



Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program

Case Study for CAEP Standard 4.1: Completer Effectiveness

Completed: June 2022

Updated to include Fall 2022 Data: January 2023

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Overview

Bluefield University (BU) is situated in the state of Virginia. The Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program (EPP) graduates obtain teacher licensure through the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). The VDOE does not share data with EPPs once its graduates are teaching within public schools (PreK-12) in the state. Therefore, in response to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standard 4 and revised standard 4.1, the BU EPP presents this condensed case study containing a sample of its completers over the last three years.

CAEP standard four on program impact states, “The provider demonstrates the effectiveness of its completers’ instruction on P-12 student learning and development, and completer and employer satisfaction with the relevance and effectiveness of preparation” (CAEP, 2022). CAEP revised standard 4.1 on completer effectiveness, which this case study seeks to specifically address, states, “The provider demonstrates that program completers: effectively contribute to P-12 student-learning growth and 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” (CAEP, 2022).

BU EPP candidates in EDU 4103 Dynamic Learning Environments complete 15 hours of field experience observation hours. Ten of these clinical experience field hours are completed with two experienced teachers who have taught more than three years and who are identified as effective teachers to serve as mentor teachers by their principals. The additional five hours of field experience occurs within a recent BU program completer’s classroom who is now in his or her first, second, or third year of teaching. The EPP candidates’ complete five field experience hours with the recent program completer including four hours of observation in the classroom

and one hour interviewing the new teacher. The candidates are matched with experienced teachers for ten of the clinical hours for EDU 4103 by the school principals; however, the Director of Teacher Education matches the candidates with the recent program completer who is now in their first, second, or third year of teaching according to the candidates' endorsement area(s). During the field experience observation hours with the experienced teachers and recent program completers, candidates take field notes including information for the following categories: student characteristics, instructional strategies, classroom management, room organization, and resources and tools. Candidates discuss observations during EDU 4103 class sessions and analyze various instructional strategies, classroom management methods, technology integration techniques, etc. from the mentor teachers in connection with the pedagogical knowledge and professional disposition skills they are gaining and developing within the course. EDU 4103 is taken the semester prior to student teaching and builds on the foundational and advanced knowledge the candidates gain in previous education coursework and clinical experiences.

Candidates in EDU 4103 are particularly observing in the classrooms for classroom management and other instructional and organizational strategies along the domains of content, conduct, and covenant management. Content management refers to the teacher's management of space, materials, equipment, movement of students, and lessons as part of a curriculum or program of study (Froyen & Iverson, 1999). As part of content management, candidates observe, discuss strategies with their two experienced mentor teachers and recent program completer, and complete activities in EDU 4103 for the management of movement and transitions during lessons and the school day, maintaining individual and group focus, and avoidance of satiation as well as managing all of the day-to-day activities within a classroom

including instruction and presentations, review sessions, individual work, group work, field trips, homework, projects, etc. For conduct management, candidates are observing and learning “procedural skills that teachers employ in their attempt to address and resolve discipline problems in the classroom” (Froyen & Iverson, 1999, p. 181). From their field experience observations, research, and education course activities, candidates prepare a classroom management plan in EDU 4103 including their classroom rules and procedures as well as appropriate measures to take for mild, moderate, and severe student behaviors. As part of their classroom management plan, candidates consider and plan for: (a) acknowledgement of responsible behaviors; (b) correction of irresponsible and inappropriate behavior; (c) when to act and when to ignore student behaviors; and (d) strategies including proximity control, gentle verbal reprimands, delaying, preferential seating, how to notify parents/guardians, how to create written behavioral contracts, how to implement positive reinforcement systems, etc. Further, covenant management focuses “on the classroom group as social system that has its own features that teachers have to take into account when managing interpersonal relationships in the classroom (Foyen & Iverson, 1999, p. 192). Through field experience observations, research, and education course activities, candidates learn effective ways to problem solve with students, help students make value judgments about behaviors, have clearly stated high expectations for students, etc. Candidates learn how to implement content, conduct, and covenant management within a framework and mindset of culturally responsive teaching and restorative justice to provide the most effective, evidence-based practices for diverse learners. At the end of the semester for EDU 4103, candidates complete a reflective paper for the field experience hours conducted with two experienced mentor teachers and include their field notes. Candidates prepare a separate reflective paper for their time with a recent completer and include their field

notes as well as a transcript from a semi-structured interview. Candidates also submit a time sheet initialed by their mentor teachers at each visit and signed by the mentor teachers at the completion of the required hours.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program completers' instruction on P-12 student learning and development and their ability to apply the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions in P-12 classrooms that they gained as part of their preparation at Bluefield University. The rationale for this case study is that the Virginia Department of Education has strict guidelines on the sharing of assessment data, performance evaluations, or any other information relating to the performance of P-12 students and teachers with EPPs; therefore, the BU EPP does not have access to statewide data as evidence for CAEP revised standard 4.1. This case study seeks to provide this necessary evidence.

Research Questions

This case study seeks to answer two research questions:

Central question 1: What is the effectiveness of Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program completers on P-12 student learning and development?

Central question 2: How effectively do Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program completers apply the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions gained as part of the Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program within P-12 classrooms?

Setting

The setting for this study is Tazewell County Public Schools (TCPS). Bluefield University is situated within the school district for Tazewell County Public Schools giving accessibility for teacher education candidates to complete clinical experiences within these schools. TCPS is a small, rural school district located in the southwestern portion of Virginia. TCPS consists of seven elementary schools with a student population of 2,431 in grades PreK-5, three middle schools with a student population of 1,270 in grades 6-8, and three high schools with a student population of 1,731 in grades 9-12 for the 2020/2021 school year (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). The entire student population for TCPS for 2020/2021 was 5,432 (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). In the school district, 92.7% of the student were white, 2.7% were black, 1.0% were Hispanic, 0.6% were Asian, and 3.0% were multiple races as of fall 2020 (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). Students with disabilities make up 16.6% of the student population, 48.3% are economically disadvantaged, and 0.2% are English learners as of fall 2020 (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). Although TCPS is a small, rural school district with geographic and socioeconomic barriers, the school district exhibits examples of high-quality schools in that it was ranked 11th out of 133 school districts in the state of Virginia for student achievement in 2017/2018 and 10th in 2018/2019 (Virginia Department of Education, 2022).

Tazewell County Public Schools serves as a primary partnering school district for the Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program. The majority of BU EPP students complete clinical experiences consisting of field experience observation hours and student teaching within schools in this school district. Numerous program completers are also employed within Tazewell County Public Schools as teachers, administrators, and school counselors.

Participants

This study utilized criterion-based purposeful sampling to determine participants. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a purposeful sample would “intentionally sample a group of people that could best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination” (p. 148). Utilizing criterion sampling enabled the selection of rich cases that met the needs of the teacher education candidates by matching them with recent program completers currently in their first, second, or third year of teaching within specified grade level(s) and/or content area(s) that the candidates are planning to teach upon completion of the program. The sample size for this case study was 10 participants who recently completed the BU EPP program and who are teaching in a variety of grade levels and subject areas as provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Case Study Participants – Recent BU EPP Completers

Name	Endorsement Area	School	Grade(s)	Subject(s)	Data Collected
Evan Ferrell	Mathematics 6-12	Richlands Middle School	7 th and 8 th	Math/Pre-Algebra	2 semesters during 3 rd year
Laura Kincer	English Education 6-12	Tazewell High School	9 th – 12 th	English and Photojournalism	2 nd and 3 rd year
Courtney Oxford	Health & Physical Education PreK-12	Graham High School	9 th – 12 th	Health & Physical Education	2 nd and 3 rd year
Kaitlyn Oxford	Elementary Education PreK-6 and Special Education K-12	Tazewell Middle School	6 th – 8 th	Special Education	1 st year
Leah Plott	Elementary Education	Abbs-Valley-Boissevain	1 st	All subjects	1 st and 2 nd year

	PreK-6 and Special Education K-12	Elementary School			
MyKenzie Roach	Elementary Education PreK-6 and Special Education K-12	Tazewell Middle School	6 th – 8 th	Special Education	2 semesters during 1 st year and 2 nd year
Cameron Roberts	Elementary Education PreK-6	Graham Intermediate School	3 rd	All subjects	2 nd year
Taylyn Strange	English Education 6-12	Graham High School	9 th – 12 th	English and Film Studies	1 st year
Kelly Walker	Elementary Education PreK-6	Abbs-Valley-Boissevain Elementary School	5 th	Reading	1 st , 2 nd , and 3 rd year
Cameron West	Elementary Education PreK-6 and Special Education K-12	Graham High School	9 th – 12 th	Special Education	1 st year
Alexandra Stout	Music Education – Instrument PreK-12	Graham Middle & Graham High School	6 th – 12 th	Vocal/Choral	1 st year

Data Collection

Data was collected by candidates in EDU 4103 through observations, field notes, and interviews. Data obtained through the observations, field notes, and interviews was assimilated by the candidates through a written summary and reflection. Candidates formulated the interview questions in alignment with the InTASC standards with the assistance of the course instructor and Director of Teacher Education, Dr. Shellie Brown. Each semester, candidates reviewed the interview questions to ensure if any additions or revisions needed to be made with the assistance of Dr. Brown. These forms of data collection provided a rich, descriptive context

for providing an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of BU EPP completers on P-12 student learning and development as well as how effectively BU EPP completers apply the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions within P-12 classrooms that they gained as part of the BU EPP.

Observations and Field Notes

According to Stake (1995), “observations work the researcher toward greater understanding of the case” (p. 60). According to Yin (2009), a case study should “take place in the natural setting of the case” (p. 109) making observations a crucial component of case study research. In this case study, BU EPP candidates each completed four hours of observations within a recent completer’s classroom. During the observations, the candidates utilized the field notes template as shown in Figure 1. Figures 2 and 3 show the field experience requirements and assignment directions provided to candidates in the syllabus for EDU 3193. By taking field notes during the observations, the candidate is more purposeful and intentional about observing for specific criteria during the observations.

Figure 1

Field Notes Format for EDU 4103 Dynamic Learning Environments

Name:

School:

<p>Field Notes: At the beginning of each observation, write the date, the time or period, the grade, and subject. Then record notes of your observations or describe how you participated in the class during that time. Include notes for the following categories each time: instructional strategies, room organization, classroom management strategies, resources/tools utilized during instruction, and student activities.</p>	<p>Analysis: For each observation session, think about questions that came to mind as you were observing or participating, ideas that you had for strategies or techniques, new words or concepts that you learned, how the class related to your textbook or education courses, or what you learned overall about teaching, students, or the school. You should have at least one such statement for each observation date.</p>

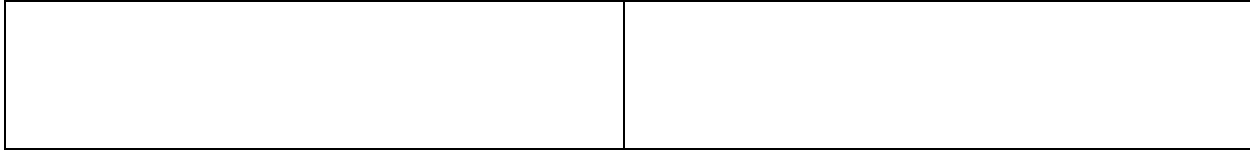


Figure 2

EDU 4103 Dynamic Learning Environments Field Experience Requirements

EDU 4103 Dynamic Learning Environments

Field Experience Requirements

Each student will spend a total of 15 hours in a classroom observing and working with teachers whose responsibilities include teaching in the grade level(s)/content area(s) related to the Virginia Standards of Learning for which endorsement is sought. Students will spend some time talking with the classroom teachers about strategies for teaching various content related topics.

10 hours will take place with two experienced mentor teachers (5 hours in each classroom). Five additional hours will take place with a recent graduate of Bluefield University who is teaching within the same grade level(s)/content area(s) as the student's endorsement area(s).

The student should do the following:

1. Observe the classroom teacher providing instruction, classroom management, and student activities relating to various topics related to the Virginia Standards of Learning.
2. Take notes during each classroom visit while observing the classroom teacher providing instruction and student activities relating to various topics using the approved format for notes in the course syllabus. Notes will include the following categories: instructional strategies, room organization, classroom management strategies, and resources/tools utilized during instruction and student activities.
3. Discuss with the classroom teacher various strategies that he/she utilizes in teaching various topics related to the Virginia Standards of Learning.
4. At the completion of the observation hours, write a final 2-page reflective paper to be submitted with observation notes. The field experience observations paper will contain descriptions and reflections for the following categories:

Logistical Information:

- List each day/grade level/time that you observed/subject or content area.
- What is the general arrangement of the school; what additional personnel does the principal have to assist him/her in the educational setting?

Students Description:

- Directions: Include observations that you made about the physical, emotional and/or social development of the students you observed.

Instructional Strategies and Resources/Tools:

- List and discuss briefly at least two of the instructional strategies you observed for science.
- List and discuss briefly at least two of the instructional strategies you observed for social studies.
- Include comments about at least two of the resources/tools that you observed.

- Describe at least one of the activities in which you were able to participate with the students. NOTE: If you did not participate with students, discuss what you did during this experience.

Room Organization and Management:

- Describe the way the room is organized; include a detailed description of the methods used by the teacher in managing the class.
- What ideas did you gain about organization and management that you will incorporate into your own classroom? NOTE: If you got no ideas, what could you incorporate in your own classroom?

Generalizations:

- Based on your observations to date, cite 3-5 generalizations about what you have noticed during these observations about teaching science and social studies, about classroom management, and/or other generalizations.
- Include comments about the following: What, if anything, made you feel happy or exhilarated while you participated in this observation? If nothing made you feel happy or exhilarated, explain why not.
- Cite one piece of advice that you would offer the “powers that be” about creating rules for improving science and social studies education.
- What suggestions do you have for others or yourself for future observations?

5. For the recent completer, the student will also conduct a semi-structured one-hour interview with the completer. Interview questions will be provided.

Figure 3

EDU 4103 Dynamic Learning Environments Directions for Interviews and Observations of Recent Completer

EDU 4103 Dynamic Learning Environments

Interviews and Observations of Bluefield University Completers

1. Complete four observation hours in the teacher’s classroom who you have been assigned. Take notes each time you visit the teacher’s classroom on the approved notes format in the syllabus. You will handwrite your notes while you are in the classroom, but will type them before submission.
2. Conduct a semi-structured interview with the teacher. You will want to record the interview; however, you do not have to provide a verbatim transcript of the interview. You will type summarized answers of the teacher’s responses in the interview question chart under notes (number the answers corresponding with the numbers of the questions).
3. Write a two to three paragraph reflection about this experience. What did you learn from the teacher? How can you use that learning in your future classroom? Be specific and substantial in your reflections and responses.
4. Combine all documents into one Word document and upload to Canvas. The reflection first with your name and course information at the top, then the interview questions/answers chart, then the notes from the observations.

Interviews

Interviews allow the researcher to give a voice to participants and can provide deep knowledge that is “constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 4). Further, according to Stake (1995), “Two principal uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others” (p. 64). Interviews with the participants provided multiple viewpoints, experiences of the recent completers, and in-depth information pertaining to the research questions.

Table 2

Interview Questions for Recent Completers Aligned with InTASC Standards

Interview Questions for Mentor Teachers/Recent Graduates
 EDU 4103 Dynamic Learning Environments

InTASC Standard	Questions	Notes
Introductory Questions	1. What is your name? 2. Where do you teach? 3. What grades do you teach? 4. What subjects do you teach? 5. How long have you been teaching? 6. When did you graduate from Bluefield College (month/year)? 7. What made you want to become a teacher?	
Standard #1: Learner Development The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of	8. What are ways that you address students’ cognitive development in your classroom? Linguistic?	

<p>learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.</p>	<p>Social? Emotional? Physical?</p> <p>9. How do you provide for the diverse needs of your students in your classroom?</p>	
<p>Standard #2: Learning Differences The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.</p>	<p>10. How do you as the teacher, bring multiple perspectives into a discussion?</p> <p>11. How do you incorporate family, community experience, and multicultural components?</p> <p>12. How do you show you students that you value their diverse languages, cultures, and dialects?</p>	
<p>Standard #3: Learning Environments The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.</p>	<p>13. What kind of challenges (if any) have you faced communicating with families?</p> <p>14. What kind of challenges (if any) have you faced communicating with colleagues?</p> <p>15. Do you have any examples of where communication resulted positively with families or colleagues?</p> <p>16. What are some different ways you encourage your students to reach your goals for them in the classroom?</p> <p>17. How do students know what kind of goals are set for them?</p>	
<p>Standard #4: Content Knowledge</p>	<p>18. How do you keep the attention of your students?</p>	

<p>The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.</p>	<p>19. How do you differ instructional resources and materials so each student can have a more accurate understanding?</p> <p>20. Do you have an example of a way that you have been able to make the content relevant and applicable to the students?</p>	
<p>Standard #5: Application of Content The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.</p>	<p>21. How do you encourage critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving in the classroom?</p> <p>22. Do you use collaborative groups for discussions or assignments? If so, can you provide an example of a way that you use collaborative groups?</p> <p>23. Do you bring local, national, and global current events into the classroom? If so, how do you bring current events into the classroom?</p> <p>24. How do you help the students develop communication skills (talking, writing, reading, thinking) within the subjects that you teach?</p>	
<p>Standard #6: Assessment The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.</p>	<p>25. What types of assessment do you use in the classroom on a daily or weekly basis?</p> <p>26. How do you use assessments to inform your instruction?</p>	

<p>Standard #7: Planning for Instruction The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.</p>	<p>27. How do you prepare lessons based on each child's strengths and needs?</p> <p>28. What type of remediation and/or enrichment types of activities do you incorporate in your classroom?</p>	
<p>Standard #8: Instructional Strategies The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.</p>	<p>29. What kinds of different activities do you include in your lessons?</p> <p>30. How do you incorporate technology into your classroom?</p>	
<p>Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.</p>	<p>31. What do you do to increase your knowledge and teaching skills? For example, do you go to conferences, do research, talk to other teachers?</p> <p>32. How do you assess your teaching to make improvements? For example, do you reflect on your teaching?</p> <p>33. What advice do you have for beginning teachers on ways to be professional?</p>	
<p>Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to</p>	<p>34. How do you work with other teachers and administrators in order to ensure that students are getting the best education they can receive?</p> <p>35. What types of things do you and your colleagues do</p>	

<p>ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.</p>	<p>to create a positive culture in the classrooms and school?</p> <p>36. What is your favorite thing about teaching?</p>	
<p>Other</p>	<p>37. With the changes in instructional delivery due to COVID, what has your experience been like in teaching in-person and online students?</p> <p>38. When you are teaching online students, what strategies do you use to keep the students engaged and participating?</p> <p>39. When are you are teaching online students, are you able to provide hands-on learning experience for them? If so, how do you accomplish that?</p>	

Data Analysis

Data collection for this condensed case study was performed by BU EPP candidates during their EDU 4103 Dynamic Learning Environments education course taken the semester prior to student teaching beginning in fall 2019 through spring 2022. Data was collected each semester during this three-year period for a total of six semesters. The field notes during observations, written summaries and reflections, and interview responses were collected by 16 EPP candidates for the 10 participants. The data was then compiled and analyzed by myself, Dr. Shellie Brown, Director of Teacher Education. My previous experience as a general education teacher within Tazewell County Public Schools provided some prior, expert knowledge that I applied during the analysis phase of the study (Yin, 2009). As postulated by Yin (2009), pattern matching logic was utilized as it is “one of the most desirable techniques” (p. 136) for case study

analysis. Pattern matching allowed the researcher to match patterns within the themes of the data to strengthen the internal validity of the study (Yin, 2009).

I began data analysis procedures with open coding by organizing data into “causal conditions (what factors caused the core phenomenon), strategies (actions taken in response to the core phenomenon), contextual and intervening conditions (broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies), and consequences (outcomes from using the strategies)” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 85). This process was accomplished by organizing data collected by TEP candidates from field notes, written summaries and reflections, and interview transcriptions into usable textual forms that could be entered into searchable spreadsheets which allowed me to better organize the data for performing analyses and interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009). Next, I performed a within-case analysis through detailed descriptions of each case and the themes within each case (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009). I was then able to analyze the participants across cases to determine pattern of themes across the cases, which helped to determine assertions and interpretations of the meaning across the cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009).

Then, I developed implications from within and across the cases that could be applied to the EPP for continuous improvement. The triangulation of multiple sources of data with the field notes, written summaries and reflections, and interview transcriptions increased the construct validity of the investigation, and the use of multiple participants across a three-year period provided thicker, more robust data (Yin, 2009).

Trustworthiness

Frameworks have been in existence for years for rigorous credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability, which helped to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). This researcher addressed each of these issues within this study to ensure high-quality research.

Credibility

Credibility, or internal validity, seeks to ensure that the “study measures or tests what is actually intended” (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). Credibility was established in this case study by utilizing well-established research methods, peer review, and member checking (Yin, 2009). I used direct interpretation and aggregation of codes to determine themes and sub-themes as recommended by Yin (2009). I utilized peer review through review from multiple Bluefield University members of staff and administration. Additionally, member checking was utilized as participants were allowed to read the interview transcripts to ensure “accuracy and palatability” (Stake, 1995, p. 115).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability was established by providing an account of the methods and procedures utilized throughout the investigation (Shenton, 2004). Throughout the data collection, TEP candidates had prolonged engagement with the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Dependability was strengthened through triangulation of data collected through field notes, written summaries and reflections, and transcription of interviews (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

According to Shenton (2004), confirmability relates to ensuring that the “work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher” (p. 72). Confirmability was established in this study through the

use of external audits through multiple university staff members including the EPP's accreditation specialist, the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, and the Provost. The study also included transcriptions of interviews and field notes taken directly during observations.

Transferability

Transferability, or external validity, relates to the “extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (Shenton, 2004, p. 69). The findings from this study will help inform the EPPs continuous improvement processes as information was obtained directly from completers during their first, second, and/or third year of teaching in the field. The findings from this study could be beneficial to other educator preparation programs, but are intended for internal use at Bluefield University.

Participants

The participants in this case study were ten recent completers of the Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program. These participants all teach within Tazewell County Public Schools. Other completers teach within Virginia and other states; however, the EPP could not gain permission from those school districts for candidates to complete virtual observations making them non-viable participants for this case study. The BU EPP focused on completers within Tazewell County Public Schools because the EPP is located within the school district making it easier for candidates to travel to the schools for in-person observations and interviews, the EPP has an articulation agreement with the school district, and the EPP gained approval from Dr. Christopher Stacy, Superintendent of Schools, and each school principal for candidates to complete observations and interviews with the participants.

Evan Ferrell

Evan graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics Education. He teaches at Richlands Middle School for 7th and 8th grade math and pre-algebra. He just completed his third year of teaching. Evan also coaches the high school cross country team. Two candidates completed field experience observations and interviews with Evan this year, one during the fall and one during the spring.

Laura Kincer

Laura graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Education. She teaches at Tazewell High School. Laura teaches 9th – 12th grade students for English and photojournalism. She is in charge of the school yearbook. Laura just completed her fourth year of teaching. Two candidates completed field experience observations and interviews with Laura during her second and third years of teaching.

Courtney Oxford

Courtney graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Health and Physical Education. She teaches at Graham High School. Courtney teaches 9th – 12th grade girls for Health and Physical Education. She also coaches cheerleading, volleyball, and tennis. Courtney just completed her third year of teaching. One candidate completed field experience observations and an interview with Courtney during her second year of teaching.

Kaitlyn Oxford

Kaitlyn graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with teacher licensure. She is endorsed to teach Elementary Education

PreK-6 and Special Education K-12. Kaitlyn serves as a special educator teacher at Tazewell Middle School for grades 6th – 8th. Kaitlyn also serves as an assistant cheerleading coach for Graham High School. Kaitlyn just completed her first year of teaching. Two candidates completed field experience observations and interviews with Kaitlyn during her first year of teaching, one during the fall and one during the spring.

Leah Plott

Leah graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with teacher licensure. She is endorsed to teach Elementary Education PreK-6 and Special Education K-12. She served as a first-grade general education teacher at Abbs-Valley Boissevain Elementary School this year and will be transitioning to a special education teaching position at Graham High School next year. Leah also serves as a cheerleading coach for Graham Middle School. One candidate completed field experience observations and an interview with Leah during her first year of teaching.

MyKenzie Roach

MyKenzie graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with teacher licensure. She is endorsed to teach Elementary Education PreK-6 and Special Education K-12. MyKenzie also recently graduated from Bluefield University with a Master of Art in Educational Leadership degree. MyKenzie serves as a special education teacher at Tazewell Middle School for 6th – 8th grade students. Three candidates completed field experience observations and interviews with MyKenzie. MyKenzie just completed her second year of teaching. Two candidates were with MyKenzie during her first

year of teaching, one during the fall and one during the spring. Then, one candidate was with MyKenzie during her second year of teaching.

Cameron Roberts

Cameron graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with teacher licensure. He is endorsed to teach Elementary Education PreK-6. Cameron teaches 3rd grade at Graham Intermediate School. He just completed his third year of teaching. One candidate completed field experience observations and an interview with Cameron during his second year of teaching.

Taylyn Strange

Taylyn graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Education. She teaches at Graham High School for 9th – 12th grade students. Taylyn teaches English and film studies classes. She also coaches girls' softball and volleyball. Taylyn just completed her first year of teaching. One candidate completed field experience observations and an interview with Taylyn during her first year of teaching.

Kelly Walker

Kelly graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with teacher licensure. She is endorsed to teach Elementary Education PreK-6. Kelly teaches 5th grade reading at Abbs-Valley Boissevain Elementary School. She just completed her fourth year of teaching. Three candidates completed field experience observations and interviews with Kelly during her first, second, and third years of teaching.

Cameron Gasperson West

Cameron graduated from Bluefield University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with teacher licensure. She is endorsed to teach Elementary Education PreK-6 and Special Education K-12. Cameron serves as a special education teacher at Graham High School for 9th – 12th grade. Cameron just completed her first year of teaching. One candidate completed field experience observations and an interview with Cameron during her first year of teaching.

Results

The purpose of this case study is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program completers' instruction on P-12 student learning and development and their ability to apply the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions in P-12 classrooms that they gained as part of their preparation at Bluefield University. The rationale for this case study is that the Virginia Department of Education has strict guidelines on the sharing of assessment data, performance evaluations, or any other information relating to the performance of P-12 students and teachers with EPPs; therefore, the BU EPP does not have access to statewide data as evidence for CAEP revised standard 4.1. Furthermore, with Virginia's strict guidelines, Tazewell County Public Schools and its employees are also prohibited from sharing specific quantitative data with the EPP.

Overview of Findings

All of the participants expressed that they felt very prepared for the classroom by their preparation from BU EPP and all described how they have continued to learn and grow as an educator by participating in professional development opportunities, collaborating with fellow teachers, and researching relevant topics as needed. Through the field notes from field

experience observations completed by EPP candidates, written summaries and reflections completed by EPP candidates, and interviews of recent completers, several themes developed across all participants in response to the research questions.

Central Question One

CQ1: What is the effectiveness of Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program completers on P-12 student learning and development?

Themes across all participants in relation to effectiveness on P-12 student learning and development included: (a) reflective practitioner, (b) communication, (c) high expectations, (d) utilizing assessment data, and (e) listening to students.

Reflective practitioner. All participants discussed in the interviews the importance of their reflective practice. Participants described that they reflect on their lessons each day in order to determine what worked, what did not, and what they will do differently the next day or in the future. Participants purported that spending this time as a reflective practitioner helped them to make effective instructional decisions for their students improving learning outcomes. Participants began to develop the skills necessary to be a reflective practitioner during education courses and student teaching at Bluefield University. Candidates complete reflections on all lessons taught for peers and in the public-school classrooms. Participants described that this aided them in developing this habit that has carried over to their classroom practices.

Communication. All participants described communication as crucial to their success as educators. Participants described communication with several stakeholders including: (a) students, (b) families, and (c) colleagues. Kaitlyn Oxford stated, “Communication is key to doing right by your students. Whether parent concerns arise or your own concerns arise, having

an open line of communication with parents, teachers, and administrators is the most important thing.”

Students. Participants stated that it is crucial for them to listen to their students in order to develop a positive, working relationship but also to determine proper levels of scaffolding and support in differentiating instruction for all learners. EPP candidates reported in their field notes and written summaries/reflections seeing the participants constantly moving around the room, talking with students, gauging students’ understanding, and communicating with students in various ways.

Families. Participants also discussed the importance of communicating with students’ parents, guardians, and/or families. Communicating academic or behavioral concerns with families was one of the areas that many participants said they struggled with when they first began teaching. Also, effective communication was made more challenging during the pandemic when students were working online and it could be difficult to get all families to respond to phone calls or emails from the participants. However, participants provided that building a strong bridge of communication is an extremely influential piece to their ability to have a positive impact on students’ learning and development.

Colleagues. All participants reported that they learned a great deal from their mentor teachers and other fellow colleagues during their first, second, and/or third year of teaching. Many participants expressed that their colleagues have been a lifeline in helping to keep them afloat and making good progress with their students. Participants who are serving as general education teachers spoke of working on lesson plans and getting assistance with grade level teachers as well as co-planning and co-teaching with special education teachers. Participants who are serving as special education teachers described that the classes where they have had the

most positive impact on student learning and development have been those where they are able to co-plan and co-teach effectively with the general education teacher.

High Expectations. All participants reported that one of the keys to successful learning outcomes for their students has been establishing high expectations at the beginning of the school year and then consistently implementing them throughout. All participants discussed ways that they differentiate their instruction and activities for students, but that they still maintain high expectations for learning and that they celebrate milestones of growth with students on benchmark assessments and for in-class activities. Several participants described helping students set goals for their learning. Kelly Walker stated that she has her students write their MAP scores on a card with a goal for growth which she discusses with them. She described that having this visual reminder helps her fifth-grade students set and reach learning goals. Laura Kincer stated, “My favorite thing about teaching is watching a student that has been struggling finally grasp a concept and have so much pride and joy in themselves.”

Utilizing Assessment Data. A theme that was evident across all participants’ interviews is their utilization of assessment data to inform instructional decisions and increase student learning outcomes. All participants described utilizing formative and summative assessments in their classrooms. They also provided that they worked in cooperation with grade level teachers or co-teachers (in inclusion classrooms) to disaggregate the data from assessments and implement strategies for remediation or enrichment for students. All of the participants particularly found the use of benchmark assessments such as Interactive Achievement helpful. Evan Ferrell uses the questions missed on benchmarks as review questions for students. The participants could not provide specific data from assessments, per TCPS and VDOE testing confidentiality regulations; however, they described disseminating MAP and SOL reports to

determine areas of weakness to make continuous improvements in instruction for student learning and development. Participants described seeing successful learning outcomes for students through these practices.

Listening to Students. An interesting theme that appeared numerous times from the collected data was listening to students. The participants indicated that part of their success in student learning and development is due to their active practice of listening to their students. Participants talk to their students and initiate classroom discussions pertaining to the content, but they were very purposeful in listening to the students' responses and using their answers to guide instructional decisions. Participants saw this practice as an important contributor to their effectiveness as educators because it greatly helped them to differentiate and provide for the needs of diverse learners.

Central Question Two

CQ2: How effectively do Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program completers apply the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions gained as part of the Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program within P-12 classrooms?

Themes across all participants in relation to the effective application of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions in P-12 classrooms included (a) differentiation, (b) professional responsibility, (c) building relationships, (d) professional development, and (e) student motivation.

Differentiation. A common theme across all participants relating to professional knowledge and skills was effectively differentiating instruction, student activities, and assessments for all learners. All participants spoke of the importance of listening to students to

learn about their interests and needs, utilizing assessment data to determine students' strengths and weaknesses as well as to make instructional decisions for individual students, and providing proper levels of remediation and/or enrichment to meet all learners' needs. Leah Plott stated, "For me, remediation can sound very grueling, so I like to make it as fun as possible. One thing that is fun and academically challenging is creating review packets with individual games in them. This way, the students aren't bored with paper-pencil work, but are still getting the reinforcement they need while keeping their attention."

Professional Responsibility. All participants described how the knowledge and skills related to professional responsibility and professional dispositions gained at BU have helped them in their classrooms and schools. Many of the participants described feeling much younger than the majority of their colleagues when they began teaching directly upon graduating from college. They reported needing to hold themselves to high standards of professionalism including punctuality, professional dress, positive attitude, and culturally responsive teaching. Holding themselves to professional standards has aided them in having a well-organized, effective classroom and has helped them to fit in better with their colleagues as they collaborate and work together. Candidates reported seeing participants act with high levels of professional responsibility including greeting their students at the door with a smile and warm welcome each day and working well with colleagues and administrators.

Building Relationships. A common theme relating to both research questions was the importance of building relationships. Participants discussed the importance of building positive working relationships with students, families, and colleagues as having a positive impact on student learning and growth, but also on their continued development relating to professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions. MyKenzie Roach stated, "I am always working with other

teachers and my administrators to find what is best for my students. We have planning meetings frequently.” Many participants described having mentor teachers and other colleagues who they can go to with questions or assistance anytime. Leah Plott provided that she had the opportunity to observe multiple teachers and how they teach the same content through the school district’s new teacher training program. She stated that this has been very helpful in her development. The majority of these recent completers hold their colleagues in high esteem and look to them for modeling professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Professional Development. A common theme across participants was also the necessity of professional development. The recent completers discussed observing other teachers through the new teacher program within the school district as well as videos provided for their review. Many participants have attended conferences, professional development workshops, webinars, and conducted educational research to continue to build upon the foundation of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions gained at Bluefield University. Within the BU EPP, a large emphasis is placed on professional development. Through the BU chapter of Student Virginia Education Association (SVEA), the Director of Teacher Education holds several professional development opportunities including in-person guest lectures in education courses, in-person workshops, and webinars. Candidates are provided with professional development certificates and vocatio credit (the University requires vocatio points each semester). It is apparent from this data collection that the participants have learned the value of professional development and still place a large emphasis on it.

Student Motivation. All participants discussed the importance of student engagement and motivation. Participants discussed how they work to get to know their students and develop a positive, working relationships with them because they have seen how it aids in student

motivation and learning. Participants described the importance of having respect for students' culture, background, interests, and opinions. The participants have also learned at BU and in their practice, that they need to utilize variety in their instructional strategies, student activities, and assessments in order to get students' buy-in and active engagement in learning. Participants described many methods they utilize to provide variety as well as meaningful and purposeful learning experiences for students including: Blooket, Kahoot, interactive notebooks, real-world scenarios, hands-on learning, experiential learning, videos, escape room activities, Jeopardy review games, sketching out scenes from a book, variety of writing activities, incorporating movement, using music, class discussions, think-pair-share, collaborative problem solving, creating posters, etc.

Summary

Although the Virginia Department of Education and thereby Tazewell County Public Schools cannot share specific quantitative data, these field notes, written summaries and reflections, and interviews provided rich qualitative data on recent completers' effectiveness on student learning and development. The participants are still learning and growing as educators, but have already been experiencing success with their students pertaining to learning outcomes and positive trends in learning and development for their P-12 students. They have also added to the foundational professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they gained within the Bluefield University Educator Preparation Program. In their written summaries and reflections, the candidates expressed how impressive the participants already are in their abilities to impact student learning and development. A lot of this was attributed to their very obvious care and respect for their students as well as their superb levels of professional knowledge, responsibility, and dispositions. The participants are still learning and growing as educators, but are committed

to their practice and have demonstrated effective teaching practices, professional knowledge, and professional dispositions as evidenced by this case study.

Future Implications

The BU EPP will continue to collect qualitative data by having candidates complete field experience observations within the classrooms of recent completers in their first, second, and/or third years of teaching. The EPP will continue to utilize the data collected to make continuous improvements in its programming. The Virginia Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (VACTE) has established a committee whose purpose is to coordinate with the Virginia Department of Education and Virginia state legislators to petition Virginia to create a system of data sharing with Educator Preparation Programs. If this work comes to fruition, EPPs will be able to provide quantitative data in addition to the qualitative data collected for recent completers their first three years in the field. In the meantime, the EPP is encouraged by the findings of this case study and its implications for the impact the provider has on its completers and on their P-12 classrooms.

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