

# C

ompetency-based  
Reference Checking



(This page intentionally left blank.)

## Table of Contents

---

Introduction .....	1
Guiding Questions .....	1
When should a reference check be conducted?.....	2
Whom to contact for references?.....	4
Candidate’s Role in the Reference Checking Process .....	5
Who should conduct the reference check?.....	6
Selecting Questions for the Reference Check.....	7
Preliminary Questions.....	7
Verification Questions .....	8
Competency–based Questions .....	8
Format of Reference-Check Form .....	10
Preparation for the Reference Checker Prior to a Call.....	11
How is the reference informed of the checking process?.....	12
How to Conduct a Reference Check .....	13
Example of Opening.....	14
If the Reference Refuses to Participate .....	15
Continue the Reference Check by Asking the Other Questions .....	15
Take Detailed Notes.....	16
Concluding the Telephone Call.....	16
Review and Evaluate the Reference Check Telephone Notes .....	17
Summary.....	19
Reference Checklist .....	20
References .....	21
Appendices .....	22
Appendix A Template Letter: To Notify Reference of their Participation.....	24
Appendix B Potential Questions to Check References for Teachers Aligned with DPAS II.....	26
Appendix C Other Questions for Reference Check .....	32
Appendix D Template: Reference Checking Evaluation Form .....	38

(This page intentionally left blank.)

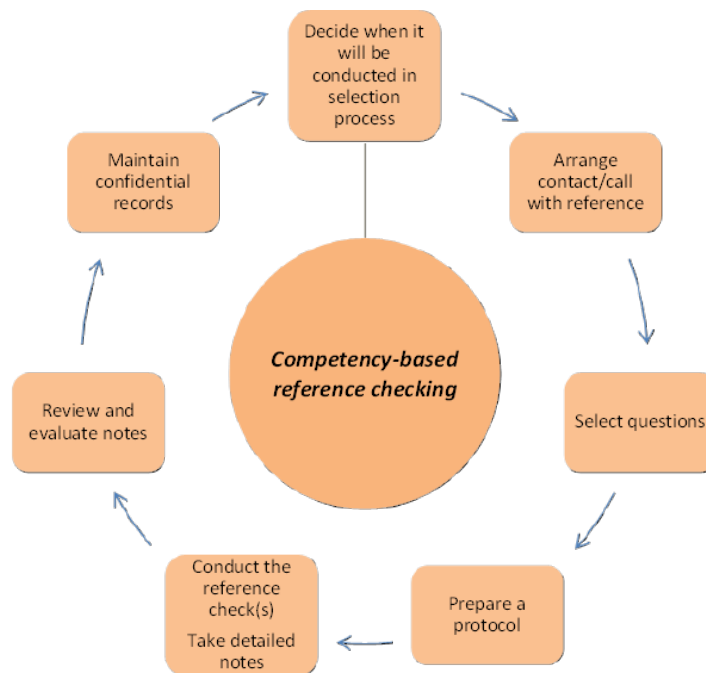
# Introduction

This guide provides the Selection Team with key elements to conduct a Reference Check. This section will offer strategies for structuring the Reference Check process, planning and preparation methods, conducting the Reference Check, and evaluating the outcomes.

## Reference Check

A structured Reference Check is a systematic review of a candidate’s previous employment, based on a performance review by former/current colleagues or supervisors. A reference check focuses on a candidate’s ability to perform the essential aspects of the position for which he/she applied. Typically, reference checks are conducted to: confirm details on a candidate’s application or obtained during an interview; discover new information about a candidate; and check for on-the-job performance and any potential problems (Vermont Department of Human Resources, 2009).

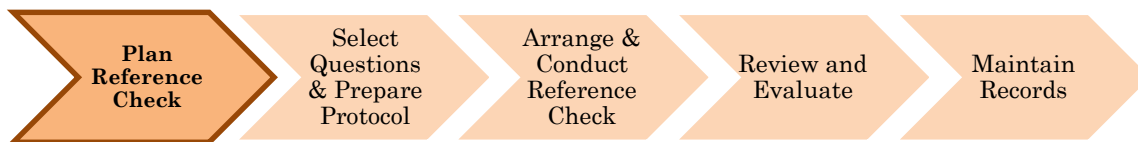
The questions focus on job-related behaviors based on a reference’s experience working with or observing a candidate (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009). In addition, by obtaining at least two references, the Selection Team can look for consistency across the references’ comments (Department of Navy, 2013).



## Guiding Questions

Questions	Answers
<b>What is the purpose?</b>	Verifying accuracy of information gathered from the resume, application form and interviews
	Assessing how the candidate would handle on-the-job situations
	Assessing patterns of behavior and performance in a candidate's employment history
	Identifying developmental needs of the candidate to assess potential areas of professional development
<b>What competencies* are assessed during the process?</b>	Competencies demonstrated over a period of time (e.g., handling situations, dealing with multiple assignments)
	Competencies described by a reference (e.g., supervisor)
	Competencies needing to be clarified and/or verified
<b>Why is it important?</b>	It is a critical component of a comprehensive selection process
	It helps to provide a comprehensive background of the candidate
	It helps to screen for the candidate's fit in a district/school

\*The toolkit is using the components and criterion of the DPAS II for primary competencies.



## When should a reference check be conducted?

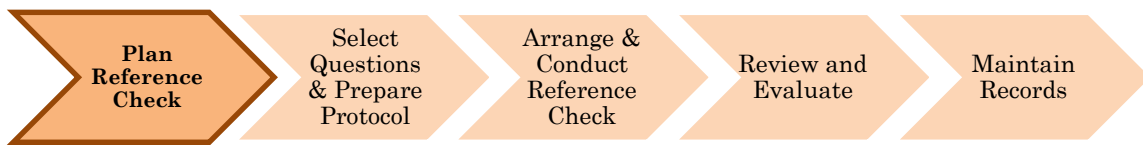
The Competency-based Reference Check has flexibility and may be adapted to many stages of the selection process to suit the needs of your district/school. Depending on time, the reference check can occur in several places in the linear selection process.

**Between the Interview and Demonstration Lesson.** If time allows, a suggested time is after the interview and before the demonstration lesson. This allows the team to have a better understanding of the candidate’s professional history, as well as to clarify previous roles and responsibilities. After the reference check is completed, the Selection Team may ask the candidate who successfully passes to prepare a demonstration lesson. However, this may result in time lapses in the selection process; thus, there are other options for conducting the Competency-based Reference Check.

**Following the Demonstration Lesson.** The next option for the competency-based Reference Check would be following the demonstration lesson, once the candidates are narrowed down. This will allow the Selection Team to have a comprehensive perspective of each candidate’s profile in order to make the best decision.

**Final Step in Selection Process.** A third option for conducting the Competency-based Reference Check is the final step in the selection process. Once the top three candidates have been selected, a member of the Selection Team calls the top ranked candidate’s references.

If the references are verified, the top ranked candidate will be offered the position. If the top ranked person has unsatisfactory, inadequate, or questionable references or declines the offer, then the Selection Team can telephone the second ranked candidate for the Competency-based Reference Check, and continues the process until a candidate has received satisfactory references.



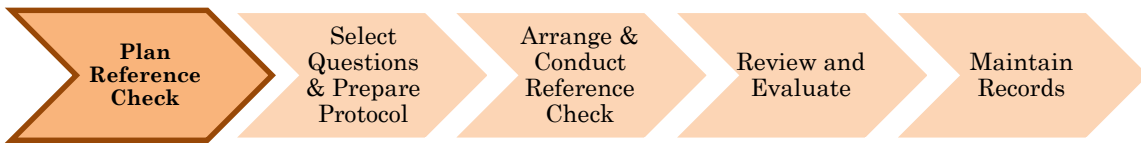
## Planning for the Reference Check

An effective reference check requires some planning and preparation prior to the telephone call with references.

1. It is recommended that the Selection Team member review:
  - a. the job description and
  - b. the candidate's application package and results of the screening and selection activities to date (e.g., telephone screening, on-site interview, etc.).
2. Identify what information from the candidate needs to be verified or confirmed. (e.g., employment dates, responsibilities)
3. Identify which critical competencies and/or criterion need further information and/or validation for the Selection Team:
  - Are there any job-related competencies that the Selection Team wants to ensure they have across candidates and their references?
  - Are there any competencies of a particular candidate that needed additional or supplemental information?
  - Are there any areas of concern that the Selection Team raised about a candidate that needs further clarification and/or confirmation?
4. Based on the above, develop and/or identify/adapt the preliminary, verification, competency-based, developmental needs, and closing questions from Appendix B to be asked during the reference-checking.

If you check the references for more than one candidate, be sure to ask the same general questions about each candidate





## Whom to contact for references?

**Number of References.** It is recommended that districts/schools check three (3) references for each candidate. If possible, the references should represent at least two past employers so you can find consistent trends in the candidate's performance.

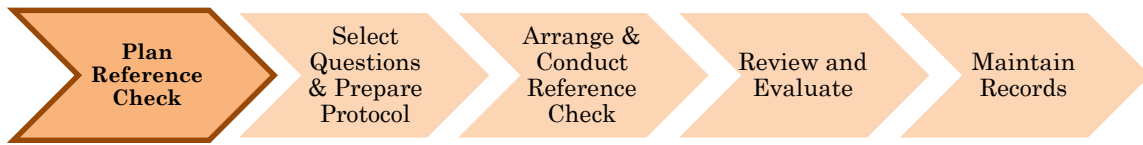
Usually, the most accurate reference information will be a past or present supervisor. While reference letters provide some useful information, an advantage of a telephone Reference Check is that the caller can ask questions about the candidate and obtain a more complete picture.

Usually, districts/schools do not accept personal references, such as a candidate's friends, workplace friends, or family (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).



Always check the candidate's application to see if a district/school has permission to contact current supervisors before a call.

Reference Checks can be completed over the telephone or in writing. Employment references are useful primarily as confirmation of a candidate's prior employment, dates, and salary.

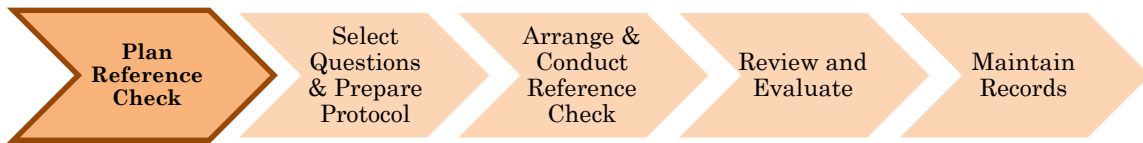


## Candidate's Role in the Reference Checking Process

In order for the Reference Check to be a successful venture, the candidate has an important role to play in the process.

The candidate should:

1. Provide a list of reputable references, including a list of alternative references;
2. Ensure the references are aware of their involvement in the process and agreed to participate;
3. Verify the provided contact information is accurate (e.g., telephone number, address, email);
4. Provide the references a copy of his/her resume, cover letter and job description (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).

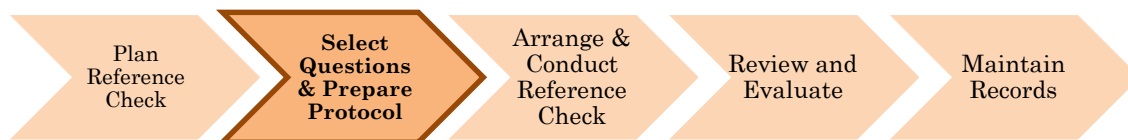


## Who should conduct the reference check?

1. **Supervisor(s):** the person who will ultimately supervise the new employee; or
2. **Leader(s):** a person who has a close working relationship with the position being staffed; or
3. **Selection Team Member:** a member of the Selection Team who is well acquainted with the position requirements.



It is important that the Reference Checker be more experienced than the candidate, and be familiar with using the tools and the position requirements!



## Selecting Questions for the Reference Check

How the reference-check questions are framed is critical. In general, avoid questions that garner a simple “yes” or “no” responses. When asking for specific information, there is a better chance the information will be more useful than receiving a response, such as the “(Candidate) was great.”

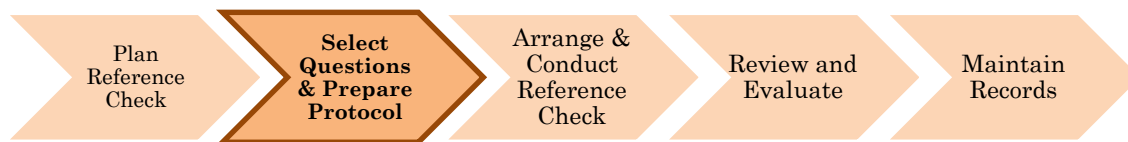
A Reference Checking process is typically comprised of four main types of questions that are designed for different purposes (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009). Depending on the purpose of the reference check, you can use one type of question or combine the different types.

Types of Questions to Ask During Reference Checks	
<b>Preliminary questions</b>	Open-ended questions to garner clarification of the role in the candidate’s professional history and strengths/weaknesses.
<b>Verification</b>	Questions to legitimize a candidate’s information to be able to triangulate the gathered information from the candidate’s documentation.
<b>Competency-based questions</b>	Specific questions about the candidate’s skillset, job-relevant competencies, and behavior assessment.
<b>Developmental needs</b>	Targeted questions to learn about areas which the candidate could grow and be supported.

### Preliminary Questions

The reference check typically begins with a series of open-ended questions to help the reference checker gain a clear understanding of the reference's working relationship with a candidate, as well as the candidate's strengths and areas for development. These questions also serve to increase the comfort level of the reference with the process, which maybe an unfamiliar one.

**Example:** “How long and in what capacity did you know \_\_\_\_\_? What was your work relationship with this individual?”



## Verification Questions

Verification Questions verify/confirm /complete previously gathered and received information during the application process (e.g., application form, resume, interview, etc.). Reference checks may unveil potential problems with a candidate, especially when there are conflicting statements between the candidate and the reference (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).

**Example:** “What were the individual’s most important job duties? How well did he/she carry them out?”

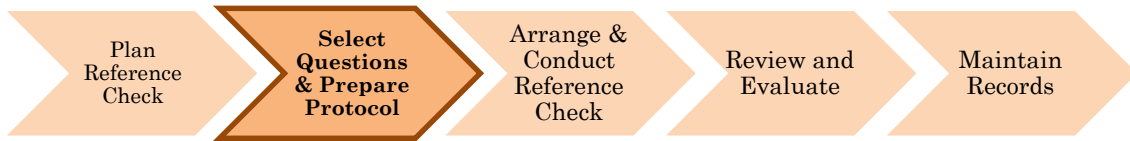
## Competency-based Questions

Competencies are patterns of thinking, feeling, acting, or speaking that causes a person to be successful in a job or role (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). For the toolkit, the DPAS II components and criterion represent the primary competencies for the selection process. Therefore, competency-based questions ask the reference to describe the performance of the candidate on the key competencies (e.g., DPAS II components and criterion) being assessed by the reference check.

It is recommended that you keep all questions job-related. For example, ask the reference to describe a situation, the context and tasks that a candidate faced; the candidate's actions; and the impact of the actions.

**Example:** “How would you characterize the candidate’s skills in teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions?”

**Consistency in Competency-based Questions.** When questioning references about competencies, it is important to ask the same questions for each candidate. This consistency will generate comparable information from each reference for a candidate. It will help to ensure that the Selection Team treats all candidates equally.



## Questions about Developmental Needs

In order to bypass the reluctance sometimes expressed by referees to report unfavorable information about an applicant, questions on developmental needs can be asked.

Questioning about more sensitive information, such as potentially-inappropriate work-related behavior, should occur later in the process, once sufficient rapport has been reached between the reference and the Selection Team member (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).

**Example:** "Are you aware of any areas that could be developed in relation to a competency (e.g., a component and criterion of DPAS II)?"



Appendix B includes examples of verification questions, competency-based questions aligned with DPAS II components and criterion; and developmental and closing questions.

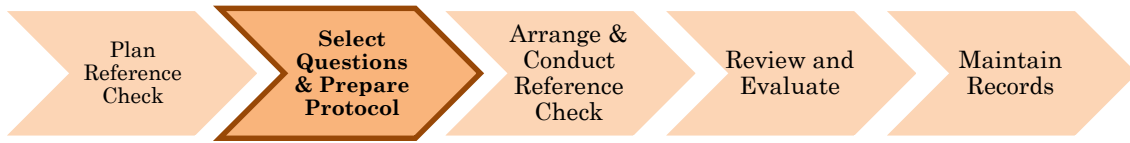


### Examples of Illegal or Unethical Questions to Avoid

(Please note these are examples. If unsure, check with your Human Resources Specialist or legal counsel).

1	Does the applicant have any disabilities or health/medical problems?
2	Does the applicant have any children?
3	Has the applicant made child care arrangements?
4	Is the candidate married?
5	Would you describe the candidate's home life as stable?

Adapted from Department of Navy, Office of Civilian Human Resources. (2013, April). *Quick step guide reference checking*. Washington, DC: Author.

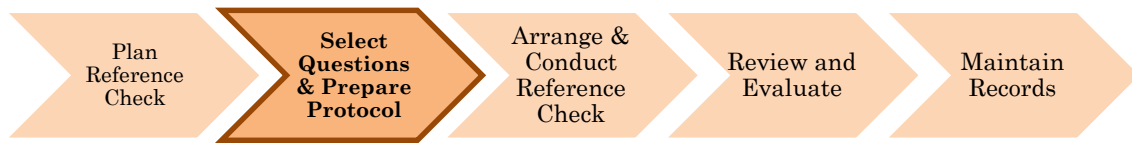


## Format of Reference-Check Form

To facilitate a standard approach and record-keeping, it is recommended a district/school use a standard referenced form. At a minimum, the form should include: your name and date; name of candidate and position applied for; name, title, and organization of the reference; and the questions that will be asked about the candidate. The form should have plenty of space for recording responses to questions.



Please refer to Appendix C template, the Reference Checking Evaluation Form to insert questions and record notes.

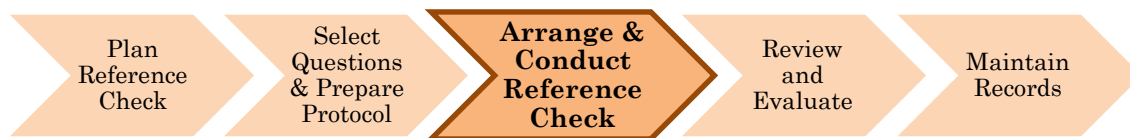


## Preparation for the Reference Checker Prior to a Call

Prior to a telephone call with a reference, the reference checker will need:

1. Reference Checking Form with pre-determined questions to be asked during the telephone call;
2. Job description;
3. Candidate's screening and selection portfolio (previous screening and selection evaluation forms); and
4. Any other relevant information.



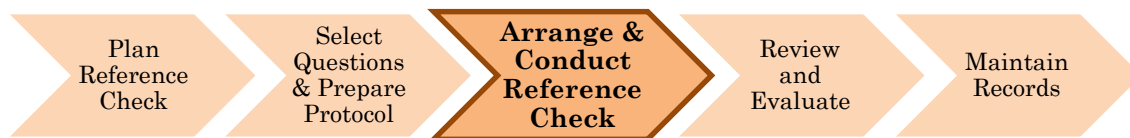


## How is the reference informed of the checking process?

It is recommended that a Selection Team member send a letter or an Email to the reference with information about potential dates and times for the telephone call and instructions of the process. Consider additional materials that may be attached or included: the job description; the candidate’s resume; and/or a copy of the reference form.



Please refer to Appendix A, a template letter to contact a reference for a reference check on a candidate.

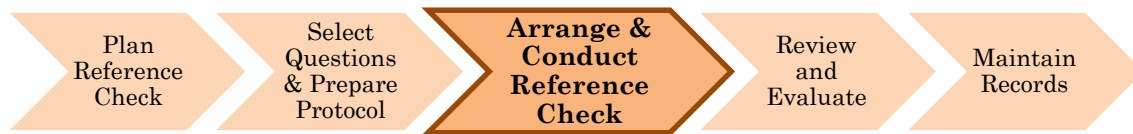


## How to Conduct a Reference Check:

- ✓ Be very familiar with the candidate's file (including application package, screening and selection evaluations) prior to beginning the Reference Check. Review the candidate's file in-depth.
- ✓ Prior to beginning the telephone call, inform the reference of the reason for the call and a bit about the position.
- ✓ Use the pre-determined questions created for the telephone call.
- ✓ Be objective and do not let opinions override the conversation.
- ✓ Be an attentive listener and actively participate in the telephone call. Do not begin the evaluation process during the call.
- ✓ Be aware of long pauses or interruption in the flow of conversation, or overly enthusiastic or negative comments.
- ✓ Be consistent.
- ✓ Verify a candidate's academic degrees, professional certifications, or licenses.
- ✓ Make the reference check tailored to the position and district/school vision (Department of Navy, 2013).



Follow Delaware state laws and federal laws and regulations. Limit questions to actual on-the-job performance or job-related questions.



## Example of Opening

“Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling to conduct a reference check on \_\_\_\_\_, who is being considered for the position of \_\_\_\_\_.

The Reference Check will take approximately \_\_\_\_\_ to complete. Is this a good time for you? If not, when would be a convenient for me to conduct the interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?”

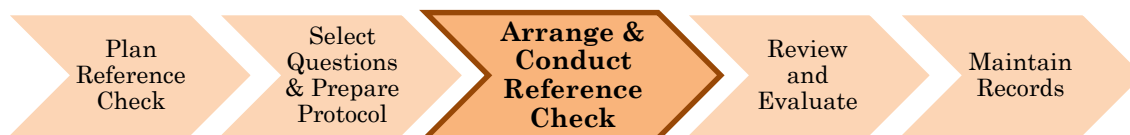
The reference check will include preliminary questions, questions to verify certain employment information, followed by gathering information on the candidate against a series of job-related competencies.

It is recommended the checker confirm that the reference has received all the necessary information (e.g., instructions of the process, job description, and reference form).

Once the introductory statement is completed, notify the reference that during the process, the interviewer will be taking notes. In a note-taking role, the interviewer may need to request repeating a statement for clarification, and ensure the silent periods are periods of documentation (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).

Once the introductory information is shared, it is valuable to state:

“Since this information that you provide us will help to determine a candidate’s fit for the target position, I would appreciate your candor in responding to the questions. This information will only be shared with the Selection Team.”



## If the Reference Refuses to Participate

Since this is a voluntary request, the interviewee may refuse to participate in the reference check for various reasons, or perhaps be reluctant to provide specific information. Here are a few tips for handling this type of situation:

1. Remind the reference that this check is only one component of the process to determine the most suitable candidate; and
2. Inform the reference the candidate has provided the contact information for this reference checking process.

If hesitation still persists after the reassurance, then it is best to end the call and note the call in the candidate's file.

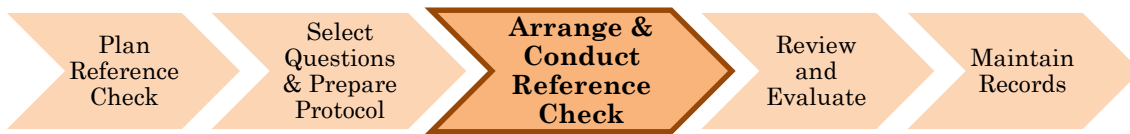
Then, contact the candidate to inform them of the situation and discuss an alternative for the reference check (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).

## Continue the Reference Check by Asking the Other Questions

Follow the structured question format to ensure that the same questions are asked about each candidate to ensure that all candidates are treated equitably (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).

As mentioned earlier, the reference checking discussion should take approximately thirty minutes. Be mindful of the time duration during the checking process.

In addition, it may be important to share a bit about the district/school culture to provide context of the position and the overall vision. This information will help frame the questions and allow the reference to understand if the candidate would be successful in the district/school environment (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009).



It is important to build a strong rapport with the references in order to gain clear insight into a candidate’s history.

## Take Detailed Notes

Reference checkers need to listen carefully and keep detailed, accurate notes. The notes should be a record of what the reference stated. However, if the responses appear hesitant or ambiguous, these should be noted (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2009). If you receive negative information from a reference, evaluate it with caution and check the information against other reference statements.

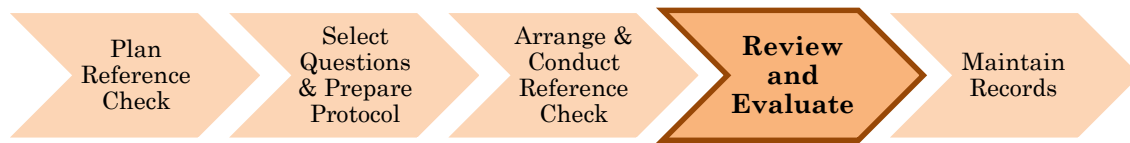


Please refer to Appendix C template, the Reference Checking Evaluation Form to record notes.

## Concluding the Telephone Call

Prior to concluding the telephone call, ask the reference if she/he has any questions or concerns. Thank the reference for her/his time and insight on the candidate. Provide contact information if she/he has any other information to share at a later date.

A recommended question to conclude the Reference Check is “Would you rehire the candidate if given the opportunity? Why or why not?” (Department of Navy, 2013).



## Review and Evaluate the Reference Check Telephone Notes

Once the reference checking interview is finished, the Selection Team should review the notes documented on the Reference Checking Evaluation Form.

If you receive negative information from a reference about a candidate, evaluate it with caution and check the information against other reference statements.

Responses to reference-checking questions can be rated against a variety of scale types. The simplest scale provides only "satisfactory/unsatisfactory" choices which we have adopted in Appendix D. This type of scale is typically used for verification questions and/or when the selection process does not require comparisons to be made among candidates. In addition, there should be a category for not being able to rate the reference's responses.

If the Selection Team decides it wants to compare references across candidates, then consider, using the rating scale that we have used throughout the Toolkit. For example, an abbreviated version is below:

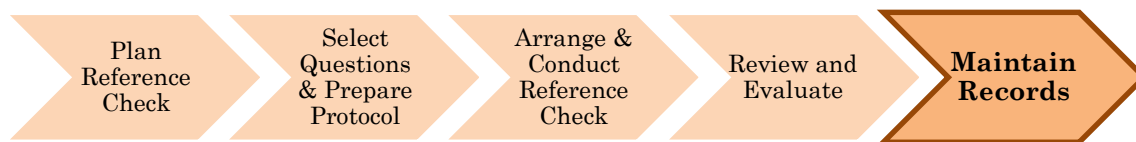
Points	Level	Rating Scale for Each Question
4	Highly Effective	Responses indicated evidence of exceptional performance and outstanding knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, competencies, and/or indicators in a DPAS II component.
3	Effective	Responses indicated evidence of solid performance and strong knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, competencies, and/or indicators in a DPAS II component.
2	Needs Improvement	Responses indicated evidence of mediocre or developing performance and fundamental knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, competencies, and/or indicators in a DPAS II component.
1	Ineffective	Responses indicated little or no knowledge and understanding of the key concepts, competencies, and/or indicators in a DPAS II component.
0	Unable to Evaluate	Responses were missing sufficient information for rating.

A few questions may help to drive the evaluation of the responses to the competency questions:

1. How many of the elements for the competency were addressed during the reference-check?
2. How were the behaviors described in the provided examples in terms of complexity and impact?
3. Do the provided behavioral examples meet the performance expectations for the target position?
4. How would the candidate's developmental areas affect her/his performance in the target position?

Based on the evaluation criteria, and performance levels, the team should assign points for each question asked and total the number of points assigned.

Each of the scores for the questions should have justifications provided to support the claim. If you use the reference check information as a basis for eliminating a candidate from consideration, this must be clearly documented.



## Maintain Confidential Records

All information obtained from references and any other background checks should be used only as part of the employment process and kept strictly confidential (Department of Navy, 2013).

## Summary

First, this section of the guide defines a Reference Check and discusses the timing of the Reference Check in the selection process. Second, it provides an overview of the process and procedures for preparing and conducting a competency-based Reference Checking of candidates, including the four types of questions to be asked. Third, it includes suggestions for reviewing and evaluating the reference's responses. Finally, the appendices include templates for example letters to references, example questions aligned with DPAS II and other questions, and an evaluation form that may be used and/or adapted.



## Reference Checklist

- ✓ Decide who will conduct the reference checks. It should either be the potential supervisor, hiring manager, or a member of the Selection Team
- ✓ Always check references prior to making a job offer.
- ✓ Be sure to ask each candidate if you may contact her/his listed references. Also, be sure to ask the candidate prior to contacting a present employer.
- ✓ When possible, always use the most current supervisor as he/she is best able to speak to performance on the job.
- ✓ Identify yourself, your position, the candidate's name, and the reason for your call.
- ✓ Check references for all final candidates and be sure to ask the same questions of each reference source. Three or more professional references are ideal.
- ✓ Ask the same reference questions for each final candidate.
- ✓ Do not stop at one reference regardless of how negative or positive it may be during the interview—contact all references for each candidate.
- ✓ Do not accept references from relatives or friends.
- ✓ Accept written letters of reference but not in lieu of a telephone contact.
- ✓ Listen to the reference's tone of voice when conducting the reference check—you might detect underlying issues.
- ✓ Never reveal to the candidate the information received from a previous employer or other reference. This is confidential information!

*Adapted from* University of Connecticut, Department of Human Resources. (n.d.) *Guide to effective recruiting*. Storrs, CT: Author. Retrieved from [www.hr.uconn.edu/docs/Guide to Effective Recruiting.pdf](http://www.hr.uconn.edu/docs/Guide_to_Effective_Recruiting.pdf)

## References

- Delaware Department of Education. (2015, August). *Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS): Building greater skills and knowledge for educators. DPAS II guide revised for teachers*. Dover, DE: Author. Retrieved from [http://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib09/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/375/DPAS II Guide for Teachers 2015-16.pdf](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib09/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/375/DPAS%20II%20Guide%20for%20Teachers%202015-16.pdf)
- Denver Public Schools, Department of Human Resources. (2007). *Personnel selection process: Interview guide for personnel selection committee members. Section on Conducting reference checks*. Denver, CO: Author. Retrieved from <http://static.dpsk12.org/gems/hr2009/2009PrincipalInterview.pdf>
- Department of Navy, Office of Civilian Human Resources. (2013, April). *Quick step guide reference checking*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Public Service Commission of Canada. (2009). *Structured reference checking*. Gatineau, Quebec, Canada: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/plcy-pltq/guides/checking-verification/index-eng.htm>
- The New Teacher Project. (no date). *DSST public schools: Reference check questions*. Retrieved from <http://tntp.org/teacher-talent-toolbox/partner/dsst-public-schools>
- University of Connecticut, Department of Human Resources. (n.d.) *Guide to effective recruiting*. Storrs, CT: Author.
- United States Department of Education, Race to the Top School Turnaround, Community of Practice. (2012). *Promising practices for recruitment and staffing in turnaround schools*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/teacher-competencies-webinar.pdf>
- Vermont Department of Human Resources. (2009). *A guide to interviewing and reference checking*. Montpelier, VT: Author. Retrieved from [http://humanresources.vermont.gov/sites/dhr/files/Documents/Recruitment/DHR-Guide Interviewing Reference Checking.pdf](http://humanresources.vermont.gov/sites/dhr/files/Documents/Recruitment/DHR-Guide%20Interviewing%20Reference%20Checking.pdf)
- For additional information, please refer to the Annotated Bibliography.

# Appendices

(This page intentionally left blank.)

## Appendix A

### Template Letter: To Notify Reference of their Participation

[District/School Letterhead]

[Date]

Name of Applicant

Address

Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

[District/school] is contacting you to schedule a reference check over the telephone for [candidate's name]. He/she provided your contact information to us during the hiring process. The district/school was told that you were made aware of the potential for representatives to contact you.

I would greatly appreciate no more than 30 minutes of your time to speak with us about [candidate's name], and his/her role at [organization]. Below are 3 timeframes that we are available to speak with you. Please let me know the most convenient one. If these dates are not convenient, please suggest another time.

[Suggest time #1]

[Suggest time #2]

[Suggest time #3]

I look forward to speaking with you. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

[name and title of personnel]

(This page intentionally left blank.)



## Appendix B

### Potential Questions to Check References for Teachers Aligned with DPAS II

Potential Questions to Check References for Teachers
<b>Preliminary Questions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How long and in what capacity did you know this individual?</li><li>• What was your work relationship with this individual?</li><li>• What were this person's title and responsibilities at the time you worked together and the reference's current title, if different? What position(s) did the individual hold and what were the duties?</li></ul>
<b>General Verification Questions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What were the beginning and ending employment dates for this individual?</li><li>• What was this individual's beginning and ending salary?</li><li>• Can you describe any additional training or work experience that he/she acquired that would be considered an asset?</li><li>• Does your organization conduct performance reviews? If yes, tell me about ____'s most recent performance review? How would you describe this individual's overall performance and quality of work?</li><li>• Did this individual receive any promotions or demotions? Please describe.</li><li>• Did this person's conduct ever require disciplinary measures? Were there any instances of inappropriate behavior or misconduct?</li><li>• Do you know of any reason why it would not be advisable for this individual to be employed in a capacity where he/she would come in contact with children?</li></ul>



DPAS Criterion	Potential Questions to Check References for Teachers
<b>Competency-based Questions aligned with DPAS II</b>	
<b>Component 1: Planning and Preparation</b>	
1.a. Selecting Instructional Goals  1.b. Designing Coherent Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the lesson plans of the candidate?</li> <li>• To what extent did his/her instructional goals align with state standards and the district or charter school’s curricula?</li> <li>• To what extent did his/her instructional goals reflect high expectations for all students?</li> <li>• Did instructional goals describe what students will know and will be able to do?</li> </ul>
1.c. Demonstrating Knowledge of Content & Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the individual’s greatest strengths as a teacher?</li> <li>• How would you describe the individual’s knowledge of academic content (insert subject(s))?</li> <li>• How well did the individual differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of a variety of students?</li> </ul>
1.d. Demonstrating Knowledge of Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the students in the school in terms of ability, culture, and interests, how well did the individual use his/her knowledge to plan lessons?</li> <li>• How would you evaluate this individual’s knowledge of students?</li> </ul>
1.e. Designing Student Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What formative assessments and data were used by this individual in the school? How were these used?</li> <li>• How has the individual demonstrated measurable student achievement growth?</li> </ul>

DPAS Criterion	Potential Questions to Check References for Teachers
<b>Component 2: Classroom Environment</b>	
2.a. Managing Classroom Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well did he/she clearly define procedures for managing learning time, transitions between learning events, and routines that maximized learning time?</li> </ul>
2.b. Managing Student Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent did the individual establish behavioral expectations and consequences and monitor student conduct?</li> <li>• How frequently did he/she refer students to the office for disciplinary reasons?</li> </ul>
2.c. Creating an Environment to Support Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well did the individual create an atmosphere in which learning was valued? Was his/her classes grounded in mutual respect?</li> <li>• How would you characterize his/her skills in teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions?</li> </ul>
2.d. Organizing Physical Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent did he/she arrange classroom settings to maximize student learning and safety?</li> <li>• Were physical resources accessible to all students?</li> </ul>

DPAS Criterion	Potential Questions to Check References for Teachers
<b>Component 3: Instruction</b>	
3.a. Engaging Students in Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe, in general, his/her instructional activities and assignments?</li> <li>• In general, how would you describe the structure and pace of his/her lessons?</li> <li>• To what extent did the instructional activities engage all students?</li> </ul>
3.b. Demonstrating Flexibility, and Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the individual’s use of a repertoire of instructional strategies?</li> <li>• To what extent was he/she able to make adjustments depending on students’ needs, interests, or questions?</li> <li>• Can you provide an example of how the individual made modifications to lessons and differentiated as needed?</li> </ul>
3.c. Communicating Clearly and Accurately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the quality of this person’s oral and written communication skills.</li> <li>• To what extent were his/her communication skills appropriate to students’ ages, backgrounds, and levels of understanding?</li> </ul>
3.d. Using Questioning, Discussion Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general, how would you describe the quality of his/her questioning/discussion techniques?</li> <li>• To what extent did he/she facilitate student-led discussions?</li> </ul>
3.e. Using Assessment in Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When and how did he/she monitor student learning and performance?</li> <li>• Can you provide examples of how he/she used formal and informal assessments with students?</li> </ul>

DPAS Criterion	Potential Questions to Check References for Teachers
<b>Component 4: Professional Responsibilities</b>	
4.a. Communicating with Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe how he/she involved parents in the learning process.</li> <li>• Describe how he/she communicated with parents of different socio-economic, cultural and/or ethnic groups.</li> </ul>
4.b. Recording Data in a Student Record System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did he/she keep accurate and complete records of students' attendance, progress, disciplinary information, etc.?</li> </ul>
4.c. Growing and Developing Professionally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did he/she grow in skills and abilities over time? If yes, how did he/she grow in his/her skills and abilities?</li> <li>• How well did the candidate respond to feedback from colleagues and supervisors?</li> <li>• In what school committees did the candidate participate?</li> </ul>
4.d. Reflecting on Professional Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe his/her assessments of the effectiveness of his/her lessons?</li> <li>• Can you provide an example of an occasion when the candidate reflected on a lesson?</li> </ul>

DPAS Criterion	Potential Questions to Check References for Teachers
<b>Interactions and Relationships with Colleagues</b>	<b>Other Additional Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent was this person a team player?</li> <li>• Describe how this person got along with leadership/administration. With peers, and/or coworkers?</li> <li>• How much supervision did this person require?</li> <li>• What kinds of people did this person have trouble with? In what situations did you observe this?</li> <li>• How would you describe this individual’s leadership, management, or supervisory skills?</li> <li>• What was the individual’s greatest contribution to the organization?</li> </ul>
<b>Developmental Needs Questions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were his/her greatest weaknesses as a teacher?</li> <li>• In what areas (refer to DPAS components) might this person need to develop further? Please give examples.</li> <li>• How well did he/she manage stress, pressure, and/or crises?</li> </ul>	
<b>Closing Questions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In terms of absolute performance, where does the individual fall in comparison to his/her peers? (e.g., Top 10%, 30%, 50%)</li> <li>• Would you recommend that your organization rehire this individual? Why or why not?</li> <li>• What else is important to know about this individual that we not already talked about?</li> </ul>	

Sources: Delaware Department of Education (2014 and 2015). *DPAS II Guide (Revised) for Teachers*; The New Teacher Project. *DSST Public Schools. Reference Check Questions*; Public Service Commission of Canada (2009). *Structured Reference Checking*; U.S. Department of Navy (2013). *Quick Step Guide Reference Checking*. Vermont Department of Human Resources. (2009) *A Guide to Interviewing and Reference Checking*.

## Appendix C

### Other Questions for Reference Check

#### General information

1. How long and in what capacity did you know this individual?
2. What were this person's title and responsibilities at the time you worked together and the reference's current title, if different?
3. What were the beginning and ending employment dates for this individual?
4. What was this individual's beginning and ending salary?
5. What position(s) did the individual hold and what were the duties?
6. What were the individual's most important job duties?
7. Did this individual receive any promotions or demotions? Please describe.
8. Why did this individual leave your company?
9. Do you know why he/she is leaving his/her current employment?
10. Would you recommend that your company rehire this individual? Why or why not?
11. What was it like to work in your organization? Please describe the culture and any unique dynamics that were present.
12. Were there any instances of inappropriate behavior or violence?

#### Job-related questions to ask of a supervisor/manager

1. I'd like to go over the candidate's current resume concerning the job he/she had with your organization. Is this correct?
2. What were the individual's most recent job duties or responsibilities? How well did he/she carry these out?
3. In your opinion, what are the individual's strengths? Please give examples.
4. In what area(s) might this individual need to develop? Please give examples.
5. Do you think this individual would perform well as a [job title]?
6. What kind of job is best suited for this individual's abilities?

## Performance levels

1. How did this individual's performance compare to other employees with similar job duties?
2. Was this individual a team player?
3. Was this individual a motivated self-starter?
4. Can the applicant manage a heavy workload? Describe a typical workload for this individual.
5. How would you describe this individual's overall performance and quality of work?
6. How has this individual changed the position from any predecessors?
7. How has this person grown in her/his skills and abilities over the years?
8. How would you describe his/her performance compared to others with similar responsibilities?
9. Did this person's conduct ever require disciplinary measures? If so, describe.

## Personal traits and abilities affecting the job

1. Describe how this individual got along with management. With peers and/or coworkers.
2. Describe how this individual responds to criticism. Please give an example.
3. On the average, how many times a month is the candidate absent from work? (Can also ask about tardiness and leaving early)
4. How did this individual demonstrate honesty and integrity?
5. How does he/she handle new challenges of any sort?
6. How would you describe the candidate's values and ethics?
7. What have been the candidate's greatest contributions to the organization?
8. Do you personally like the candidate?
9. What has he/she learned from you?
10. What would his/her critics say about this individual?
11. Did any personal problems affect this individual's work performance?
12. Did the candidate demonstrate flexibility when appropriate?
13. What kinds of people did this person have trouble with? In what situations did you observe this?
14. How well did this person manage crises, pressure, and/or stress?

## Major skill areas

1. How fast and/or accurate is the applicant's work?
2. Does the employee keep his/her supervisor informed?
3. Describe this individual's relationship with (choose from students, faculty, other staff, customers/clients and/or suppliers, community, administrators, etc.).
4. Describe the quality of this individual's written and verbal communication skills.
5. Describe the type(s) of decisions this individual was responsible for.
6. Please describe any major accomplishments of this individual.
7. How would you define this individual's technical skills?
8. Please describe this candidate's organizational skills.
9. How much supervision did this individual require?
10. Describe this individual's ability to organize and track details.
11. Please give an example of when this individual asked you for some information.
12. How resourceful is the candidate? Did he/she rely on you (or someone else would be considered to be a subject matter expert) to find out about everything he/she needed to know? Did he/she demonstrate initiative in finding relevant information themselves?
13. Has he/she ever successfully changed your mind?
14. When an urgent assignment is needed, how did this individual approach this kind of situation? Can you please describe an example?
15. How do you rate this individual's ability to plan short-term? Long-term?
16. Please provide examples in which this individual had to make sound and timely decisions. What were the results?
17. Did this person plan and/or administer a budget? If so, what was the size of the budget and how did this person manage it?

## Job-related questions to ask of a coworker

1. How did this individual get along with management? Other coworkers?
2. How would you describe this individual's overall performance?
3. What kind of job is best suited to this individual's abilities?
4. What do/did you count on this individual for?
5. How would you describe this individual's leadership, management, or supervisory skills?



6. What types of people work well with this individual? What types of people do not?
7. What is his/her willingness to go to bat for others?
8. Describe the most controversial issue in which you have seen the candidate?
9. What are his/her hobbies and/or interests?

### Supervisory skill questions

1. How many people did this person supervise? What were his/her titles and duties?
2. Did the candidate do the following (clarify as to whether he/she had the authority and had actual experience in each of these areas):
  - a. hiring
  - b. establishing job duties
  - c. recommending pay increases
  - d. evaluating performance
  - e. disciplining employees
  - f. firing
  - g. supervising/managing in a union environment
3. Describe the candidate's supervisory/management/leadership style. (Ask for clarification if necessary and evaluate if it was effective.)
4. How would you describe this individual's leadership skills?
5. How would you describe this individual's managerial or supervisory skills?
6. How would you rate the individual's ability to plan short-term? Long-term?
7. Describe this individual's part in the department's budget process.
8. Has this individual ever fired anyone? How was that handled?
9. Describe a situation in which the candidate had to use political skills.
10. How well did the individual manage crisis, pressure or stress?
11. Give an example of the individual's creativity.
12. How would you describe his/her success in training and developing others?

## Concluding questions

1. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't covered?
2. Given the position as I've described it, would you hire this individual for the position?
3. What type of advice would you give his or her next employer to ensure success?
4. Do you know of anyone else in your organization that would be qualified and/or willing to comment about this individual?

Adapted from Department of Navy, Office of Civilian Human Resources. (2013, April). *Quick step guide reference checking*. Washington, DC: Author.

(This page intentionally left blank.)

## Appendix D Template: Reference Checking Evaluation Form

[District/School Letterhead]

**Directions:** The person conducting the reference check inserts the questions that will be asked and completes this evaluation form during and after the reference check for each candidate.



There is flexibility in assigning the number of points for each question the total number of points across the questions, and the range of points for each performance level. The rating scale and performance levels may be adjusted by a district/school.

Candidate Name:		Applied Position:	
Team Member(s):		Date:	
Reference Name:		Reference Position:	
Reference Organization:		Contact Number:	



























\*\*Remember, this evaluation form will need to be completed for each of the **3** references \*\*

**YES**, the candidate has successfully passed the reference check section.

**NO**, the candidate will not move forward. A letter of non-selection will be sent.

Scores: a  for a satisfactory answer and  for an unsatisfactory answer.

**Directions:** Please insert the wording of the question for each question asked. This form may also be used to record the reference’s comments or the evaluator’s justification. Indicate on the last page of this form, the question number related to each of the DPAS II components and criterion.

Questions	Rating	Comments/Justification
<b>Verify dates of employment:</b>	Response:  or 	
<b>Verify current/previous job title (starting/final):</b>	Response:  or 	
<b>Verify salary (starting/final):</b>	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 1</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 2</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 3</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 4</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 5</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 6</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 7</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 8</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 9</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>Question 10</b> (insert)	Response:  or 	
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>		

**Performance Levels based on Total Number of Points** (if two points are assigned per satisfactory response for questions 1-10). The range of total number of points for each performance level are suggestions. The rating scale and performance levels may be adjusted by a district/school.

Ineffective	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20
(Insert Range of Total Number of Points):	(Insert Range of Total Number of Points):	(Insert Range of Total Number of Points):	(Insert Range of Total Number of Points):

DPAS II Components and Criterion Referenced in Questions	Question Number	Comments
<b>Component 1: Planning and Preparation</b>		
1.a. Selecting Instructional Goals		
1.b. Designing Coherent Instruction		
1.c. Demonstrating Knowledge of Content & Pedagogy		
1.d. Demonstrating Knowledge of Students		
1.e. Designing Student Assessments		
<b>Component 2: Classroom Environment</b>		
2.a. Managing Classroom Procedures		
2.b. Managing Student Behavior		
2.c. Creating an Environment to Support Learning		
2.d. Organizing Physical Space		

DPAS II Components and Criterion Referenced in Questions	Question Number	Comments
<b>Component 3: Instruction</b>		
3.a. Engaging Students in Learning		
3.b. Demonstrating Flexibility, and Responsiveness		
3.c. Communicating Clearly and Accurately		
3.d. Using Questioning, Discussion Techniques		
3.e. Using Assessment in Instruction		
<b>Component 4: Professional Responsibilities</b>		
4.a. Communicating with Families		
4.b. Recording Data in a Student Record System		
4.c. Growing and Developing Professionally		
4.d. Reflecting on Professional Practice		
<b>Other</b>		