

Impact on P-12 Learning and Development

AY 2021-2022

The Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) does not share any student or teacher data with EPPs. In order to meet CAEP Standard 4, Kansas State University-College of Education (KSU-COE) is in the process of conducting a longitudinal case study in which we will sample from all of our programs. This report reflects year two of this study, and it serves as an addendum to last year's report <https://coe.ksu.edu/about/accreditation/documents/KSU-Impact-AY-19-20.pdf>. The study's methodology and research timeline may be viewed in the initial report.

The data gathered from this research meets CAEP 4.1, which was the basis for the original case study design and rationale: **“demonstrate the impact of our completers on P-12 student learning and development, classroom instruction, and schools, and to better gauge the satisfaction of our completers with the relevance and effectiveness of their preparation” (CAEP 4.1).**

In addition, data gathered also reflects the updated benchmarks set forth for CAEP Standard 4. Completers: **effectively contribute to P-12 student-learning growth AND B. apply in P-12 classrooms the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions the preparation experiences were designed to achieve. In addition, the provider includes a rationale for the evidence provided. AND [completers] apply in P-12 classrooms the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the preparation experiences were designed to achieve. In addition, the provider includes a rationale for the data elements provided.**

Participants: All participants selected for this case study are completers in their first or second year of teaching, who are also recent graduates from one of KSU-COE's teacher licensure programs. Refer to Table 1 for participant demographics:

Table 1.

Participant Demographics		
Academic Year 2019-2020	Academic Year 2020-2021	Academic Year 2021-2022
Cohort 1 (N=25; n=23) 10 UG Elem (Traditional) 3 MAT Elem 1 English 4 Social Studies 1 Math 1 Ag 2 Modern Language (Spanish) 1 Speech/Theatre	Follow-up with Cohort 1 (N=23; n=20) 8 UG Elem (Traditional)* 3 MAT Elem 1 English 4 Social Studies 1 Math 2 Ag 1 Modern Language (Spanish) 1 Speech/Theatre Cohort 2 (N= 25; n=23)* 2 UG Elem (Traditional) 3 UG Elem (Distance) 6 MAT Elem 1 MAT English 2 Social Studies	Follow-ups with Cohorts 1 & 2 and Cohort 3 (N=25) 4 UG Elem (Traditional) 3 UG Elem (Distance) 5 MAT Elem 2 English 1 Ag 1 Music 2 Modern Language (French and German)) 1 Art (TELRN) 1 Earth Science 1 Physics 1 Physical Education 1 Business (TELRN)

	2 Math 1 Ag 1 Music 1 Biology 1 Chemistry 1 FCS 1 Early Childhood 1 Journalism <i>*data changed from previous report to reflect actual participants</i>	1 Art 1 Earth Science
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Research Questions: In year 3, researchers asked participants questions based on whether this was their first year of participating in the study (Cohort 3) or if they were returning (Cohorts 1 and 2).

Cohort 1 participants are in their last year of the study. We asked participants more in-depth questions pertaining to their impact on diverse learners. These were the questions that we posted to Cohort 1 participants, who responded in written reflections:

- Regarding the development of your students, how do you ensure student growth happens while still honoring the fact that student needs vary greatly across cultural, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical domains?
- Regarding your students' learning, how have you been able to use your own understanding of your students' individual differences and/or your understanding of their diverse cultures and communities to create an inclusive learning environment where every student is able to meet high standards?
- Regarding the learning environment of your classroom, in which ways have you been able to create an environment that supports individual and collaborative learning, and that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation with the diverse body of students you teach?
- Regarding your planning for instruction, how have you been able to use your own knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context to plan instruction that supports your diverse group of students in meeting the rigorous learning goals you set for them?
- Regarding your instructional strategies, how have you been able to use your own understanding of various instructional strategies, as well as your understanding of the diverse cultures and abilities represented in your classroom, to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways?
- Regarding your professional learning and ethical practice, how have you been able to engage in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate your practice, particularly the effects of your choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapt your practice(s) to meet the needs of each of the diverse learners in your classroom?

These were the questions posted to returning participants in Cohort 2:

- Thinking back to your first year of teaching, now that you are almost through your second year, has your definition of student academic success changed or shifted?
- Reflecting back to your first year of teaching, what challenges have persisted, or are there new ones to report?
- What would be an/some example(s) from this year you can share with us that you feel demonstrate your impact on student learning growth?
- As a second-year teacher, reflecting back now on your experience within the College of Education, what would you want those people who make curricular decisions within the College of Education to know?

In separate focus groups, Cohort 3 participants were asked to identify and reflect upon the following questions:

- How do you identify student academic success?
- What challenges do you face in helping students achieve academic success?
- What measures do you take to address said challenges?
- Describe three documents/artifacts that would demonstrate your impact on student-learning growth.

New Findings:

While their experiences as early-career completers are varied, three significant themes emerged that embody how participants defined their impact on student academic success and growth, as it pertains to diverse student populations: Culturally Responsive Teaching, Social Emotional Learning, and Safe Spaces.

Rationale for data provided: The data presented in this addendum offers a rich, albeit broad, overview of how our study participants conceptualize diversity, and how they adapted their perspectives and instructional practice to meet their students' needs and attend to their academic success, accordingly.

Culturally Responsive Teaching While none of our participants used the term “culturally responsive teaching,” several participants’ explanations of how they build relationships and make learning meaningful for students illustrated how completers engage diverse learners within their classrooms—how they use “the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, p. 106). Below are three examples of how our candidates positioned the diversity of their students within their instruction:

[When incorporating culture into his lessons]: Growing up and not having, one, very many male teachers, and two, a Hispanic male teacher—somebody that looked like me—who understood me on a whole different level: I think that’s something that resonates with me so much more deeply. ... It’s so important to understand the core of who the student is: looking at the socioeconomics demographics... what traumas are consistent with their culture? What norms are we trying to establish? I tell my students: I can sit here and try to teach you subject object pronouns all day long. But if I don’t know how inclusive our community is; if I don’t know what your pronouns are—how significant they are to you and your culture, to you and your community—then it’s meaningless for me to even teach it. That’s the biggest thing. It’s focusing on the culture of what is our community and implementing that within the constructs of our school.

— Recent Completer, Elementary Education Cohort 2

I start by ensuring that I acknowledge as many various cultures and norms in my lessons as possible. Then I work to scaffold assignments so that students have the ability to practice the skills I am assessing many times in multiple ways.

— Recent Completer, Secondary Education Cohort 1

When I begin planning a unit, I always start with the “why” behind every activity or assignment. Students who do not understand why they are doing something tend to not have a stake in their learning or the outcome. ... I also ensure that the students are acknowledged in lessons with regard to their specific backgrounds or cultures because I believe that they should feel seen in the curriculum they are learning.

— Recent Completer, Secondary Education Cohort 1

It is important to note that while most candidates expressed the importance of understanding their students and their backgrounds when planning and delivering instruction, their experiences with ethnically diverse students varied, depending on the demographics of their schools and communities. For completers teaching in culturally

and linguistically diverse settings, they often noted the importance of cultural representation within their curriculum and teaching.

Social Emotional Learning As schools resume to a “business-as-usual” state, teachers and administrators are increasingly dealing with the residual effects of COVID-19. While schools in the United States are no longer facing the immediate threat of buildings shutting down, they are grappling with an increase in not only problematic student behaviors, but also in the social-emotional needs of students (Chapman, 2019). This reality was echoed in the responses of our completers, who shared the challenges they faced in helping their students regulate their emotions and behaviors, as well as in engaging them in academic learning. Below are three excerpts from our completers that illustrate how they approached social emotional learning:

With COVID..., the social emotional needs are so high and I get to spend my time kind of focusing on that and then bringing those resources

— Recent Completer, Elementary Education Cohort 3

I pride myself on building relationships with my students. When ensuring growth, I highlight the students' strengths and weaknesses. Capitalizing on individual data helps acknowledge every student's behavior academically and socio-emotional. We focus on the 4 to 1 ratio of positive and negative interaction with students in our school.

— Recent Completer, Secondary Education Cohort 1

I have been able to create a supportive and collaborative learning environment in my classroom by utilizing "Conscious Discipline". This is an evidence based, trauma-informed social emotional learning approach that has changed my perspective on classroom management. The key component of this approach is that it is adult-first. This is my first year implementing this approach so I will not claim to be an expert (and research says it takes 3 years to really get a grip on it) but it has caused me to examine my beliefs, thoughts, and emotions. Some of the take-aways that I have implemented thus far include brain smart starts and the feeling buddy curriculum. Brain smart starts happen every morning and included rituals that get us moving, thinking, and connect us as a "class family". The feeling buddy curriculum is SEL that teaches my students about their emotions and how to address difficult emotions and situations. Again, when students feel safe, loved, and connected, they can access the higher order executive functioning areas of their brain necessary to learn.

— Recent Completer, Elementary Education Cohort 1

Completers discussed the importance of social-emotional learning in their ability to impact their students' academic success. Notably, most completers reiterated the need to center the students' lived experiences as a means of helping them regulate their emotions, and feel secure in the learning environment. This aligns with findings that “an emotionally supportive learning environment is a key predictor of student achievement in schools” (Donahue-Keegan, Villegas-Reimers, & Cressey, p. 153).

Safe Spaces

As an extension of social emotional learning, the cultivation of safe spaces was a recurring theme for participants, particularly Cohort 1, who returned to the need for spaces in which students felt safe and comfortable to learn:

I take each moment as a learning opportunity and encourage all students to share their culture with the class. Whether that is letting a student share why wearing a flower or having long hair is important to their culture or creating safe spaces to have tough conversations when students say or do something that can be hurtful to another student.

— Recent Completer Elementary Education, Cohort 1

I have been able to use my own understanding of my students' individual differences and your understanding of their diverse cultures and communities to create an inclusive learning environment where every student is able to meet high standards. I have the unique opportunity of teaching WORLD history which means I can draw from all backgrounds and cultures which is very exciting. I also get to know my students very well and hope to always find their "best fit" of learning in my class.

— Recent Completer Secondary Education, Cohort 1

I make sure to provide students an opportunity to represent themselves, give them autonomy of choices, and have other cultures be represented in my classroom. I highly stress the idea of being an 100% inclusive and safe environment for all students and therefore all students feel welcomes and ready to learn exactly how they are.

— Recent Completer Secondary Education, Cohort 1

Our completers frequently cited the need for an inclusive learning environment as a key factor in student academic success. Completers shared the multitude of ways in which they created safe spaces/learning environments, including: incorporating elements of their students' culture within their classrooms; encouraging students' use of their native languages, create a physical environment that was warm and inviting; etc. While all completers had different ways by which they sought to construct physically and mentally safe spaces for their students, they identified the ways in which their learning environments reflected their values as teachers. Their practices are supported by research that suggests that "creating more caring and safe classroom environments enhances student development of social and emotional skills" (Ward, Woods, Crusto, Strambler, & Linke, 2011).

Completer Satisfaction In order to **better gauge the satisfaction of our completers with the relevance and effectiveness of their preparation**, researchers ended the focus groups by asking participants about what they felt were the strengths and areas of growth for the programs. These areas often correlated with what they perceived to be their level of preparedness in the classroom. While not uniformly true for all participants, in year 3 of this study, they shared notable strengths of their preparedness stepping into their first years of teaching: develop and modify their curriculum to meet student needs; build relationships with students and families; and their ability to problem-solve. Likewise, while not uniformly our completers expressed a need for more instruction on student behavior and classroom management. This feedback offers a basis for further improving upon our programs to better prepare our completers.

References

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