

## What the Research Suggests About Fostering Dispositions: Summary Points for Practice

Employment forecasts predict both turbulent change and increased opportunities for transformation, with many individuals experiencing a shift in careers over their lifetime. Certain dispositions of mind can aid individuals in these moments of change. Therefore, fostering dispositions that lead to productive and adaptive behaviors for uncertain times proves to be of utmost importance.

We already know a lot about fostering dispositions. What does the research say? What are examples of “to do’s” for workforce educators based upon the findings?

1. **Dispositions are behavioral, meaning that learners can witness others engaging in them. Educators can model dispositional behavior and engage in discussion that helps to make them explicit.**

Educators can model sensitivity, ability, and inclination towards higher order thinking and reasoning and encourage learners to engage in similar behaviors. However, this means that educators must be alert to possibilities for using particular types of reasoning (sensitivity), be able to deploy the skills of good thinking associated with particular types of reasoning and thinking challenges, and be inclined to take the time and expend the effort to follow through. As they do, they can reflect out loud about each aspect of dispositional thought—helping learners to see how their behaviors are important for good thinking and helping them to gain a vocabulary for thinking about dispositions.

2. **Dispositions can be taught and fostered through educational experiences.**

As outlined by Dede and Etemadi (2021), there are key moves or choices educators can make both before and during instruction to help develop dispositions. Establishing common and consistent vocabulary for dispositions, as well as their meaning and benefits, allows learners to understand and communicate dispositions of importance. Offering examples of different dispositions helps ground and illustrate them. Having students recall examples of when they may have engaged certain dispositions or having them think of examples when given dispositions could be useful (or not) can also help students actively process and develop understanding of dispositional behaviors. Distinguishing between both positive and negative dispositions is also imperative so that learners don’t develop maladaptive dispositions.

3. **We can measure dispositions in various ways.**

Given that dispositions often present as observable behaviors, educators can create authentic and varied opportunities and contexts that reveal whether learners are exhibiting desired dispositions. One way to do this is to utilize immersive technology, such as virtual reality, where learners engage in digital contexts which allow them to practice dispositional behaviors in a low-stakes way. Learners can also use self-reports to assess whether they believe that they are exhibiting certain dispositions.