

Results & Conclusions

Results and conclusions are presented below with the research questions:

1. How do we prepare and sustain quality professionals?
 - a. Since the EXED MAE began in June 2002, 405 students have been admitted and 155 have already graduated and are fully certified teachers. Four students dropped the program for various reasons. Of the 250 continuing, 75 are scheduled for graduation summer 2005, with the remaining anticipating graduation in 2006. All students have passed the comprehensive exam and completed the Teacher Work Sample. The initial PRAXIS pass rate for the program is 94%. The remaining 6% pass when they retake the exam.
 - b. Multiple forms of performance-based, authentic assessment provide a more accurate picture of student achievement as well as significantly increase the quality of graduates in K-12 settings. Shared assessment strategies include professional development in schools, authentic assessments, action research projects, problem based learning, simulations, case studies, web enhances instruction, electronic, standards-based professional portfolios, etc.
 - c. Faculty and school practitioners have engaged with the Renaissance Project to employ the teacher work sample to showcase the effect teacher candidates have on K-12 student achievement.
 - d. The changing faculty and student roles in these models are discussed and documented. The instructor's role is one of intense preparation prior to commencement of a course and switches to more of a role of support and guidance once the class begins. The student is an active learner responsible for his or her own learning.
 - e. Objectives, content, and assessment are aligned vertically with course objectives, content and assessment and horizontally with state, national, learned societies, and accreditation standards.
 - f. The authors model effective technology integration techniques by developing slideshows with course content, teaching/demonstration videos, and creating course "text" CDs.

2. How do we measure and document effectiveness of programs?
 - a. Critical benchmark measurements are presented in Table 1 documenting the performance and effectiveness of students in the program. Data is gathered at admission, during courses, during field experience, exit data, and follow-up.
 - b. Programs meet NCATE, SACS, CEC, ISTE and KETS standards.
 - c. Program delivery options in the EXED program include online, off campus, cohorts, and distance education.
 - d. Field experiences are necessary to provide the authentic context for the acquisition and demonstration of performance standards. Performance measurement includes instructor observation, videos of teaching, supervisor assessment, and student self-evaluation and reflection.
 - e. Graduate surveys of new graduates and graduates after their first and third year of employment in the field are aligned with state teaching standards and dispositions.

- This provides valuable data about preparation for job success and suggestions for improvement.
- f. Program decisions are focused on increasing student achievement, not high stakes testing results.
3. How do we effectively prepare students in the use of data in decision making?
 - a. Projects and assessments demonstrating the effective use of student data are shared for the program. Examples include action research projects, teacher work samples, case studies, and professional portfolios.
 - b. Field experiences provide students the opportunity to make decisions about interviews, on-site visits, collaboration, and field projects. More importantly, students make everyday decisions in authentic teaching situations with real children.
 4. How do we effectively prepare students in the use of technology in data management?
 - a. Online instruction is a valuable part of the program. Students must use technology to manage data in each course.
 - b. Students must decide how to integrate technology in instruction. When technology integration is a focus in a course, the use of the technology and its integration are in the scoring rubric for the project.
 - c. Students learn to use technology to manage data through spreadsheets, databases, and statistical applications.

The WKU Exceptional Education program is based on a common conceptual framework while the contextual experience of each student is slightly different. Emphasis on quality is a constant. Faculty have truly shifted from a teaching-centered to a learning-centered model as described by Angelo (1999). A learning community culture among faculty and students is developing as a result of this collaborative model. A shared trust is evidenced through the mutual respect and collective efforts in program revisions. Faculty have developed shared visions, goals, and language through a revised conceptual framework. The authors have developed shared guidelines for promoting performance-based, authentic assessment to strengthen student learning and program improvement.

Professional education is a continuing process beginning with, not ending with, initial preparation. Strong content expertise is required of all teachers. You cannot teach what you do not know. Attainment of program objectives requires a specific learning sequence—the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills, and controlled functional use of skills.

Implications for Practice and Recommendations for Further Research

This research goes to the very heart of professional education preparation in higher education today. Colleges and universities face increasing demands and many of the systems and structures currently in place will not meet future needs. This research focuses on enhancing present preparation options, developing additional options, collaborating with multiple partners,

and coordinating all these in alignment with state and national standards, while focusing on the student's ability to affect K-12 learning.

The authors plan to continue a longitudinal study of graduate performance, revise graduate surveys to reflect how practice relates to state and national standards in their jobs, how well their graduate program prepared them for their jobs, and suggestions for improvement in the programs. The authors plan to gather this data from graduates immediately after graduation, one year later, three years later, and five years later. Such hard data will be invaluable in fine tuning and reporting effectiveness of the program.

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