

Impact on P-12 Learning and Development

AY 2020-2021

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
<p>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</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Cohort 2 (N= 25; n=23)* 2 UG Elem (Traditional) 3 UG Elem (Distance) 6 MAT Elem 1 MAT English 2 Social Studies</p>	<p>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 (TEL RN) 1 Earth Science 1 Physics 1 Physical Education 1 Business (TEL RN)</p>

	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 2, researchers asked participants questions based on whether this was their first year of participating in the study (Cohort 2) or if they were returning for a second year (Cohort 1).

These were the questions posted to returning participants in Cohort 1:

- 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 2 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 diverse, one significant new theme emerged that embody how participants defined their impact on student academic success and growth: the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rationale for data provided: The data presented in this addendum offers a rich, albeit broad, overview of how our study participants not only survived the COVID-19 pandemic, but also adapted their perspectives and instructional practice to meet their students’ needs and attend to their academic success.

COVID-19 Pandemic COVID-19 has uprooted many of the assumptions underlying traditional educational paradigms, as teachers transitioned their face-to-face classrooms to remote settings. Cohort 1 teachers were finishing their first-year of teaching when schools across the country shut down. Participants had varied experiences as they transitioned to remote learning in March 2020 (Dwyer); however, there was a common element of loss as a result of COVID-19. One of the participants shared the following reflection on how COVID-19 affect how they interact with kids:

I have struggled a lot with students wearing masks. I am a hands-on teacher: I want hugs! I want high-fives! I am ‘in-your-face’ relationships! And masks and COVID have completely put a boundary on that. I don’t get to hug my children, but I do though—if they really need it.
— Recent Completer, Elementary Education Cohort 1

Indeed, while our participants understood the necessity for the protocols set by their districts (e.g. mask wearing, social distancing, etc.) put into place for the safety of themselves and their students, they noted how it shifted the ways in which they connected with their students without visible smiles or other physical cues.

COVID-19 also posed other challenges for participants, notably helping students stay motivated and engaged through the past few semesters. One participant reflected on the mental toll that COVID-19 has taken on them and their students. For our completers, COVID-19 compelled them to reflect on what matters most when evaluating student academic growth and learning:

I was really focusing on how much can my students produce, how much are they understanding [of the content]. But that kind of had to change when we went online and had to do our distance learning. And that is still very important, but academics, for me, is more well-rounded. Are they mentally healthy? Do they have a good view of themselves as students? That has taken more of a priority, especially since last year, because mental health is so important.

— Recent Completer, Secondary Education Cohort 1

Participants in Cohort 1 discussed the ways in which this year's struggles are intertwined with the larger effects of COVID-19. They discussed their students' fears stemming from the pandemic, their lack of motivation and interest in school work, etc. They also discussed the academic deficits that they perceived in their students' learning as a result of the pandemic. In the face of these challenges, Cohort 1 participants adapted their expectations and practices to meet their students' needs, focusing on growth rather than traditional/standardized benchmarks of learning outcomes. For most participants in Cohort 1, these challenges were mitigated, to a degree, by prioritizing the physical and emotional well-being of their students.

This was a recurring theme for participants in Cohort 2, as well—the importance of social-emotional well-being as not just part of the curriculum, but also of the holistic approach with which they helped students learn through COVID:

I remind myself to give grace to myself and to my students. A way that COVID has really changed my teaching is not only to be flexible, but also, I have found myself-- since I view [my content] as a vehicle for which to teach life skills and life growth skills, I feel more like a counselor than a teacher, which is great-- it is my favorite part of my job! I want my class to be a place where kids can come and feel less stressed.

— Recent Completer Secondary Education, Cohort 2

For me, it has changed me on a personal level, but also professionally. Unfortunately, I lost my mother to COVID and it's been something I had to prepare myself for the school year, with everything opening. [...] But I'm the oldest of five, and we don't have any parents anymore. So I've taken that... and look at my students and say: I'm standing-- them seeing the real life concept of being able to withstand the storm, and making that connection. [For example,] if I'm struggling with all this new technology as a self-contained classroom, they see through my struggle and they see that they are okay if they struggle.

It makes you a different teacher. It makes you think of other ways you can get students to be engaged... in the circumstances and times we're facing.

— Recent Completer Elementary Education, Cohort 2

Cohort 2 participants also experienced similar struggles to those of Cohort 1, as they navigated teaching through the pandemic. Yet, for Cohort 2 participants, their induction to the profession during COVID presented a unique positionality to the challenges posed by the pandemic. They reflected extensively on their

experiences as first-year teachers in COVID, noting that they do not have a point of reference to which to compare to their induction experiences:

I think I would have already been flexible in trying new things, but really, COVID has been freeing to make mistakes.

Recent Completer Secondary Education, Cohort 2

I will never know how I would have been if I hadn't experienced COVID my first year of teaching, and everybody keeps telling me that next year will be easier—and I believe them! But I'm glad that it broke in me that rigid perfectionism that I felt I needed to be successful—knowing that I can wing it, that I can roll with the punches.

Recent Completer Secondary Education, Cohort 2

While challenges persisted comparable to those of Cohort 1 during their first year of teaching (i.e. classroom management, assessment, meeting the needs of diverse learners, etc.), they also found that COVID presented them with the opportunity to grow professionally. They correlated this personal and professional growth to better instruction and outcomes for their students, both socio-emotionally and academically.

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 2 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 demonstrate flexibility in the wake of new regulations and shifts within the educational landscape (i.e. remote learning, hybrid instruction, etc.). Likewise, while not uniformly true of for all participants, a noteworthy *change* mentioned in several focus groups was for the college of education to more directly address how to navigate the political landscape of schools: how to foster relationships with key stakeholders such as guardians, parents and administrators; how to document and communicate difficult conversations about grades or behavior with parents and guardians; when and how to properly work and seek support from their administrators; how to become a part of the larger community that is home to their schools, etc. Like last year completers, particular those in secondary fields, 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

- Dwyer, C. (2020, March 18). *Kansas becomes the first state to end in-person classes for the year*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/Coronavirus%20Live%20Updates/2020/03/18/817886198/kansas-becomes-the-first-state-to-end-its-school-year>.