacking the time, need, or opportunity to engage in the ethical decision-making process. To conclude, the third optional, open-ended question asked teachers to briefly describe an ethical dilemma they have experienced. Responses are too numerous to include as a discussion; pertinent comments are included in Appendix G.



## CHAPTER V

### **Discussion**

Against the widespread belief that research on professional ethics has had little impact on teacher education curriculum and professional practice, the purpose of this study was first to determine what extent (a) professional ethics training is included in teacher preparation program curriculum throughout the U.S., (b) teacher educators include information regarding ethical decision-making within program curriculum, (c) teacher educators value professional ethics education and instruction in ethical decision-making. As a potential source of strength for school-based professionals, teacher educators were also surveyed on approaches to and viewpoints on interdisciplinary collaboration within program curriculum. To connect preparation with practice, the second purpose of this study was to explore how and by what means educators throughout the U.S. make ethical decisions, according to levels of training and experience. From this investigation, meaningful clusters of educator characteristics were created, based on survey factors and demographic information.

### **Summary of the Entire Study**

Contrary to the notion that professional ethics instruction is absent from teacher preparation, data from the ETCS showed that a majority (99.59%) of teacher educators surveyed teach professional ethics in some capacity and that all teacher educators agreed

that professional ethics should be taught in preparation programs. Professional ethics instruction is largely delivered as an integrated component throughout all courses (72%), with 16% of teacher educators report having a standalone course in ethics. Professional ethics is introduced into teacher preparation curriculum by group discussions, lectures, and case studies, using organization/professional and state codes of ethics (56%) or educational theory and philosophy (37%). Further, the majority of the respondents (95%) reported including information regarding professional and ethical decision-making in teacher preparation curriculum, and 99.91% responded that specific information regarding ethical decision-making should be included in teacher preparation curriculum. Consistent with best practices, ethical decision-making is most frequently taught by use of the case study method, with the use of general or unspecified decision-making models, frameworks, or theories and collaborative problem-solving activities following. However, another frequent response category was one in which there was no use of ethical decision-making models or activities. Lastly, 96% of teacher educators indicated that they include information regarding interdisciplinary collaboration into the curriculum and 94% include opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration into teacher preparation curriculum. Almost the entire sample (99.70% and 99.49%, respectively) indicated that these elements should be included within teacher preparation curriculum. Open-ended responses represent a variety of school-related and outside professionals that teachers may interact with throughout their careers.

Demographics data for the IEDMC are congruent with those found by the U.S. Department of Public Education (Taie & Goldring, 2018): In the 2015-16 school year, around 80% of all public school teachers were Caucasian and 77% female, with an average of about 14 years of experience, mostly at the elementary and secondary level, and roughly half (47%) holding a master's degree. The IEDMC sample was 86% Caucasian, 79% female, and most 38% of respondents had between 11-20 years of experience, currently at either the Elementary (33%) or Secondary level (31%). As previously mentioned, the largest percentage of students in the U.S. attend public schools in suburban areas (40%) and urban areas (30%), followed by rural areas (19%) and towns (11%; Glander, 2016, 2017a; 2017b), so it follows that 47% of educators were located in a suburban district, 38% in an urban district, and 15% in a rural district.

IEDMC responses revealed that most educators surveyed reported relying on professional training when making ethical decisions (63%); however, nearly half (46%) reported feeling unprepared for making ethical decisions and that ethical concerns/ethical decision-making were not addressed in training (49%). Forty-two percent reported relying more on personal beliefs than on a professional organization/state code of ethics to make ethical decisions; yet 79% percent and 56% disagreed that feelings or intuition, respectively, are the basis of ethical decisions. Moral principles play a large role in ethical decision-making of 84% of the sample. Forty-eight percent did not report the use of ethical decision-making models and 40% were unfamiliar with ethical decision-making models. In contrast, 55% reported using a professional or state code of ethics

when making ethical decisions. Additionally, 85% reported familiarity with their professional organization or state's code of ethics and 70% agreed that personal values align with those in the codes. Most teachers reported the use of brainstorming during ethical dilemmas (67%), discussing ethical decisions with other educators (80%), and seeking consultation when faced with ethical decisions (81%). Further, 48% reported discussing ethical dilemmas with professionals outside of the teaching discipline and 61% reported accepting help from interdisciplinary professionals when faced with an ethical dilemma.

The exploratory two-step cluster analysis identified two groups of participants that differed significantly in multiple characteristics. Educators in Cluster 1 were in overall higher agreement with IEDMC items, reported feeling prepared by coursework to make ethical decisions, reported the use of ethical decision-making models, had less teaching experience, had school psychologists present on campus, and were more likely to have graduated from an accredited teacher preparation program. In contrast, teachers in Cluster 2 were lower in agreement with IEDMC items, did not report feeling prepared by coursework to make ethical decisions, did not report the use of ethical decision-making models, had more experience teaching, did not have or were unsure of the presence of a school psychologist on campus, and were less likely to have graduated from an accredited teacher preparation program. Qualitative responses highlighted teacher preparation in professional ethics, personal processes for making ethical decisions, and the types of ethical dilemmas experienced. Although multiple respondents received

ethical training within teacher preparation or some additional training, 73 respondents claimed little or no preparation for ethical decision-making. Collaboration, mandatory ethics training, professional organization codes of ethics, personal or professional experience (within or outside of education) or beliefs have prepared other respondents to make ethical decisions. Personal processes for making ethical decisions included considering and reflecting upon all factors and possible outcomes involved in the ethical situation, consulting with others, consulting law or established procedure, referring to personal/religious beliefs or standards, maintaining and adhering to professional standards, perspective-taking, following the “golden rule”, considering the outcomes and judgements of the school, observing students’ best interests, relying on experience, or using a multistep problem-solving process. A discussion of findings per research questions follows.

### **Research Question 1**

**Is professional ethics instruction provided in teacher preparation programs throughout the U.S., and, if so, using what methods?** The findings of Research Question 1 revealed the extent CAEP accredited teacher preparation program faculty included instruction on professional ethics. The data collected from ETCS Items 1 and 2 dealt with the teaching of professional ethics by teacher educators and their perception of the inclusion of this teaching into teacher preparation curricula. There was an interesting difference between the responses for ETCS Items 1 and 2. Specifically, the percentage of respondents including teaching of ethics continuously or frequently in ETCS Item 1

(79%) was less than the interest shown in ETCS Item 2, wherein a higher percentage (95%) of the professors responded that the teaching of ethics should be frequently or continuously included in teacher preparation curriculum. This response pattern is supported by Davenport et al. (2015). That 79% of teacher educators report frequently or continuously providing professional ethics instruction in their programs is in opposition to the findings of Glanzer and Ream (2007), Campbell (2008; 2011), Boon (2011), and Warnick and Silverman (2011), who contend that the delivery of professional ethics is ubiquitously lacking throughout teacher preparation. However, this finding may not generalize to non-CAEP accredited preparation programs.

ETCS Items 3, 4, and 5 pertained to how professional ethics is delivered and introduced into teacher preparation program and from what sources. Congruent with the literature (e.g., Campbell 2008, 2011; Hutchings, 2009), results from ETCS Item 3 suggest that standalone courses are scarce (3%) even when the standalone course is paired with integrated coursework (14%). Rather, 72% of respondents report integrating instruction in professional ethics throughout the entirety of their teacher preparation programs, rather than offering standalone courses. Both Hutchings (2009) and Maxwell and Schwimmer (2016) found similar methods of delivery. For example, Hutchings (2009) reported that only 3.6% of the national education programs surveyed offered a standalone teacher ethics course, but 78% reported having at least a unit of study addressing teacher ethics. When considering IEDMC results, integrated professional ethics instruction may not have the intended effect found in the literature—in other

words, dispersal of training may not be as effective as explicit, direct instruction in the context of a standalone course. For example, 46% of the IEDMC sample reported that coursework left them unprepared for making ethical decisions in practice and 49% indicated that ethical concerns and ethical decision-making were not addressed throughout professional training. Further, 12% of respondents selected “Other (please specify).” Answers included short-term trainings (e.g., seminars, orientations, workshops, professional development, online modules), exit requirements (i.e., portfolios or interviews), and dispositions ratings, each of which reflect current training paradigms in teacher preparation. These responses also replicate those provided by Davenport et al. (2015), in which teacher educators cited student orientations, seminars, workshops, and student handbooks as additional considerations for introducing the topic of professional ethics to education students. Still other respondents state that professional ethics is addressed—and should be addressed—later in training, during field experience, when under supervision and when able to apply principles.

Regarding the introduction of ethics into the curriculum (ETCS Item 4), responses were split between multiple methods, with group discussion, lectures, and case studies being the three most prominent methods. An analysis of “Other (Please specify)” selections shows that one-on-discussions are favored in the context of supervision or advising, as are self-reflection, group projects, practical application, signed and statements or contracts. This is in line with the practical approach to ethics instruction, as presented by Campbell (1997), Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), Strike (1993), who

suggest introducing professional ethics instruction to education students by providing them with realistic scenarios for discussion, analyzing codes of conduct, and introducing students to a common ethical language to connect practical dilemmas to theory and moral principles. Further, the case study approach is found to be highly effective in helping educators with ethical decision-making (e.g., Blumenfeld-Jones et al., 2013; Campbell, 1997; Fallona & Canniff, 2013; Johnson et al., 2013; Stengel, 2013; Warnick & Silverman, 2011). Considering IEDMC qualitative responses, it appears that educators continue to discuss ethical situations with colleagues, read law or established procedure, reflect upon personal values, and consult codes of conduct in practice.

When exploring the originating materials for professional ethics instruction (ETCS Item 5), responses indicate that organizational/professional codes of ethics (30%), state codes of ethics (26%), educational theory (24%), and philosophy (14%) are among the most useful to teacher educators. With 56% of the sample reporting the use of state and organizational codes of ethics as source material for the teaching of professional ethics, it is possible that teacher educators are furthering the movement toward professionalization as conceived by Strike (1993). Further, consideration of educational theory and philosophy reflect an early imperative in research to help education students develop a critical understanding of theorists important to education as a component of ethical training, as well as the main theories of normative ethics (Blumenfeld-Jones et al., 2013; Bull, 1993; Campbell, 2013; Soltis, 1986; Warnick & Silverman, 2011). However, frequently occurring “Other (please specify)” text answers suggest that “common sense”



notions, personal anecdotes and opinion, and religious ideology are pervasive source materials. ETCS qualitative responses also point to the notion of an implicit or “hidden” curriculum and expectations for ethical behavior in teacher preparation programs (i.e., unspoken norms within education that govern teachers in professional activities, facilitate group cohesion, but also create a double bind that may prevent ethical action; Campbell, 2008; Maruyama & Ueno, 2010). Specifically, these authors found that teacher preparation programs viewed required courses in ethics as an implication that teaching candidates are dishonest and at risk of behaving unethically in professional settings. Related to this is the idea that “good will and good character are sufficient to guarantee ethical practice” in teaching (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016, p. 364). Further, mandatory courses in ethics may be seen as redundant, if programs already integrate ethical issues into curriculum (Bruneau, 1998) and mastering technical skill-building may be seen as more important in contemporary society’s technical-managerial schools than learning about ethics and morality (Alexander, 2009; Boon, 2011; Connell, 2009).

Lastly, the shift in increased emphasis on cultural diversity, social justice, and equity in educational theory and teacher preparation is reflected throughout many ETCS qualitative responses and appears to be conflated with professional ethics (see Villegas, 2007). This is discussed at length by Maxwell and Schwimmer (2016), who contend that professional ethics (one of three ethical dimensions of education frequently addressed in research, the two others being moral education and social justice) is distinguishable from both moral education and social justice, but that:

“...the distinctions here are somewhat artificial in the sense that it is difficult to separate them neatly in practice...Furthermore, because each of the three agendas prioritizes a particular ideal of the teacher’s role in society, they are bound to generate normative friction...we would nevertheless insist, following Campbell (2011), that preparing ethically accountable practitioners versed in the collective standards of teacher professionalism, supporting new teachers’ capacity to act effectively as moral educators, and raising teachers’ awareness about how the school systems can reinforce deep seeded social injustices constitute three distinct objectives of pre-service teacher education” (p. 356-357).

## **Research Question 2**

**Are teacher educators including in their instruction information regarding ethical decision-making, such as use of decision-making or problem-solving models?**

For Research Question 2, ETCS Item 6 asks to what extent do teacher educators include information on ethical decision-making in the teacher preparation curriculum. Results suggest that 72% of respondents “occasionally” or “frequently” provide information regarding ethical decision-making in their curriculum. This finding diverges from the endorsement (79%) of professional ethics being taught “frequently” and “continuously” throughout teacher preparation programs. When asked the extent to which teacher educators *should* include information regarding ethical decision-making in preparation programs (ETCS Item 7), 90% responded that information regarding ethical decision-making should frequently or continuously be included in the curriculum. Comparatively,

teacher educators are less inclined to address ethical decision-making during instruction, than to address professional ethics training—a finding that has potential long-reaching consequences for educators. For instance, IEDMC results suggest that 46% of educators feel unprepared for making ethical decisions after teacher preparation coursework, 49% report that ethical concerns and ethical decision-making were not addressed throughout professional training, 61% deny the use of real-world dilemmas in professional training, and 63% deny the use of ethical decision-making models. Emphasis on professional ethics over ethical decision-making may relate to state and professional mandates for professional ethics training, as mentioned throughout qualitative responses. Without specific guidelines from states or accrediting agencies, the possibility exists that teacher educators may not provide information on or instruction in ethical decision-making in their curriculum; therefore, a response rate of 90% for how often ethical decision-making should be addressed in teacher preparation may indicate the lack of such provisions in these programs. Further, when examining the open-ended responses to ETCS Item 8, the lack of cohesive models or techniques based on performance data or evidence-based research practices suggest that this is an area of concern when considering the emphasis placed upon ethics education. For instance, although the case study method—an empirically validated technique for bolstering ethical-decision making capacity—is the most frequently mentioned ethical decision-making model/problem-solving technique used, over 300 responses indicated that either no use of ethical decision-making models

or activities are used in teacher preparation, or that some general, unspecified, theoretical, or extra-disciplinary decision-making model is used instead.

Despite this, 100 teacher educators endorsed the use of collaborative problem-solving techniques either with other teachers or with stakeholders; 88 mentioned the use of conceptual frameworks, concept mapping, decision trees, worksheets, and checklists; 42 reported using critical reasoning, reflective judgment, self-assessment, student-directed inquiry, reflective thinking, and traditional moral dilemmas (e.g., Heinz dilemma), and values clarification; and 40 reported using education-specific decision-making models or frameworks in their curriculum. Education-specific models related to data-driven or evidence-based decision making in context of curriculum-based measurements, IEP meetings, and Response to Intervention teams, rather than individual processes for ethical decision-making. An interesting finding relates to the use of collaborative problem-solving and mentorship to promote ethical decision-making. This is in line with both the team-based decision-making agenda and the use of professional learning communities within which “teachers try new ideas, reflect on outcomes, and co-construct knowledge about teaching and learning in the context of authentic activity” (Butler, Novak Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger, & Beckingham, 2004, p. 436).

### **Research Question 3**

*Are teacher educators including information on or opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration within program curriculum?* The findings for ETCS Item 9 suggest that 73% of teacher educators occasionally or frequently include

*information* in the curriculum about interdisciplinary collaboration as a means of solving problems and 85% indicated that teacher educators should include information regarding interdisciplinary collaboration into their teacher preparation program curriculum (ETCS Item 10). ETCS Item 11 asked respondents how frequently they include *opportunities* for interdisciplinary collaboration in teacher preparation program curriculum. Comparable to ETCS Item 10, responses indicated that 74% of the teacher educators surveyed occasionally or frequently provide such occasions, with 82% agreement that teacher educators should frequently or continuously include opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. The reduction in expectations regarding interdisciplinary collaboration is of interest, considering that collaboration in itself is a mainstay of teacher preparation curricula (Simmons et al., 2000) and the previously mentioned emphasis on decision-making teams. Although collaboration with colleagues may be valued within teacher education and education practice, it may be that opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration in the context of ethical decision-making are limited. In addition, the term “interdisciplinary collaboration” may be interpreted as interdepartmental as opposed to within the realm of education. Nevertheless, IEDMC results suggest that both inter- and intra-disciplinary collaboration is frequently used in the process of ethical decision making: 80% report discussing ethical decisions with other educators, 81% report seeking consultation when faced with ethical decisions, 48% report discussing ethical dilemmas with professionals outside of the teaching discipline, and 61% report accepting help from interdisciplinary professionals when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Lastly, respondents were asked what professions are of interest when discussing or using interdisciplinary collaboration (ETCS Item 13). Answers included special educators (32%), administrators (27%), and school psychologists (19%), with a total of 21% Other (please specify) responses. These additional responses reflected the use of an interdisciplinary, team-based approach within the context of schools, as well as the need for an ongoing ecological view of collaboration to address the challenging needs of a complex society: The majority of responses cited teachers of other content, school or guidance counselors, community stakeholders, related service providers, community and culture groups or workers, social service workers, support personnel, mental health professionals, legal representatives, medical professionals, specialists within schools, and researchers. These responses also illustrate the multifaceted and expanding role of teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, within which school psychologists also operate (Dempster & Berry, 2003).

#### **Research Question 4**

*How often do teacher educators feel that they should include ethics instruction, ethical decision-making models, and interdisciplinary collaboration within program curriculum?* Research Question 4 addresses the perceptions and expectations of teacher educators versus reported practice, in relation to the teaching of professional ethics, the provision of ethical decision-making tools, and the informed use of interdisciplinary collaboration. Responses indicate differing levels of discrepancy between expectations versus practice. For example, there is a 18.12% difference between how often ethical

decision-making is included and should be included within teacher preparation curriculum, a 16.48% discrepancy between how often professional ethics is included and should be included into teacher preparation curriculum, and a 11% difference between the informed use of interdisciplinary collaboration and the expectation that it should be provided in the curriculum. Gaps in practice were also identified Bruhn, Zajac, Al-Kazemi, and Prescott (2002), in which teacher educators endorsed being committed to an ideal or action; yet, displayed a consistent disparity between such stated commitments and actions. Yet, it is important to note that professional codes of ethics, which articulate aspirational and higher-than-required standards, often create an irreconcilable gap between practice and expectation (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016; O'Neill & Bourke, 2010).

### **Research Question 5**

**How do educators make ethical decisions in daily practice?** When considering professional ethics and ethical decision-making training gained while attending teacher preparation programs, it appears 63% teachers surveyed for the IEDMC rely on professional training when making ethical decisions. It is possible that in-service training and additional preparation in professional ethics (i.e., masters or doctoral degrees in education, specialty degrees, or degrees and training unrelated to the field of education) may explain the high endorsement of this item. For example, many educators cited previous careers in outside fields (i.e., law enforcement, military, social work, etc.) as major guiding factors in ethical decision-making. Despite this high percentage, 46% of

respondents felt educational coursework left them unprepared for making ethical decisions in practice. Further still, 49% reported that ethical concerns and ethical decision-making were not addressed in professional training—a theme reflected in qualitative responses, wherein 73 respondents claimed brief, minimal, or no preparation for ethical decision-making. In general, 48% of educators surveyed do not report using a formal ethical decision-making model and 43% do not rely on the use of an ethical decision-making model in practice. Forty percent were unfamiliar with ethical decision-making models. In contrast, 55% report using a professional or state code of ethics when making ethical decisions. This finding echoes Boon (2011), in which preservice teacher candidates reported the need for instruction and training in ethics, and found case studies, workshops, reflective journals, and lectures related to ethics as useful learning experiences. Despite the widespread use of these activities cited in ETCS responses, teacher educators were less inclined to address ethical decision-making during instruction and use of ethical decision-making models, preferring instead variations of the case study method. In order for the case study method to serve as a definitive replacement of a well-rounded decision-making model, more stringent and formalized procedures is needed.

According to the results, the influence of educators' personal beliefs, coupled with concern regarding how the consequences of ethical decisions will affect school relationship, were major determiners of how educators report making ethical decisions. For instance, 67% agreed that the culture of the school and community plays a primary role in ethical decision-making, while, to a lesser extent, 53% agreed that the culture of



the student plays a primary role in ethical decision-making. Most respondents reported considering the effects of ethical decisions upon relationships with administrators (47%). Likewise, half of the respondents report considering how ethical decisions will affect relationships with school staff, and many qualitative responses pertained to how stakeholders and colleagues will perceive the teacher as a result of the ethical decision. Similarly, a common theme among the ethical dilemmas found in Appendix G was that of collegiality, administrative pressures, and lack of administrative support. For instance, respondents described situations in which they did not want to report a friend or colleague for an ethical infraction or did not feel comfortable approaching or reporting an administrator. As previously mentioned, lack of administrative support is a salient barrier to ethical behavior for professionals in educational settings. Further, hidden norms prevent teachers from criticizing peers, as this a breach of loyalty and will result in group disapproval. When loyalty demands are high, teachers report feeling that they cannot report abusive, negligent, or incompetent actions of peers and must conform to administrative practices that may be harmful (Campbell, 2000; Colnerud, 2006).

Despite these discouraging findings, an overwhelming majority of educators in the sample report using brainstorming during ethical dilemmas (67%), discussing ethical decisions with other educators (80%), and seeking consultation when faced with ethical decisions (81%). Another 48% reported discussing ethical dilemmas with professionals outside of the teaching discipline, 50% reported having the resources needed to resolve ethical dilemmas as they occur, and 61% reported accepting help from interdisciplinary

professionals when faced with an ethical dilemma. According to qualitative responses, reliance on consultation and collaboration in ethical decision-making, both in the context of preparation and practice, was beneficial to many educators. Other teachers, administrators, and school counselors were the most frequently mentioned professionals who engage in collaborative ethical decision-making, for both the ETCS and IEDMC samples; however, a number of qualitative answers referred to consulting unspecified outside professionals.

Although 42% of respondents disagreed with the statement “I rely more on my professional organization or state’s code of ethics to make ethical decisions than I do on my personal beliefs”, personal beliefs, religious beliefs, and moral principles were frequent themes in both survey endorsement and qualitative responses. On one hand, significant disagreement (79%) was obtained for IEDMC Item 8 (“I make ethical decisions based more on *feeling* than I do on a conscious thought process.”) and 56% for IEDMC Item 23 (“I use *intuition* more than a conscious process when making ethical decisions). On the other hand, responses were less vehement to IEDMC Item 1 (“My own beliefs of right and wrong are more important when making ethical decision than referring to a code of ethics”), with 43% in disagreement and 30% in agreement.

Consistent with scholarly assertion that teaching is an innately moral profession (e.g., Bullough, 2011; Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001; Campbell, 1997; Campbell, 2008), 84% of educators surveyed agreed that moral principles play a large part in ethical decision-making. The idea that teacher quality and quality teaching are linked with

teacher values and belief is widely held and observed in research (Gore, Ladwig, Griffiths, & Amosa, 2007; Lovat & Toomey, 2007; Revell & Arthur, 2007), with student success being related to the pairing of high expectations, morally defensible beliefs, and a teaching orientation linked to social justice and an internalized value system.

Compounding this, qualitative responses indicate that the exclusive use of personal experience and beliefs—including religious beliefs or principles—is common in the ethical decision-making process of many educators. Nonetheless, the preference for conscious thought processes and use of ethics codes in decision-making is in contrast with other findings, such as those presented by Knight, Shapiro, and Stefkovich (2001), who found that educators mostly relied on emotions when required to make professional decisions. For instance, 85% of educators in the sample reported familiarity with a professional organization or state code of ethics and 70% agreed that personal values align with those presented in such codes. However, this may be the result of mandatory professional ethics training.

Lastly, IEDMC data indicate that educators possess both implicit and explicit comprehension of ethics, from a professional as well as personal perspective (e.g., following the “golden rule” in practice) and are aware of their role in society as moral figures (Boon, 2011; Campbell, 2011). Normative ethics (i.e., utilitarianism, pragmatic ethics, and ethics of care, etc.) pervade many IEDMC Item and qualitative responses. For instance, student safety is a component of “ethics of care”, based in empathy and compassion and interdependence. How a teacher cares for students is thought to be

among the most important of all professional matters in education (Bullough, 2011). Student safety was a primary and equal concern above all others for 83% and 78% of participants (IEDMC Items 3 and 19, respectively), and qualitative responses often centered around eliminating harm toward students and considering the culture/point of view of the student or family. As previously mentioned, 19 educators described in the IEDMC qualitative Item 44 a detailed, multistep problem-solving process similar to those endorsed by NASP, 45% reported resolving every ethical dilemma using a similar process, and 45% reported that the same ethical dilemma in different contexts would still have a similar solution. That 65% of educators surveyed would disagree with the statement “There is no right way to make ethical decisions”, is in direct contrast with the notion that moral relativism (i.e., moral standards depend on the feelings of the individual; Campbell, 2000) dominates education and is indicative of the movement toward fostering professional ethics in teacher education.

### **Research Question 6**

*What meaningful clusters will emerge when using educator demographics and response patterns as factors?* Of the six factors included in the two-step cluster analysis Training and Decision-Making Models were the most important predictors for the clusters. Therein, two clusters were identified: Cluster 1 provided “higher” (i.e., Agree/Strongly Agree) and Cluster 2 consistently provided “lower” (i.e., Disagree/Strongly Disagree) endorsement of factors Training and Decision-Making. This means that educators in Cluster 1 generally reported feeling prepared by coursework to

make ethical decisions and are more inclined to use ethical decision-making models when faced with dilemmas, whereas findings were opposite for Cluster 2. However, participants in both clusters reported using a code of ethics when making ethical decisions. Cluster characteristics were similar for most demographic variables; yet, a significant difference between Clusters was found for the demographic variables of years practiced, school psychologist present, and teacher preparation program accreditation status. Educators in Cluster 2 tended to have practiced teaching longer than those in Cluster 1. In Cluster 1, nearly 60% reported the presence of a school psychologist on campus, whereas 55% of educators in Cluster 2 reported no presence of a school psychologist or uncertainty. Seventy-nine percent of the educators in Cluster 1 came from teacher preparation programs that had regional, national, or both regional and national accreditation, versus 65% in Cluster 2. It may be that early-career educators, graduating from CAEP and other recently standardized preparation programs, have more ready access to current research and standards, and, as a result, feel more prepared to make ethical decisions in practice. Further, the presence of interdisciplinary staff and resources may increase confidence and support in ethical decision making. These factors may be more salient than experience when making ethical decisions.

Yet, it is important to note that only 50% of IEDMC participants, regardless of Cluster membership, indicated having the resources needed to make ethical decisions. For instance, one participant stated:

“Honestly, teachers are so overloaded...ethical decisions are not on [their] radar. Teachers are doing the best they can every day, our decisions are very often made in seconds. I don’t know when I would have time to prepare for decisions or use models to solve them. I have no planning period and no breaks. I’m drowning trying to get everything done and be the best I can for my students...(Appendix G).”

This finding also connects with many of the issues brought forth in ETCS. For example, several teacher educators stated that there are “bigger fish to fry than...ethics” in teacher preparation, that “dedicated coursework” for professional ethics training is “hard to find” and, even if available, it is “seemingly impossible to add anything else” to teacher preparation curriculum (see Appendix F). Further, professional ethics training may be either at odds with, or secondary to, current paradigms and mandates, such as the push for evidence-based practices and accountability reform.

### **Conclusion**

A common statement in educational research is that teacher preparation programs have either resisted or missed the call for increased ethics instruction in higher education (Boon, 2011; Glanzer & Ream, 2007). This position is based on some evidence that professional ethics training is scarce or even absent from teacher education programs. Yet, a review of literature reveals that there is little empirical evidence that supports this case (Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016) and the few studies that have explored this claim are not without multiple limitations (see Boon, 2011; Davenport et al., 2015; Glanzer &

Ream, 2007; Sacher, 2004; Wakefield, 1996). The results of this study provide evidence that professional ethics is widely addressed throughout CAEP accredited programs and that at least 63% of educators feel prepared to make ethical decisions in daily practice. Although teacher educators endorsed providing instruction in ethical decision-making, this process varied considerably and rarely included relevant and systematic ethical decision-making models. The paucity of training in this area echoes practice, with a sizable number of educators reporting unfamiliarity with and little use of formal ethical decision-making models. Yet, this finding is influenced by those factors identified by the two-step cluster analysis—educators with fewer years of experience and who have graduated from an accredited teacher preparation program report more preparedness and confidence in making ethical decisions and in using ethical decision-making models. It may be that educators who have recently graduated from preparation programs have been exposed to higher standards and ethical instruction more frequently than colleagues who have been out of teacher preparation for over a decade or longer. Further, educators reported making use of informal resources during ethical decision-making, such as collaboration, reflection, and brainstorming. For instance, results from both the ETCS and IEDMC both indicate that collaboration remains an important aspect of teacher preparation and educational practice, as is interdisciplinary collaboration. The cluster analysis also revealed that educators who have a school psychologist present on campus may feel more prepared to make ethical decisions.

Discrepancies between the practice of teacher educators and aspirational goals imply that teacher preparation programs still strive to meet professional ideals and standards. That 46% of practicing teachers report feeling unprepared to make ethical decisions, despite knowledge of professional ethical codes, harkens back to the role of teacher preparation in producing educators capable of navigating today's complex societal changes. As teachers share many of the same ethical concerns as those presented by school psychologists, it is important for educational stakeholders to recognize the influence of administrative pressure and collegiality on ethical practice. As such, continued movement toward interdisciplinary collaboration and consultation, as is presented in many responses, is necessary for efficient school practices and the wellbeing of students and the system as a whole. Future studies should be confirmatory in nature, should address questions arising from the current survey, and should lend themselves to application. For instance, if educators rely on colleagues in the process of ethical decision-making, how does the presence of interdisciplinary staff effect such processes? Or, how will pre-clustered groups of educators respond to real-life scenarios, and, how can this knowledge be applied to training and practice? Further, what steps could be taken to create and implement an ethical decision-making model that would be both widely used and reflective of the teaching profession?

This study is not without limitations. First, the ETCS provides information about the outward teaching of professional ethics; however, teacher educators were not questioned about whether or not they were provided opportunities for training that covers



professional ethics or ethical decision-making, in the manner of Davenport et al. (2015). This represents an additional area for research. Further, the lack of definitions for the terms “professional ethics” and “interdisciplinary collaboration” may have led to a misrepresentation of survey items. Limiting the dataset for the ETCS to only programs that are CAEP accredited may have provided a limited view into the state of ethics education and training in teacher preparation programs throughout the U.S. Overall response percentage for the ETCS was 9.9%, below the average survey response rate of 25%, which may affect the generalization of results (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). Regarding the IEDMC, Cronbach’s alphas obtained for each Factor, apart from the Training, were lower than those found in Brown (2017). This suggests that alterations to the IEDMC Items, as well as use with a differing sample, may have affected reliability. In addition, some items were left out of the two-step cluster analysis, which could have changed Cluster characteristics. Further, at least two participating states currently have mandatory ethics training laws for either teachers or state employees, which may have influenced responding. The possibility of social desirability in responding, due to the survey’s distribution through the district, may have affected response patterns. To conclude, although 26 districts in 19 states approved data collection, this represents only 9% of the 632 districts recruited. Despite these limitations, the current study serves as an indicator of the state of professional ethics training, decision-making, and practice amongst teacher educators and educators throughout the U.S.

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## APPENDIX A

**Participant Cover Letter & Consent Agreement for an Online Survey  
Ethics Training and Curriculum Survey**

Dear Participant,

My name is Brittany McCreary, and I am a school psychology doctoral candidate at Stephen F. Austin State University, in the Department of Human Services. I am under the supervision of Dr. Jillian Dawes and Dr. Luis Aguerrevere. I am collecting data for my doctoral dissertation, which explores how professional ethics, ethical decision-making, and interdisciplinary collaboration are addressed in teacher education programs. Using an online survey, information about these factors will be collected and examined. Thank you in advance for your participation in this survey.

Should you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to complete an online survey. You will be asked 22 questions about your engagement in the teaching of professional ethics, ethical decision-making, and interdisciplinary collaboration, and demographics. The survey should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete.

Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to complete the survey, just close your browser. Any responses you have provided prior to closing your browser will be removed from data storage and analyses.

There are no risks to individuals participating in this research beyond those that exist in daily life. Although there are no direct benefits to you by your participation in this study, the data obtained will inform teacher preparation programs of best practices, guide training and professional development, contribute to the literature regarding ethics and education, and may aid in drafting policy about professional ethics in education. There will be no financial or other compensation for your participation in this research.

Your privacy and confidentiality will always be maintained. The researcher will not share your identifiable or individual information with anyone. The researcher will be the only person authorized to view and access the survey data. If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact:

Researcher:  
Brittany McCreary  
Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Human Services – School Psychology  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
936.671.3002  
lowtherbl@jacks.sfasu.edu

Advisor:  
Dr. Jillian Dawes  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Human Services – School Psychology  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
936.468.1686  
dawesj@sfasu.edu

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the SFASU IRB, with IRB Case #AY-2019-2012:

IRB Chair:  
Dr. Luis Aguerrevere  
Chair, Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
Nacogdoches, Tx 75962  
936.468.1153  
aguerrevle@sfasu.edu

Following the link below indicates that you have read the description of the study and you agree to participate in the study:

[Link]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[URL]

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[Link]

## APPENDIX B

### **Participant Cover Letter & Consent Agreement for an Online Survey Inventory of Ethical Decision-Making & Collaboration**

This project has been approved by the district. Feel free to contact me with questions. All responses are ANONYMOUS and participation is completely VOLUNTARY.

Dear Participant,

My name is Brittany McCreary, and I am a school psychology doctoral candidate at Stephen F. Austin State University, in the Department of Human Services. I am under the supervision of Dr. Jillian Dawes and Dr. Luis Aguerrevere. I am currently working on my dissertation, which explores teachers' attitudes and experiences with ethical decision-making and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Should you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to complete an online survey by following the link found below. The survey consists of 42 questions designed to explore your attitudes and experiences regarding ethical decision-making and interdisciplinary collaboration, as well as a short demographic section. The survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes to complete.

Your decision to participate or decline participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to complete the survey, just close your browser. Any responses you have provided prior to closing your browser will be removed from data storage and analyses.

There are no risks to individuals participating in this research beyond those that exist in daily life. Although there are no direct benefits to you by your participation in this study, the data obtained will inform teacher preparation programs of best practices, guide training and professional development, contribute to the literature regarding ethics and education, and may aid in drafting policy about professional ethics in education. There will be no financial or other compensation for your participation in this research.

Your privacy and confidentiality will always be maintained. The researcher will not know your Internet Protocol (IP) or computer address when you respond to this Internet survey. The researcher will not share your identifiable or individual information with anyone. The researcher will be the only person authorized to view and access the survey data.

Clicking the link below indicates that you have read the description of the study and you agree to participate in the study:

[Link]

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact:

Researcher:

Brittany McCreary  
Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Human Services – School Psychology  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
936.671.3002  
lowtherbl@jacks.sfasu.edu

Advisor:

Dr. Jillian Dawes  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Human Services – School Psychology  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
936.468.1686  
dawesj@sfasu.edu

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the SFASU IRB, with the Case # AY2019-2012:

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Dr. Luis Aguerrevere  
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Stephen F. Austin State University  
Nacogdoches, Tx 75962  
936.468.1153  
aguerrevle@sfasu.edu

## APPENDIX C

**Ethics Training and Curriculum Survey**

This survey is intended for professors, instructors, lecturers, adjuncts, field supervisors, and program chairs/directors/coordinators of CAEP accredited educator preparation programs. The Ethics Training & Curriculum Survey (ETCS) is designed to collect current information regarding how often professional ethics is taught, offered, and presented within your teacher preparation program. In addition, the ETCS is designed to collect information regarding the use of ethic decision-making models and interdisciplinary collaboration in your program.

1. To what extent do you include professional ethics instruction to students in your teacher preparation program curriculum?

2. To what extent *should* professional ethics instruction be included in your teacher preparation program curriculum?

3. How do you deliver professional ethics instruction in your teacher preparation program curriculum? Select all that apply.

- Standalone course
- Content integrated into other courses
- Standalone course and integrated into other courses.
- Other (Please specify)

4. How do you introduce professional ethics into your teacher preparation program curriculum? Select all that apply.

- Textbook readings
- Lectures
- Case studies
- Group discussions (in class or online)
- Examinations or quizzes
- Student research papers
- Student presentations on ethics topics
- Other (Please specify)

5. From what source(s) do you derive information to teach about professional ethics? Select all that apply.

- State Codes
- Organization/Professional Codes (i.e., NAEYC, NEA, AAE, etc.)
- Philosophy (i.e., Aristotle)
- Educational theory
- Other (Please specify)

6. To what extent do you include information regarding ethical decision-making (e.g., problem-solving models, steps, brainstorming alternative actions, etc.) in your teacher preparation program curriculum?

7. To what extent *should* professors include any specific information regarding ethical decision-making in their teacher preparation program curriculum?

8. What types of decision-making models do you use, if any, when teaching ethics?

9. To what extent do you include information regarding interdisciplinary collaboration (i.e., various school professionals working together as a team to solve a problem) into your teacher preparation program curriculum?

10. To what extent *should* professors include information regarding interdisciplinary collaboration into their teacher preparation program curriculum?

11. To what extent do you include opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration into your teacher preparation program curriculum?

12. To what extent *should* professors include opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration in their teacher preparation program curriculum?

13. What professionals do you refer to when discussing or using interdisciplinary collaboration in your classroom? Select all that apply.

- School Psychologists
- Administrators/Directors
- Special Educators
- Other (Please specify)

14. Optional: Any comments not covered in this survey that you wish to add? Please elaborate below.

Optional: Please complete the anonymous demographic information.

1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- I prefer not to answer

2. What is your race/ethnicity? Select all that apply.

- African-American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian
- Native American
- Caucasian/White
- Other
- I prefer not to answer

4. What is your age?

- 20-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-69
- 60+

5. How many years have you taught at the collegiate level?

- 5 years or less
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- Over 20 years

6. What is your position title?

- Dean/Assistant Dean
- Department Chair/Assistant Chair
- Program Chair
- Professor
- Associate Professor
- Assistant Professor
- Instructor
- Lecturer
- Adjunct Faculty

- Visiting Faculty
- Field Supervisor
- Coordinator
- Other (Please specify)

7. What level(s) do you teach? Select all that apply.

- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Certification
- Other (Please specify)

8. Is your university or college affiliated with a religion (e.g., Baptist or Catholic)?

- Yes
- No

9. What are your specializations (e.g., elementary education, curriculum design, social justice, etc.)?

Thank you for your participation in this research survey.



## APPENDIX D

### **Inventory of Ethical Decision-Making & Collaboration**

The purpose of this study is to determine how teachers make ethical decisions and use interdisciplinary resources in practice. This study also intends to determine to what extent teachers differ, based on a number of factors, in their perceptions of ethical decision-making, ethical dilemmas, and interdisciplinary collaboration within the school setting.

Please read the following questions carefully and complete the survey using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

1. My own beliefs of right and wrong are more important when making ethical decisions than referring to a code of ethics.
2. My ethical decisions focus more on the issue than on the developmental age of the student.
3. I weigh student safety equally with other concerns when making ethical decisions.
4. I am familiar with my professional organization or state's code of ethics.
5. I rely on what I learned in my professional training to make ethical decisions.
6. The religion of the student plays a primary role in my ethical decision-making.
7. I often brainstorm solutions to ethical dilemmas.
8. I make ethical decisions based more on feeling than I do on a conscious thought process.
9. My course work prepared me to use ethical decision-making models.
10. The culture of the school and community play a role in my ethical decision-making.

11. My personal values align with my professional organization or state's code of ethics.
12. Real world ethical dilemmas were addressed in my professional training.
13. I consider how my decision will affect my relationship with my principal when making ethical decisions.
14. The culture of the student plays a role in my ethical decision-making.
15. I learned about ethical decision-making models in my professional training program.
16. I discuss ethical decisions with colleagues in my profession.
17. I consider case law when making an ethical decision.
18. I am familiar with ethical decision-making models.
19. My primary concern is student safety when making an ethical decision.
20. I seek consultation when faced with ethical decisions.
21. Moral principles play a large part in my ethical decision-making.
22. I rely more on my professional organization or state's code of ethics to make ethical decisions than I do on my personal beliefs.
23. I use intuition more than a conscious process when making ethical decisions.
24. The same ethical dilemma at a different school would have a similar solution.
25. There is no right way to make ethical decisions.
26. I consider how my decision will affect my relationship with school staff (teachers, coaches, etc.) when making ethical decisions.
27. I resolve every ethical dilemma using a similar process.
28. I don't use a formal model. I have my own method for making ethical decisions.

29. I felt prepared to make ethical decisions after graduating from my professional training program.
30. My religion plays a role in my ethical decision-making.
31. I refer to my professional organization or state's code of ethics when making an ethical decision.
32. Religious issues play a role in my ethical decision-making.
33. All ethical dilemmas have cultural factors.
34. I rely on an ethical decision-making model when faced with an ethical dilemma.
35. Religious factors commonly affect ethical issues.
36. I am familiar with ethical decision-making models.
37. When faced with an ethical dilemma, I consult with a cultural expert.
38. Ethical concerns and decision-making were addressed throughout my professional training.
39. I always document my ethical decisions and the reasons behind them.
40. I discuss ethical dilemmas with professionals outside of my discipline.
41. I have the resources that I need to resolve ethical dilemmas as they occur.
42. I accept help from other professionals who are not in my field when faced with an ethical dilemma.
43. (Optional) Briefly describe your professional preparation for making ethical decisions.
44. (Optional) Briefly describe your process for making ethical decisions.
45. (Optional) Describe in 1-3 sentences an ethical dilemma you have experienced.

Please complete the anonymous demographic information.

1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- I prefer not to answer.

2. What is your race/ethnicity? Select all that apply.

- African-American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian
- Native American
- Caucasian/White
- Other
- I prefer not to answer

4. What is your age?

- 20-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 60+

5. How many years have you practiced teaching?

- Less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- Over 20 years

6. What level of school do you currently teach? Select all that apply.

- Pre-Kindergarten
- Elementary
- Middle/Junior High
- Secondary/High School
- Other (Please specify)

7. What grades have you taught? Select all that apply.

- Pre-Kindergarten
- Kindergarten

- 1<sup>st</sup> grade
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade

8. What is the location of your district?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

9. In what areas are you certified? Select all that apply.

- Special Education
- Early Childhood Education
- Elementary Education
- Secondary Education
- American Sign Language
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Gifted and Talented Education
- Reading Specialist
- Curriculum Specialist
- Librarian Certification
- Alternative Certification
- Subject specific certification (e.g., math, art, English, etc.)
- Other (Please specify)

10. Do you belong to a professional teacher organization (e.g., NEA or NAEYC)?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

11. Was your educator preparation program accredited by a regional and/or national (NCATE, CAEP, TEAC, etc.) accreditation agency?

- Yes, a regional accreditation agency
- Yes, a national accreditation agency
- Yes, both a regional and national accreditation agency
- No, my teacher educator preparation program was neither regionally nor nationally accredited
- I did not graduate from an educator preparation program
- I don't know

12. Is a school psychologist present on your campus?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Thank you for your participation in this research survey.

## APPENDIX E

**Pilot Survey Feedback Form**

Rate the following components of the Pilot Survey by circling the appropriate response where:

1 = Needs Improvement, 2 = Satisfactory, 3 = Very Good

Overall Rating of the Instrument:

1. Formatting (Please specify)
2. Clarity of instructions (Please specify)
3. Clarity of questions (Please specify)
4. Relevance of questions (Please specify)
5. Match between the content of the survey and the research questions? (Please specify)
6. Estimated time to take the survey?
7. Any technological issues, such as pages not loading or formatting issues? (Please specify)
8. Comments or suggestions regarding the survey? (Please specify)

## APPENDIX F

**Selection of Relevant Responses to ETCS Item 14****Importance of Ethics in Teacher Preparation**

“In this day and age, ethics should be top priority, in my opinion. Folks can pick up subject content, but they MUST understand their ethical responsibilities regardless of discipline. We are doing a disservice to the kids (and their students) if we do not focus on ethical behavior. Too often teacher preparation folks just assume that students know ‘right from wrong’ behavior when they don’t. Example: ‘Teachers can use any copyrighted material’, right? Nope, nope, nope!”

“The discipline needs better resources on teaching ethics in preparation programs.”

“The inclusion of topics, tasks, discussions, etc. on professional ethics is critical to Teacher Education Programs. Not including a strong focus on professional ethics and standards does a grave disservice to our future teacher candidates in their professional role.”

“There are a lot of ‘shoulds’ that your survey hits upon. I was a school administrator for a decade before working in teacher education, and while we have come a long way, we could go much further to improve our preparation programs. I believe that all kids deserve the very best and that in educator preparation programs we often assign projects that do little to prepare our candidates to deal with real people and real situations that are often quite tough and that do call into question our ethics.”

“I believe that these two aspects of teaching are extremely important for the success of our teachers and students. Student teachers are understandingly very narrowly focused as student teachers. They need to hear about these topics for their future success and survival as a teacher. I think that they need to understand the importance of both, as well.”

“I don’t think that ethics is taught well enough to those of us who are preparing teachers, so it is difficult to incorporate these discussions in the classroom. I was fortunate enough to be able to bring the director of our Institute of Ethics into my class, who walked through several case studies, which I tried (with marginal success) to replicate the following year. I think this is important to consider, however, in teaching our students.”



“Students in the past 15 years have a sense of entitlement. We fail them in teacher training institutions if we do not demand accountability, much of which interweaves with your topic. Pre-service teachers need to know [that] students, and not themselves, come first in a classroom. This is a major part of decision-making, and making decisions ethically is a valuable requirement/standard that is necessary to prepare our future pool of teachers. We want our students to be ethical and be the models in their classrooms.”

“Ethics and legality should be in tune for schools, because teachers should understand that serving all students equally well should not be optional or based on one’s political or other orientations not directly related to education.”

“You cannot separate teaching from ethics. Look at teachers who get fired/arrested for violating ethical principles/laws. I constantly teach about ethical responsibility in my social studies methods and diversity courses.”

### **Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

“Ethical behavior and collaboration are the critical bases for establishing trust and building relationships in education. They create the foundation upon which all learning can take place.”

“We have co-taught courses built into the program so that a special educator and general educator share the course. We further invite administrators, counselors, and school psychologists to visit the classroom on specific nights in specific courses.”

“Until students understand that all contents in a school are cohesive, we will never understand what it looks like to see global perspective. We conduct interdisciplinary exchanges so students see how everyone can work together.”

“The traditional view of teachers operating in ‘silos’ within a school, isolated in their own classrooms, is challenged in our program. We view teachers, administrators, support faculty and personnel and outside resource persons as integral members of a team that exists for the support of each student in our care, as well as supports for ourselves as members of a professional community.”

“Collaboration is a significant part of our curriculum in middle grades education. Interdisciplinary teaming, using all resources to support all students, and integrated curriculum are cornerstones of middle level philosophy/practice.”

“Of course, school psychologists are mentioned, but no real interdisciplinary collaboration connections are emphasized.”

“I believe that the concept of interdisciplinary collaboration is more important than [is] given time. Too many important decisions are made from a ‘silo’.”

“In our state, more school social workers and psychologists are needed to address the needs of students and families. In addition, the school counselors’ time is assigned to a great degree to administrative tasks, such as school assessments, scheduling, etc. There is a limited amount of time for counselors to actual interact with teachers regarding students’ emotional needs.”

### **Diversity & Complex Systems**

“Thank you for conducting this research—it is a very important consideration at a time when our schools are very complex communities addressing a myriad of issues for which there are no easy answers.”

“An expansive definition of ethics seems crucially important to adopt, as our classrooms include a huge and increasing variety of cultural, linguistic, social, and immigrant groups. The foundational values involved in ethics and ethical practice need to be seen as culturally, socially, and politically grounded in varied communities.”

“I teach at a public university where almost all of my students come from ethnic minority, immigrant, and low-income backgrounds. My students work in early childhood settings...so they are constantly faced with issues which require consideration of ethics in handling situations in their settings; specifically, how considerations of culture, religion, class and ethnicity come into play constantly in their daily work.”

“I have taken ethical decisions to be the same as moral decisions in teaching, since ethics and moral issues arise from the same ideas. We also draw on how moral/ethical decisions and development could look different based on gender, content, social and cultural contexts, and student and teacher experiences.”

“The quality of education in [redacted location] varies with [the] zip code. Teacher candidates need to understand systemic racism, sexism and economic disparity in order to serve all students equitably.”

“Sensitivity and curiosity about culturally sustaining practices are highly relevant—the notion of de-centering western values, not normalizing one racialized or gendered approach. Although students and parents are not a specific profession, they are the most important stakeholder in education and therefore should also be referenced when discussing interdisciplinary collaboration.”

“Speaking for myself, although I think that others might concur, the ethics course is critical to survival and prosperity in today's rapidly changing world. It provides the consolations of philosophy and ‘black belt’ level uses of high-intensity decision-making processes to undergrads who are increasingly in need of ways of functioning that go beyond their ‘gut level’ inclinations of the moment. Where 1 of 140 course participants has no formal experience with philosophy or logic..., we have a serious problem staring us in the face as a multicultural society. It's urgent.”

“You need to consider ethics within multicultural contexts, to address questions such as ‘Whose ethics?’ and this shouldn't just reflect ethics of the dominant group but ethics that work for all!”

“It is quite imperative to discuss and unpack ethical issues. Future and current teachers are surrounded by ethical issues that need to be addressed—our classrooms are diverse and ripe with wide ranging world views. In this way, students can undertake the process of reflection which assists them in examining their assumptions.”

### **Complications & Issues**

“While ethics are important, we have bigger fish to fry than to worry about ethics; we have enough trouble getting them to pass their state certification requirements and get them into student-teaching.”

“Professional ethics is ‘in theory’ integrated into our coursework but does not have a class of its own. It's like conflict resolution and violence prevention. It is urgent, but hard to find dedicated coursework for it.”

“Ethical awareness and practices should never reside only with program coordinators; it should begin at the very top with university administrators. Unfortunately, this is not common. Perhaps you should study ethical violations among university administrators, staff, and faculty because there are many.”

“...while ethics is critical in education, we have so much to cover already, that even if it were a good idea to do more, it is seemly impossible to add anything else to our curriculum for pre-service teachers.”

“Professional Ethics should be housed within Colleges of Education. There are attempts by for-profit entities to take online course supplements that they provide. An online manual cannot hope to create the rich environment that is provided by an engaging ethics class. I have students read dilemmas that delve into American Indian Education, rural poverty, and issues that can only happen in small towns...”

“...Ethics is really overlooked because the mandate is evidence-based practice. I think new teachers are underprepared to make ethical decisions. They are expected to be compliant rather than diligent.”

“In this era of accountability, ethics appears to take a tertiary role. It is about the score/product and no longer the process of learning.”

“...I believe that there is a developmental aspect to teaching about professional ethics in education. It would be useful to include a qualitative aspect in your design so that you can uncover more nuances regarding the what, when, why, and how of teaching ethics; also what happens to the formative/summative evidence regarding student learning. For example, information regarding dispositions is collected sporadically, usually when there is an issue regarding one of our teacher candidates. Ethics need to inform how we conceptualize and operationalize dispositions.”

“As we move more into a socially networked society, sometimes ethics and professionalism becomes a matter of ‘group think.’ The ability to properly analyze the various perspectives in a critical manner are becoming lost to many college students and future educators today. Social consensus is becoming the universal currency of the realm. Critical thought and concrete outcomes are the elements that provide valid feedback on skill achievement. Too often, the concept of memorized ‘facts’ become the basis of evaluation. Could you imagine a surgeon who learned his/her skill via a Powerpoint presentation? Knowledge must be operationalized to be of use. Social media attitudes are often expressed by those who yell the loudest and, as a result, ethical considerations become secondary to actual practice.”

### **Practice & Preference**

“I seriously question the effectiveness of standalone or isolated ethics curriculum in teaching or really any field. Ethics should be taught in the context of real-world teaching discussion and applications. Standalone...methods of ethics instruction (as is seen in most business and law fields) ...leads to ethics being viewed as an aside or pull-out ideology that is only dusted off in time of serious crisis. Versus a holistic and constantly practiced way of being and reflecting...I continuously teach self-reflection which, in my view, promotes ethics and ethical decision-making in the classroom.”

“I used to teach a stand-alone Ethics in Education course at another university. We covered topics such as teachers recommending medication to parents; treatment of LGBTQ students; race; religion; handling funds (e.g., field trips); requiring parents to purchase school supplies; discussing other teachers, parents, students, etc.; using censored/controversial literature; politics; developmental readiness/realistic expectations;

and other day-to-day applications where ethical decisions are made. We reviewed case studies of real teachers who were charged with ethical violations...In another program, the only 'ethics' instruction was infused throughout the undergraduate program and directly taught in one seminar during student teaching. I think ethics should underly every single course and be overtly reinforced."

"At [redacted], our Professional Ethics for Educators course counts as a general education requirement in ethics for the entire campus. As such, most of our 25 sections of ethics and education course include non-educator majors as nearly half of each section. This often enriches the in-class discussions, because some students are considering how professional ethics apply not only in schools but also in other workplaces such as hospitals, corporations, non-profits, and government. Also, I will share that we have used the Strike & Soltis book of ethics cases. Finally, I have noticed that many students benefit from an introduction to philosophy and comparative world religions as a way to help them understand the intellectual history of some key ethical considerations. This is most helpful before we jump into applied ethics where we discuss cases."

"Issues of ethics and ethical behavior are best incorporated into courses whose prominent components include field (clinical) placements. Teacher candidates, especially undergraduates, need the real-world grounding in Pre-K-12 classrooms before matters of ethics hold their interest and can be used as topics of discussion."

"We encourage all students to report concerns they have for student welfare. Our disposition form has a section on ethical behaviors to which we expect all students to adhere. A disposition referral can be submitted by all instructors and placement mentors. The college assembles student success teams to help students who show dispositional lapses. Failure to exhibit high ethics would be a serious offense and could lead to termination from teacher education."

"One of my pet peeves about 'ethics instruction' is when a local professional teacher's organization is sent to my education foundations classroom (my consent on that being irrelevant) to talk about 'professional ethics.' It's simply a lawyer reading off the local teacher accreditation body's 'do's and don'ts' list and peppering it with horror stories of teacher malfeasance. It resembles the 'scared straight' days of sending juvenile delinquents to prisons to frighten them into compliance with authority figures. Without philosophy, there is no ethics, only orders. The teaching profession has enough of those already."

"I think the dimensions of ethical thinking could be more prevalent in our program. Interdisciplinary collaboration should also include professionals from outside the school..."

## Character & Virtues

“Ethics can't be forced upon students/preservice teachers. Largely, the ethical (or character?) traits a student brings to my courses were long-ago set in stone by family, church, and/or school experiences. While we have tried to make ethics a procedural, rule-based discipline that we can teach (and learn?), this process is difficult at best. In my opinion, the ethics legislation is another example of a ‘feel-good’ law. The best procedure is to treat everyone as you would like to be treated.”

“For a period of time in the 1980s, many community and church leaders spoke very negatively about including character education in P-12 public school curriculum and practices. That stopped overnight and absolutely with the first school shootings, followed by public outcry about the need for school personnel to address character education, bullying, and personal development in schools. Over the last two years (2017-2019), major businesses worldwide have published their need for employees to have particular ‘soft skills’ that include integrity, honesty, cooperation, perseverance, critical thinking, and communication skills. Requiring development in dispositions in college degree programs has become typical, including teacher preparation. Three years ago, people were still saying that dispositions can't be measured. Now CAEP and other accreditors, as well as national associations, are *expecting* that we measure students' growth in dispositions (the same soft skills that employers say are more important than content knowledge). No one is questioning the use of rubrics that check for particular behaviors on the part of preservice and in-service teachers...The standards and community needs are in place, but they are worthless unless we listen to the outcry for young people to develop integrity along with content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Because most young people have experienced ‘schooling’, instead of authentic personal and spiritual growth, it is imperative that educator preparation programs embed soft skill/integrity development across all components of teacher preparation AND measure it. Otherwise, our students think we don't mean it *and* they continue to develop as the same kinds of teachers they experienced in P-12.

## APPENDIX G

### Selection of Relevant Responses to IEDMC Optional Item 3

#### Collegiality & Loyalty

“I have been dealing with a teacher who for the last three years manipulates her students into giving her money, buying her food and groceries, etc. She has been counseled and admonished to no avail.”

“Remaining friends with a colleague who has admitted to stealing and whom I have gradually lost respect for.”

“I worked with a professional that was not following weekly minutes on an IEP. I was not sure if I should report her, especially since she was my friend... I consulted a licensed therapist, and she said ethically I had to report her, so I did...”

“Knowing that a fellow colleague was intentionally...not fulfilling their duties and role as a professional educator...I didn't want to be the ‘snitch’...and I didn't have a good enough relationship with them to call them out on it personally. So, I did nothing, hoping that somehow someone would find out and hold them accountable for it.”

“Had to report another teacher for sexually inappropriate behavior with a high school student. The child's mother, who was a teacher, did not want me to do so. I did report the behavior, since it was not about me or the mother, but the student. Not reporting would allow the offending teacher to continue unacceptable/criminal behavior with other students.”

“I had a colleague who was ‘double-dipping’ by abandoning classes (to which he was assigned) to cover other classes...He was receiving monetary compensation in the process. I reported my findings to administration...It was a very stressful time, because my colleague found out I had reported him...which made our relationship more tense....I am [now] less likely to report these types of things. I cannot trust anyone to keep things confidential.”

“A school employee was manipulating other staff to the point that it crossed a line into bullying and harassment. When speaking to the person, they minimized the concern. The behavior changed the atmosphere of the entire school, often interfering in daily decisions about students or education.

“My principal stole money, and I knew he was stealing money, but I also knew that no one in a supervisory position, including the superintendent, would take any action. I also knew that I would eventually suffer for saying anything. So, I said nothing..”

“A parent urged me to change her son's grade in my class, even though he had not earned a passing grade. I...did not feel it was ethically sound to change the grade. My principal forced me to change the grade because she complained to him.”

“We do not address homosexuality in our school. When students ask a question related to this topic, I would have to direct them to ask their parents. I'd like to discuss how we could accept everyone no matter their persuasion; however, I would be disciplined for having those discussions with students.”

“As a second-year teacher, I was asked by my principal and school counselor to alter the grades of a few students in order for them to pass and graduate. These students never completed an assignment and came to class once or twice a month but were family friends of my principal. I chose not to, and [was] subsequently reprimanded by my superintendent for being ‘disobedient’”

“An ethical dilemma I have experienced is knowing [about teachers inflating reading benchmark scores].”

“Working with English-language learners has placed me in ethical dilemmas on several occasions. I have been told over and over that the goal of education is to teach students...regardless of their abilities. I have seen that this is not the case for many teachers, administrators, and school systems. I have to... ‘walk the line’ between what the school, administrators, and system require and what students need...”

### **Professional Boundaries**

“It was rumored that a fourteen-year-old student was pregnant, and several teachers voiced she should have an abortion. One said she was willing to take her, along with mom, to Planned Parenthood. It was my opinion that she and her family should know their options and make an informed decision.”

“I was invited to a high school graduation party and saw students who were drinking alcohol. Their parents were present and allowing the behavior.”

“A student approached me for advice about an unwanted pregnancy, knowing I am a bi-vocational minister. In the situation, she assumed my stance as pro-life and wondered if I



would be willing to adopt the child should she keep it. She also wanted recommendations for counsel of options and consequences.”

“How can I balance helping those students who need help without enabling unhealthy behaviors and choices?”

“As a lesbian, I have struggled with 'coming out' to students. I have been open and 'out' with peers and at times, when appropriate, with a handful of students and their parents.”

“At parent-teacher conferences, a parent from another culture asked me to make their daughter be submissive to male students in the classroom.”

“As a young female teacher, a male student asked me to take him to work because he was called in and had no way there. This student lives in poverty, desperately needs to keep his job, and has no support at home. There wasn't enough time to seek out other options and get him to work on time...”

“Recently, I picked up a note on the floor discussing a student's personal life. I considered calling her parents, but since she did not disclose the information to me, and her life was not in any danger, I decided not to call home...”

“A mother and her daughter (my student) are living in their car but don't want anyone to know.”

“I had a student that was here in the United States illegally. While I personally would never break the law, I felt that the parents of the child were trying to give their child a better life than they had.”

“Two teenage male students were grinding and rubbing against a female student who was in the middle of them. Although she was actively participating with them voluntarily, I wrote up the males and not the female. I erred on the side of caution because she may have felt socially pressured. I also wanted to teach the males a lesson because if that behavior was allowed to go unchecked they may repeat it with a less willing female.”

### **Beneficence & Nonmaleficence**

I am fortunate to say that I have not experienced any ethical dilemmas in which I could not address in a conversation with my coworkers. Reporting child abuse is the most common ethical dilemma experience.”

“I had a student report abuse in an online classroom and that they were home alone with no supervision. I reported the information to the hotline and to my administrator. It turned out that the student had lied, but I would make the same decision despite knowing he lied. When it involves safety of a child, I report to ensure protection.”

“A parent struck their child very harshly in front of me during field day. I didn't know if I should report the incident to my principal or not...”

“Honestly, teachers are so overloaded...ethical decisions are not on [their] radar. Teachers are doing the best they can every day, our decisions are very often made in seconds. I don't know when I would have time to prepare for decisions or use models to solve them. I have no planning period and no breaks. I'm drowning trying to get everything done and be the best I can for my students...”

“...I suspected an abusive situation with a child...I went to our school psychologist and told her my suspicions, evidence, and the student's account. She seemed very hesitant to report the incident and evidence, saying that it would ‘open a can of worms.’ She stated that many children tell stories about abuse that sounds worse than it really is. I felt liable if I didn't report it, so I did.”

“Calling child protective services. Doing so would probably cause more pain for the student. It did, but I felt ethically and professionally inclined.”

### **Objectivity in Grading & Instruction**

“Disagreeing about the incessant push to ‘teach to the test’ is an ethical dilemma. I know these students don't need this and it's harming instead of helping them.”

“I had a female student whom in my past experience had only attended maybe once weekly, due to family and mental issues. Knowing this, I assigned her extra online work, which she completed, plus all the regular classroom work, which she completed as well. I gave her a passing grade even though her attendance was horrible, because she worked harder than any student that had attended my class every day. Both the principal and assistant principal had a huge issue with the grade, but I explained that she worked harder for me than any other student and deserved the grade. They allowed me to give her that grade, but the next year I was not allowed to teach that class...I felt very satisfied that she stuck it out and graduated. From this, my principal branded me as unethical in my grading. We never had a discussion about it...”

“My school had very strict rules about not allowing students to make up work outside a typical classroom. I pushed to allow alternative forms of work completion for students who parent or take on extra responsibilities outside of school.”

“Students are allowed to turn in work late without losing points, even if it is the end of the quarter and we did the assignment at the beginning. I do this because my kids would all fail otherwise, and many of them are impoverished and dealing with external factors beyond their control. I also feel like if the student does the assignment and learns the concepts, the goal of the assignment has been met regardless of when it is done. However, this also teaches them that they can get away with not meeting deadlines, which is not true in any sort of job or career...”

“A student who comes to class on time almost every class period and is an excellent young person but struggles academically. The student is earning a 59.4 % in my class with 60% being a passing grade. Knowing the grade book rounds up, do you give the student .1 % to pass?”

## VITA

Brittany McCreary completed her Master of Arts degree in School Psychology at Stephen F. Austin State University in the fall of 2017. While completing her graduate degree, she maintained living conditions for her two children, cats, plants, fish, husband, and sometimes herself. For the requirements of her thesis, she designed and conducted an independent study, *The Broad Autism Phenotype, Social Belongingness, and Reading Comprehension: Roles in Metaphor Comprehension*. In addition, Mrs. McCreary completed practicum and internships at local school districts as well as the university's School Psychology Assessment Center. Mrs. McCreary anticipates graduating with her PhD. in the summer of 2019

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