



NJCU

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Advanced Programs Focus Group Feedback 2023

Advanced Program Completers and Alumni Focus Groups

- Focus groups were conducted in July 2023.
- The discussion was based on the CAEP RA1.1 candidate proficiencies.
- 9 superintendents, principals, and supervisors who employ NJCU completers and 10 advanced program alumni participated.
- Districts participating included: Bayonne, Jersey City, Montgomery Township, Passaic, Union City

Advanced Programs included:

- Educational Leadership
- ESL/Bilingual
- Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant
- Reading Specialist
- School Library Media Specialist
- School Psychology
- Teacher of Students with Disabilities

ESL/Bilingual Completer Feedback:

- Our coursework grounded us in the foundational concepts.
- Linguistics classes gave me important information about the development aspects of language learning.
- Sometimes it is difficult to put theory into practice, so more real-life applications could be helpful.
- After graduating, I still consult research to inform my practice.

ESL/Bilingual Employer Feedback:

- Novices need to understand that there is a specialized ‘tool kit’ to bridge the gap between ESL and mainstream.
- Novices are well prepared to reflect on equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Novices are data literate, but then they are hesitant to respond to the result. Responding to the summative assessment is just as important as the assessment result itself.
- Novices have a good attitude, work well with other colleagues, and communicate well with students and parents.
- Novices are very active in being a part of the general community at large.

SLMS Completer Feedback:

- Classes were engaging and interesting.
- Integrating software across the curriculum and writing curriculum design was very helpful.
- The program encouraged self-reflection regarding personal biases and equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Having diverse teachers in the program gave you a different perspective, and this gives you a broad understanding of how to look for evidence that shows diversity.
- I learned to use research to inform decisions in my job as a SLMS. I can support my students in consulting research and making data-based decisions.
- I learned how to be collaborative through classroom group work.

SLMS Employer Feedback:

- More recent candidates are more open to DEI, and they are more open to growth.
- New teachers are very effective and knowledgeable, and they serve as resources for cultural inclusiveness.
- Novices are data literate in a general sense, but not in using the data for future instruction.

School Psychology Completer Feedback:

- I felt well-prepared in comparison to completers from other schools.
- The program provided theory and how to apply it through case studies.
- Discussions in multicultural counseling helped to challenge biases, and the textbook was great. I learned a lot in that class.
- I consult research in my current job for new ideas about tools I can use with my clients.
- I feel very comfortable interpreting assessments and can delve deeper into the data.
- NJCU prepared me well regarding collaboration. Many of the instructors emphasized the importance of how you collaborate with your colleagues.
- I felt extremely prepared to navigate the code which can be vague at the time.

School Psychology Employer Feedback:

- Novices know foundational knowledge and assessment but could use help with IEP writing.
- Analyzing how data relates to goals, needs, objectives, programming, and modifications is an important skill.
- Novices may be comfortable with a particular assessment like the WISC, but not with how to learn other assessments. They need to learn new assessments to stay relevant.
- It can be scary for novices to interact with families for the first time.
- More psychologists are expected to do educational as well as psychological interventions.
- It's important to know how to be flexible and adaptable.
- Programs should encourage candidates to stay current in their field and get ongoing professional development.
- More important than knowing laws and policies is knowing where to go for the information.

TOSD Completer Feedback:

- Professors are helpful, responsive, caring, knowledgeable about content, and aware of current trends in the field.
- The assignments, while challenging, were designed to help us learn past and current theories and trends in the field, think critically about these various approaches, and apply them to our practice.
- The instructor applied UDL to her courses, which made it easy for everyone to learn.
- The program's biggest asset is the professors' enthusiasm for the field of special education. I never doubted that most of my professors cared about their field and their students.

TOSD Employer Feedback:

- Practicums need to teach how to include paraprofessionals and how to build partnerships with them because you cannot run a room on your own.
- Special ed teachers need to know how to apply data and what the data is going to mean for each student.
- Instructional technology when utilized appropriately can impact students' ability to expand their learning for today and tomorrow.
- Research findings are important, and new teachers need to understand the value of research.
- As a professional, you need to learn how to navigate around situations when people have different views than you or may even be more experienced than you.

Educational Leadership Employer Feedback:

- Programs should promote being an instructional leader, running a Teaching and Learning Community, and understanding that learning is a continuous process.
- Good mentors are important.
- DEI and personal biases are more often experiential knowledge developed over time.
- District leaders must learn continuously about their community and what makes it unique.
- Professionals are more aware of data than in the past, but the use of data and technology could be improved.
- A leader needs to understand why they want to be an educational leader—doing the ongoing work/PD, independently as well as professionally.

LDTTC Employer Feedback:

- It is sometimes hard to find qualified LDTTC candidates.
- It is important to understand bias in assessments, and some are more biased than others.
- Professionals need to understand the development of skills in reading, writing, and math and stay up-to-date with the latest literature on how to teach these skills.
- Novices need to figure out who can help and answer questions, especially in the first year. You won't necessarily have a mentor, so need to find your own.

Reading Specialist Employer Feedback:

- Novices have strong knowledge of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). They can lead data conversations with teachers and help parents understand what the data mean.
- Novices have knowledge of research-based intervention programs and how to use the data to guide decisions.
- We should encourage students to join ILA or another leading professional association so that they can get comfortable finding places where good research is published.
- Many educators are not well-versed in laws and policies. Giving case studies, especially about confidentiality, would be helpful.