

I have two strengths listed on the disposition assessment that I can use to build upon. The strongest one would be organizational skills followed by the collegial skillset. The two listed attributes that I will need to work on are poise and perceptiveness. I believe leveraging the strengths I will be able to build on the weakness to achieve more of a balance over time.

While not everything I do is entirely organized, when I see a need for organization I can almost always create effective and efficient solutions. When I prepared for meetings as a software developer, I always had a clear goal for each meeting, and made sure I covered each topic that I was intending. By virtue of most IT places, there were clear ways to track work, but I usually went above tracking generic tasks and used the tracking software to put in detailed information, for either me or someone else who may come across it. Sometimes I would make presentations, where I would set a timer on my watch to silently alert me when time is coming to a close so I can adjust the presentation accordingly. In my regular life as well I frequently prioritize what I need to do and work from there. Even for simple tasks like cooking I start cooking the rice, for example, so that the whole dish is finished at roughly the same time.

These examples show an organizational capability that I do think will help me in the classroom. As an example of how this might help be become an effective teacher, I have created a repository to save lesson plans when I go through teaching a subject the first time. When I teach the same subject second time, common in mathematics, I already have a starting point and can work on finer details. I think this example is one way organizational skills can level up my teaching to move towards effectiveness.

The other skill set that will help me throughout my teaching career are collegial skills. Working with and helping other colleagues at work in my previous life was second nature. In an IT environment, most work is done independently but fits in as part of a team, and working with team members of every walk of life was required to get the job done. Oftentimes teams would be comprised from several demographics, and we had to rely on the strengths of others to get a project completed. This also involved soliciting feedback or receiving unsolicited feedback. If I agreed, I would thank person providing the feedback and fix or update what I was working on. If not, a conversation ensued in order for both or all of us to understand what the problem was and the solution.

In teaching, I believe this will help move me forward towards effective teaching. Especially in the beginning, I have nearly no knowledge of classroom management or school specific teaching, so learning from others will speed the transition into the classroom. Soliciting feedback and being open to changes will be a very important part of growing as a teacher without having to find out everything the hard way.

One of the weaknesses I will need to work on is poise. This includes projecting my voice and using a clear, assertive tone. I do have some of the skills listed in the assessment, such as displaying respect and having an assertive presence. But I have noticed I have to work to make sure my voice is coming across clear and available for those across a room. And when I am answering questions that I haven't anticipated, sometimes I think out loud, repeating myself, lowering the volume, and other bad habits that serve to distract. I do normally realize when I do this and have to work extra hard to come back and have that assertive and clear presence. But getting to that point where I am mostly talking to myself is something for which I need to figure a better solution. This affects the classroom management aspect of teaching.

Perceptiveness is another skill I need to work on to really get the finer touches on teaching, which affects the content aspect of teaching. This mainly affects improvisation and the ability to keep abreast of the students' needs. Some questions I don't fully grasp the context in which it is being asked, and I zero in on answering too specific of a question. In my early days of volunteer tutoring, sometimes I'd just answer a yes or a no to a question, and only continue if the student prompted. I had to learn that even a yes or no question has context and will need explanation to really learn the content.

Other times I didn't apply common sense and came up with an answer that was absurd. At my first professional job, I was asked to provide data specific to a competitor's company's filing for insurance rates. I came up with data where some of their customers were paying over 100k for insurance. Clearly, no one would do this. If I was perceptive enough to understand what my data was saying, I would have kept working on it before using it. That was the hard way to learn better ways to check one's work.

There are a couple of steps I can take to improve these weaknesses. One way to improve poise is to practice, which can be done in a few ways. Classroom activities with this masters program and the internship will both provide some opportunity to gain practice. I'll occasionally see some seminar or video on ways to improve presentation technique, which includes poise, and I'll have some opportunity to try some of these tips.

A step that will help with perceptiveness is simply being aware that I'm not perceptive, and leveraging the previously mentioned organizational skills. With a class that is well organized, I can spend more time and effort attempting to perceive non verbal cues. Being aware of perceptive deficiencies allows more preparation to expect non verbal cues. Over time as I grow more comfortable with the teaching aspect, I believe I will develop a higher ability to perceive non verbal cues and look for these cues as the day's lesson unfolds.