



NJCU

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Completer Focus Group Feedback: Initial License Programs Summer 2022

Completer Focus Groups July 12, 2022 and July 20, 2022

- Included 9 alumni who completed in 2019-2021 in traditional and alternate route initial-license programs
- School districts represented included Bayonne, Lakewood, Mountainside, North Bergen, Secaucus, Union City, West New York
- Subject area/grades taught:
 - Elementary Education
 - English/Language Arts
 - Math
 - Music Education
 - Social Studies
 - Special Education

Standards #1 & 2: Learner Development and Difference

- Being in Jersey City schools and being at NJCU, we were immersed in diversity.
- What to do for differentiated learners was taught very well. How to be discreet about modifications and how differentiation is received by other students in the class was not covered.
- I knew about mild learning needs, but I was not prepared for how to meet the needs of majorly impacted kids.
- Could have used more preparation with 504s and IEPs. Could use mock IEPs to show what a classroom looks like, how to teach students at different levels.

Standard #3 Learning Environments

- In Dr. Martin's class, he modeled this [learning environments] for us, not just telling us what to do when we become teachers. He would model and then we would discuss. We also wrote reflections.
- In Dr. Murduca's class, we focused on small groups and how to do it. For every high performing student, we should put two mediums and one low.
- We were taught that there is value in having kids sit together, not just for completing tasks, but for establishing a community.
- Each of our classes covered multiple ways of engagement (mirrored classroom style, etc.).
- NJCU taught us how to have rapport with the kids and know we're on the same side.

Standards #4 and 5: Knowledge and Application of Content

- I was very well prepared. I am on the same level as veteran teachers with knowing content.
- I took all the history coursework first, and education second, and I didn't always see how the content overlapped with the education. I felt very prepared by the History Department, but I would have liked to see how these things connected more. How do you take college-level content and teach it at an eighth-grade level?
- I felt like what I learned in English melds together with education. Many English and social studies professors have an education background, but this wasn't the case for math professors.
- I failed the Praxis twice, so would have been good to know what was going to be on it. I didn't meet my history advisor until sophomore year, and I would have appreciated knowing to take more US history courses.

Standard #6: Assessment

- The strategies we were given worked very well. What could have been explained better is how often should that occur.
- I really don't remember learning how to check for understanding. For me, you learn it by doing it in the classroom. The theory might have been mentioned, but the actual doing part was not done as I remember.
- Formal assessments I understood, but I was too rigid in summative assessments. For beginning teachers, they can do things like taking a temperature check or homework assessment.
- Dr. Winberg introduced formative and summative assessment on my first day. Grades aren't everything. I know how to use different types of assessment including technology.
- Assessment was addressed in multiple NPTNJ classes—how to develop assessment, how to tie to standards, how to ask questions, how to vary/modify assessment.

Standards #7 and 8: Planning and Instruction

- I think what we were not prepared for is just how far behind some students are going to be. We were taught to differentiate, but the actual ability range was unexpected.
- Showing a realistic lesson plan would have been helpful. During student teaching, I created lots of lesson plans but got no feedback on them.
- Lesson plans were such a waste of time. I wish I could have had a real lesson plan. We could have delivered more mock lessons to get more comfortable being in front of people, which would have helped to build up our confidence.
- I hated the lesson plans. We should have more real-life teachers as our professors. Practicing teachers can tell us what we'll really be doing and how to really engage our students.
- I had a great experience with my coop teacher, but not everyone did. I was able to get lots of experience right away in front of the class.

Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

- In my courses, everybody seemed to be talking about 504s and IEPs and how you do not talk about that in a public space. I think other ethical choices, though, were not covered at NJCU. For example, I realized on my own that from here onward, I am a public employee, and my choices effect my reputation.
- Something important that I did not know about was how much are you allowed to have a child trust you? My doors are always open, but there are child abuse laws about what you must report and when you do, then you lose the trust of the child. It's really important to know that.
- All my teachers talked about communication with family, social media. Had seminars in TIP about getting involved in the community, was also involved as a student teacher.
- There is a lack of skill in younger teachers with communication. You need to be able to write a basic letter to a teacher or a business letter. There is a need to improve writing skills.

Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration

- I feel very involved in my school. It's important for our students to see us outside of the classroom and know us outside of our roles as teachers.
- I was a lead in the TIP program, which fostered my leadership skills. I learned to work with different types of people and take on other leadership roles.
- I was not prepared to understand that some teachers are not interested in collaborating. Some teachers may disagree with how you teach, and that can carry over to how you are regarded by others in the department.
- Political polarization can be a challenge. Some teachers have different views socially and politically and it can be uncomfortable.
- There could be more information about collaborating with colleagues—how to get along, how to deal with your principal, how to build the school community. You need to work well with others. You can offer to join a committee, cover a classroom, or get involved in the community.