

Education Preparation Programs

AASCU's Christa McAuliffe Award Initial Application

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A. Description of Education Program Mission, Goals, and Key Components

Western Kentucky University's education preparation program prepares some 1,000 education professionals per year to enter schools as teachers, library media specialists, principals, superintendents, and other school administrators, school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, and speech pathologists. All these education professional preparation programs are considered by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and Kentucky's Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) to represent WKU's *Professional Education Unit*. Through the governance of the Professional Education Council (PEC), faculty representatives from each of the education fields both inside and outside the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences are involved in all decisions regarding education preparation, including the development and approval of the Conceptual Framework, the development and adoption of a unit-wide Continuous Assessment Plan, and the development and adoption of the Professional Education Unit Electronic Accountability and Portfolio systems.

WKU's Professional Education Conceptual Framework outlines the mission, vision, current goals, and key components of all education preparation programs within the education unit. Our mission is to recruit, prepare, and support school practitioners and education leaders who can facilitate the learning of all children and empower them to achieve at high levels as they become life-long learners and productive citizens in a global society. Our vision to accomplish this mission is for the WKU education unit to become a nationally recognized community of scholars who apply the best that theory, research, and experience can contribute to teaching and learning and create new knowledge that makes teaching, learning, and the operation of school more efficient and effective. Our Conceptual Framework delineates many values that the unit *aspires* to accomplish over time; however, our current focus is on the following key values:

Diversity. Recognizing and responding to student diversity represents both an *instructional opportunity* and *instructional necessity*. It is an *opportunity* to use what each child brings to the learning situation in order to facilitate learning. It is a *necessity* in that those who would attempt to ignore it risk marginalizing students, as diversity exists in every classroom and in every school. Thus, the unit's professional education courses provide candidates with both knowledge of and an experience base about differences in learning styles, strategies, and preferences of cultural, ethnic, economic, gender, and ability groups. In addition, education professional candidates are offered a variety of field experiences that reflect student diversity and demonstrate success with all students.

Reflection. Highly effective education professionals have a rich understanding of and appreciation for student differences and contextual variables. Such understanding requires reflection as the means to improve professional practice. Thus, the unit's professional education courses and field experiences provide candidates opportunities to acquire an understanding of various theories, models, and strategies of teaching and learning. These courses and experiences provide candidates multiple opportunities for reflection toward the goals of improving their skills and P-12 student learning. A final assessment shared by the initial education professional preparation programs during the student teaching semester is the Teacher Work Sample. Throughout this assessment, candidates have multiple opportunities to reflect: 1) Before developing a unit of instruction, candidates gather and write about key school, classroom, and student contextual factors. 2) Before and during instruction, candidates reflect on pre- and formative assessment data and contextual factors to refine their unit and to make instructional decisions. 3) After instruction, candidates reflect on their students' success in meeting unit goals

and objectives, describe future modifications that could improve the unit, and contemplate appropriate professional development that would improve their teaching ability. Although advanced programs have flexibility in developing a culminating assessment that meets their candidates' needs, reflection remains a shared component of all advanced preparation culminating assessments.

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions. National and state educational organizations have been able to identify core competencies that are necessary for educational professionals to be successful, and the EPSB's Kentucky Teacher Standards embody these core professional education competencies. As a Kentucky public institution, WKU has adopted these standards as targets for all professional education programs. Furthermore, the Professional Education Council has developed, adopted, and identified assessment points for a common set of professional dispositions.

Technology. Advances in technology have added a new dimension to processing information that permeates almost every aspect of our lives, including teaching, learning, and managing classrooms and schools. Technology provides teachers, school practitioners, and all educators extensions of their abilities to move toward new and higher performance levels. Thus, the WKU education professional preparation unit strives to provide instruction in, model, and assess the use of technology tools considered essential for instruction, assessment, management, and research related to schools. Furthermore, the WKU professional education unit demonstrates its commitment to technology through the development of the Professional Education Unit Electronic Accountability and Portfolio systems in which key unit-wide and program level assessment data are electronically collected, stored, analyzed, and reported.

Based on the Conceptual Framework, WKU has developed a shared data collection structure built around shared standards. Even programs that prepare education professionals other than teachers (e.g., school administrators, school counselors, school psychologists) have adopted the core competencies described in the Conceptual Framework, including reviewing and aligning their professional standards through the lens of Kentucky Teacher Standards. To monitor candidate progress toward Kentucky Teacher Standards, dispositions, and other Conceptual Framework values, WKU has adopted the following components: Component 1: Admission Data, Component 2: Course Based Assessment Data, Component 3: Clinical Experiences Data, Component 4: Culminating Assessment Data, and Component 5: Exit and Follow Up Data.

Within these components are three major transition checkpoints where candidates' learning and progress are evaluated before their continuance in programs:

- Transition Point 1: Admission to Programs (related to Component 1) – Data collected prior to admission are reviewed to ensure candidates meet university, unit, and/or program criteria to be admitted.
- Transition Point 2: Admission into Culminating Assessment/Experience (related to Components 2 & 3) - Data collected during candidate progress through the program are reviewed to ensure candidate readiness for the final assessment/experience. These include evaluation of dispositions during early clinical and school experiences and course-based Teacher Standard aligned performance assessments of candidate learning.
- Transition Point 3: Program Exit (related to Components 3-5) – Candidate data collected from the final clinical experience and culminating assessment are reviewed by each program. These assessments are standard aligned with minimal criteria established for program exit.

B. Description of Cooperative Effort Between the Faculty in the College of Education, Arts and Sciences, and P-12 Schools

Whether or not they are in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, all academic units that produce professional education graduates have faculty representation on the Professional Education Council (PEC). The composition of the PEC also includes a representative from local school administrators and practitioners. Currently, the PEC meets monthly to review candidate data from our assessment system and approve candidate admission to the initial level education preparation programs (Transition Point 1), to review and approve all education-related curricular and academic policy changes, and to review and discuss assessment data that are generated from our electronic accountability system or provided from the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB). The PEC also reviews candidate data from our assessment system to approve candidates requesting admission into the student teaching semester (Transition Point 2).

This year, national and state data that have been reviewed and acted upon by the PEC include Praxis II pass rates by program, three-year WKU teacher persistence rates, and the EPSB sponsored teacher survey results. Furthermore, the Dean has presented to the PEC his knowledge of state discussions and new regulations related to Literacy and Math preparation, the state's new Master Teacher Rank II program requirements, and recent revisions to the Kentucky Teacher Standards and indicators.

Also presented and disseminated to the PEC was an internally developed, comprehensive Unit-Wide Assessment Report for Initial Programs that presented in aggregated and disaggregated form candidate data related to admission criteria, Kentucky Teacher Standard aligned performance assessments (called critical performances), diversity of clinical experiences, Teacher Work Sample Results, internal (WKU) and external (EPSB) survey data, and Praxis results. An abridged version of this document can be viewed at the following url: [Unit-Wide Assessment Report 2006-07 Abridged](#). Based on this document that also recommended refinements in our collection and use of data, the PEC adopted a Unit-Wide Continuous Assessment Plan to guide all programs in their assessment efforts. Based on this Unit-Wide Plan, all initial and advanced programs are developing Program Assessment Plans that speak to all components and transition points outlined in the Unit-Wide Plan.

Even as these plans are in development, all programs now have some portion of their candidate data within the assessment system. For initial programs, all admission, critical performance, Teacher Work Sample, student teaching admission and exit, teacher survey, Praxis II, and certification data are within the electronic assessment system. Most field experience data are now being entered and a database to enter dispositions is in now in place. For advanced programs, all admission, exit, and certification or rank change data are within the electronic assessment system. Most programs have some critical performance data within the system; all programs have plans to enter these data within the next calendar year as they develop and refine their Program Assessment Plans. Advanced programs have also refined the unit-wide dispositions to fit their program and have begun entering dispositions into the new database.

Beyond the PEC, through the Green River Region Educational Cooperative (GRREC), a consortium of 31 schools surrounding WKU where 75% of our graduates are employed each year, WKU meets with superintendents and other key school leadership each month to discuss ways to partner together in order to enhance the preparation of WKU candidates and to improve the school environment within WKU's service area. The most obvious examples of this

partnership are the field experiences schools provide for candidates and the joint evaluation by school and university faculty of candidate competencies and dispositions while in the school. Especially during the student teaching semester in our initial level teacher preparation program, school practitioners mentor candidates through the Teacher Work Sample (TWS) and lesson implementation process and also partner with WKU two to four days per semester to complete multiple scoring of all TWS in order to establish scoring reliability and provide “external” validation of program quality.

Further examples within the last year of the partnership between WKU’s College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Arts and Sciences colleges, and P-12 schools include:

- College of Education and Behavioral Sciences and Arts and Sciences faculty collaborated with school administrators and practitioners to develop a more defined mentoring process for new teachers in the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program. Fifty people have been involved in two workshops led by the New Teacher Center of the University of California at Santa Cruz.
- In Educational Administration and Leadership, focus groups and the Advisory Committee that included local school administrators worked with the faculty to co-design and co-identify appropriate field-based tasks, leading to specific identified activities, which are linked to specific classes.
- In key undergraduate and graduate literacy courses, WKU partners with the Bowling Green Housing Authority of Bowling Green, Adult Education Centers in the Warren County, and the select schools in Bowling Green and Warren County for candidates to provide literacy instruction to the area’s most diverse populations of students.
- WKU’s College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Ogden College of Science and Engineering, and GRREC partnered together and received funding to begin development of the Southern Kentucky Teach (SKyTeach) program, modeled after the University of Texas-Austin’s UTeach program, with the goal of increasing the number of math and sciences teachers graduating from WKU.
- WKU’s Ogden College of Science and Engineering has created on-line Master’s programs for math and biology teachers and are in the process of developing similar programs in Physics and Astronomy, Chemistry, and Earth Sciences.
- WKU and GRREC school districts partner together on several school improvement and teacher professional development projects including two Teaching American History grants, two Smaller Learning Communities grants, the GEARUP project, the WKU Leadership Pilot program, the Math Alliance, the Math and Science grant, the Transition to Teach program, and the Caveland Education Support Center.
- Faculty from several WKU colleges and local school leadership partnered together to develop WKU’s new Ed. D. in Leadership, recently approved by Kentucky’ Council for Post-Secondary Education for implementation fall 2008.
- WKU has conducted several town meetings and brain-storming sessions with P-12 schools partners as it begins the redesign of its Master of Arts in Education program. This redesign is in response to the EPSB and P-12 school calls for a greater focus on teacher leadership within Master’s programs.

C. Example Evidence of Program Positive Impact on Teacher Candidates' Learning

WKU has developed a standards-based electronic accountability system to collect data and report the learning progress on candidates in its education professional preparation programs. The standards that guide the system are the Kentucky Teacher Standards mandated by the state's Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB), as well as other institutional values outlined in WKU's Professional Education *Conceptual Framework*. Our commitment to assessing these standards and values is evidenced by our public display of our continuous assessment plan on the College of Education & Behavioral Sciences website (see [WKU Continuous Assessment Plan](#)). This plan outlines how all data points are interpreted through the lens of state standards and institutional values. Collected within the accountability system are data related to program admissions, standards-based course assessments, clinical experiences, culminating assessments, and exit and follow-up surveys. For the sake of brevity, however, we will focus on the standards-based course and culminating assessment portions of the system, using the Elementary Education program as our example.

The faculty members of the Elementary Education program have developed course assessments that are explicitly linked to skills related to each Kentucky Teacher Standard. Furthermore, faculty reviewed indicators provided by the state as meeting each teacher standard to develop descriptive rubrics to judge candidate proficiency. Thus, for each indicator related to a standard, the faculty created or borrowed state language to describe four levels of skill development: 4 - Exceeds Expectations, 3 - Meets Expectations, 2 - Partially Meets Expectation, and 1 - Does Not Meet Expectations. This descriptive language increases the likelihood of reliable faculty scoring. Scores across indicators are aggregated in order to assign candidates a holistic score related to the standard based on the same four levels of development. To date, the Elementary Education faculty has created 22 course assessments, not including an additional culminating assessment, the Teacher Work Sample, to measure the Kentucky Teacher Standards. It is important to note that these assessments are administered across *all* sections of an associated course, are *standards-based*, are *uploaded by candidates*, and are *electronically scored by faculty within our accountability system*.

So, for example, in the course ELED 355, faculty members have created an assessment to evaluate candidates' ability to meet Kentucky Teacher Standard II – Creating a Learning Climate while in an elementary school field placement. Candidates develop a lesson plan with adaptations and modifications appropriate for the children in the elementary classroom. This lesson plan is then judged by faculty using a rubric consisting of five indicators built on the state EPSB's description of Standard II proficiency. Based on aggregated scores the faculty upload the holistic score into the electronic accountability system.

Annual reports assess the learning progress of candidates and evaluate the Elementary Education program. For example, in spring 2007, 98% of the candidates who completed the ELED 355 critical performance scored "3" and 2% scored "4." Table 1 presents aggregated candidate Elementary Education candidate performance based on all assessments related to each standard for the 2006-07 academic year (proficiency equals scores of 3 or 4).

Table 1. Percent of Candidates Scoring Proficient on Assessments by Teacher Standard

Program	Kentucky Teacher Standards								
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
ELED	96%	99%	98%	97%	97%	100%	100%	92%	92%

Additionally, the Teacher Work Sample (TWS) serves as a key culminating “capstone” assessment that covers many of the Kentucky Teacher Standards. Other additional evaluation tools ensure that Elementary Education candidates are assessed across all standards during their student teaching semester. The table below delineates the seven components of the TWS and their alignment with the Kentucky Teacher Standards. Instructions for completing the TWS, including fully developed scoring rubrics, are provided early in the candidates’ program. Furthermore, many standards-based course assessments earlier in the program (such as the ELED 355 assessment) are built around the skills associated with portions of the TWS.

TWS Components	Kentucky Teacher Standards Addressed by TWS Indicators
1 - Contextual Factors	I (Designs/Plans Instruction)
2 - Learning Goals	I
3 - Assessment Plan	IV (Assesses/Communicates Learning Results)
4 - Design for Instruction	I, VIII (Content Knowledge), IX (Technology)
5 - Instructional Decision-Making	III (Implements/Manages Instruction)
6 - Analysis of Student Learning	IV
7 - Reflection/Self-Evaluation	V (Reflection), VII (Professional Development)

Because of faculty agreement regarding the alignment of TWS indicators with the Kentucky Teacher Standards, we are able to report candidates TWS results through the lens of the state standards. Table 2 presents the results of Elementary Education student teachers for the 2006-07 academic year.

Table 2. Students Scoring Proficient on each Kentucky NTS Measured by the TWS

Program	Kentucky Teacher Standards						
	I	III	IV	V	VII	VIII	IX
ELED	92%	82%	82%	79%	72%	98%	87%

Additional sources of evidence that the Elementary Education program uses to ascertain candidate learning include standard aligned student teaching evaluations (not reported here) and program exit surveys, as well as performance on the Praxis II Elementary Education Content and Principles of Learning and Teaching exams. In Table 3 are the percentages of Elementary Education student teachers who on our spring 2006 exit survey reported receiving strong preparation for each teacher standard (based on standard items averages of 3.00 or higher).

Table 3. Students Averaging 3.00 or Higher on Student-Teacher Survey Items

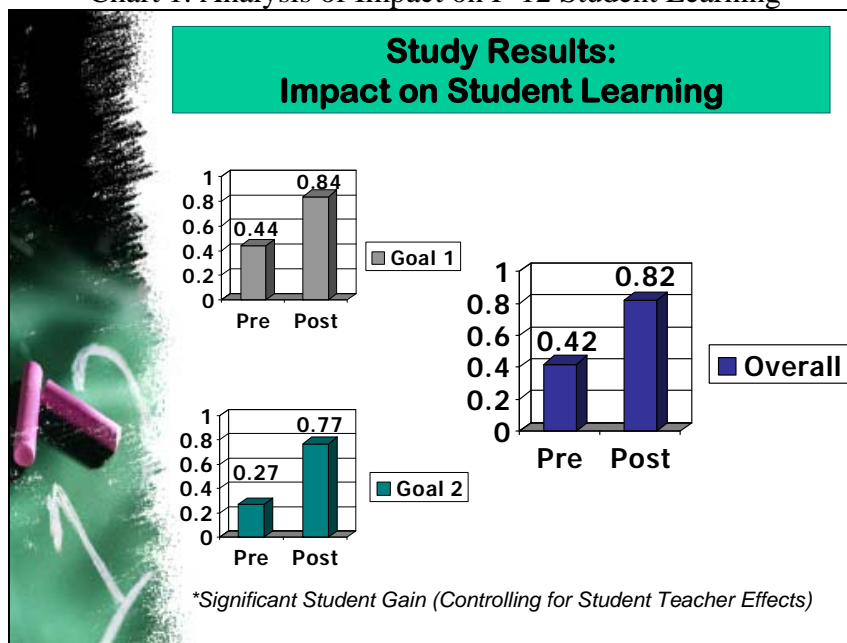
Program	Kentucky Teacher Standards								
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
ELED	99%	100%	100%	97%	100%	97%	97%	99%	96%

Finally, as part of the teacher certification process, Elementary Education students must “pass” the Praxis II Elementary Education Content and Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) tests. For our latest graduation cohort, 97% passed the Content test and 100% passed the PLT with an average score of 84% and 88% on each test. These external results confirm the learning of our candidates as a result of our program.

D. Example Evidence of Program’s Positive Impact on Graduates’ Ability to Improve P-12 Pupil Learning

Although Teacher Work Sample performance data provide overall evidence of our candidates’ ability to improve P-12 student learning, we have attempted several strategies to provide more concrete evidence. Chart 1 below represents our first attempts to glean and analyze pre- and post-assessment data from a sample of TWS. Note that these results not only indicate overall pre-post assessment gain, but also gains disaggregated by the learning goals (typically two) candidates established for their teaching unit. Candidates establish these goals based on the Kentucky Core Content for the grade and level they taught and report P-12 student progress based on the assessment items that align to each goal. Learning goal 1 is typically “lower level” (e.g., knowledge) and learning goal 2 is typically “higher level” (e.g., analysis, compare and contrast). Clearly, with an average student gain of 40-50% on each learning goal, overall our program candidates are making impact on P-12 student learning. Statistical analysis confirmed that these learning gains are significant.

Chart 1. Analysis of Impact on P-12 Student Learning



However, we were concerned that the above “overall” results might mask whether our candidates have the ability to impact the learning of *all* P-12 students. So, we selected another sample of TWS to analyze candidate impact on P-12 learning results by the percentage of P-12 students in each classroom making gains on each learning goals and/or reaching candidate established targets for each learning goal. Note that candidates were able to choose their own learning targets, with most indicating that any given P-12 student would be considered as having reached “proficiency” on the learning goal if the student scored an average of 80% or better on the items associated the a particular learning goal. The level of learning targets candidates set to indicate student proficiency, however, ranged from 75% to 90%.

Table 4 shows the results of these analyses. Although our candidates are making positive impact on about 80% of the students they teach, they still have much to learn before they are able

to positively impact the learning of all children. We plan to conduct further research to gain a clearer picture of the types of students our candidates may be struggling to reach. Such research will then guide program improvements so that we can actualize a key belief of our Conceptual Framework that “all children can learn at high levels.”

Table 4. Percent of P-12 Students Achieving or Making Progress toward Learning Goals

Learning Impact Measures	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Average Percent Achieving Learning Goals</i>	72.6	17.5
Percent Achieving LG 1	75.3	22.0
Percent Achieving LG 2	69.6	21.7
<i>Average Percent Showing Improvement</i>	82.0	18.0
Percent Showing Improvement on LG 1	80.9	23.9
Percent Showing Improvement on LG 2	82.7	19.6

Although Chart 1 and Table 4 represent our best direct information about the ability of our candidates to impact P-12 student learning, data from our internal Teacher Survey and the Kentucky EPSB Annual Survey provide additional evidence that our education programs positively impact on graduates’ ability to improve student learning. Kentucky Teacher Standard 4 – Assesses and Communicates Learning Results speaks to the teacher’s ability to impact student learning. Indicators developed by the EPSB related to the standard are as follows:

- Uses assessments that are aligned with learning outcomes
- Uses a variety of assessments to measure student learning
- Analyzes assessment data to guide instruction and learning and to measure learning progress
- Communicates learning results to students and parents
- Adapts assessment to accommodate diverse learning needs and situations

Candidates exiting our program and 1st through 3rd year teachers completed surveys asking whether we had provided Poor – 1, Fair – 2, Good – 3, or Excellent – 4 preparation to meet these Standard 4 indicators. Table 5 presents the results of last year’s survey. Survey item responses for each indicator were averaged to create an overall average for Standard 4. With overall averages across programs ranging from 3.08 to 3.54, clearly our graduates tend to view their preparation to analyze and document P-12 student learning impact as strong.

Table 5. Kentucky Teacher Standard 4 Overall Average by Education Preparation Program

Teaching Experience	IECE	ELED	MGE	SECED	5-12	P-12	SPED	Grand Total
Student Teacher	3.23	3.67	2.96	3.20	3.09	3.19		3.34
First Year Teacher		3.50	3.53	3.13	2.10	3.50	4.00	3.40
Second Year Teacher	3.40	3.23	3.70	2.10	3.65		2.95	3.21
Third Year Teacher	2.90	3.08	3.40	3.15	4.00	2.48	3.24	3.07
Grand Total	3.20	3.54	3.11	3.14	3.16	3.08	3.34	3.31

Furthermore, the Kentucky EPSB surveys first year teachers (interns), as well as their assigned resource teachers, regarding their preparation to be successful in schools. Tables 6 and 7 report four years of survey results for WKU graduates and their resource teachers on questions related to how well teachers were prepared to assess the learning of their students, again on a scale of Poor – 1, Fair – 2, Good – 3, or Excellent – 4. Note that over the last four survey years and over both survey groups (interns and resource teachers), the averages on each survey item have increased to an overall rating slightly better than “Good” preparation.

Table 6. New Teacher Survey Results

Intern N	85	97	281	177	640
Survey Year	200203	200304	200405	200506	Grand Total
Aligned Assessment	3.14	3.04	3.23	3.29	3.21
Reliable Assessment	3.05	3.01	3.15	3.23	3.14
Formative Assessment	2.95	2.96	3.15	3.18	3.10
Connecting to Real Life	3.11	3.11	3.23	3.34	3.23
Interpreting Results	2.99	2.93	3.06	3.17	3.06
Presenting Learning	2.75	2.78	2.98	3.11	2.96

Table 7. Resource Teacher Survey Results (Their Assessment of New Teachers)

Resource Teacher N	131	133	294	260	818
Survey Year	200203	200304	200405	200506	Grand Total
Aligned Assessment	3.20	3.13	3.27	3.30	3.24
Reliable Assessment	3.12	3.07	3.17	3.25	3.17
Formative Assessment	3.12	3.10	3.13	3.22	3.15
Connecting to Real Life	3.31	3.27	3.33	3.35	3.32
Interpreting Results	3.01	3.10	3.05	3.10	3.07
Presenting Learning	3.04	3.06	3.05	3.12	3.07

As our various data indicate, WKU candidates and graduates are having a positive impact on the learning of the students in their care and they attribute their success to our strong preparation programs. The final piece of evidence that would “seal the case” regarding the high quality of our programs would be data that tie our graduates to the actual achievement of their students. We are working closely with local school districts to develop a strategy to gather data relative to this impact.