

**A Study of the Perceptions of
UCM College of Education
Student Teachers and Recent Graduates**

**by
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Introduction

The Dean of the College of Education, Dr. Ann McCoy, approached the researchers with a request to gather data from University of Central Missouri (UCM) College of Education student teachers and recent graduates. After a discussion with Dean McCoy, the researchers embarked upon a Utilization Focused Evaluation. Patton (2008) stated:

Program evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and results of program to make judgments about the program, improve or further develop program effectiveness, inform decisions about future programming, and/or increase understanding. Utilization-focused program evaluation is evaluation done for and with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses. (p. 39)

Methodology

Dean McCoy provided the researchers with general questions she believed would be useful in her pursuit of program improvement. The researchers refined the questions, presented them back to Dean McCoy, and ultimately used these research questions to guide the study:

1. What can the UCM College of Education do to better prepare preservice teachers for student teaching?
2. What can the UCM College of Education do to better prepare preservice teachers for teaching?

It was agreed that virtual focus groups would be an appropriate means for gathering data, as the participants would be completing their student teaching or first year of teaching. The researchers gained Institutional Review Board approval from the UCM IRB. Dean McCoy provided the researchers a list of 76 COE graduates from 2020/2021 and 161 UCM student teachers from Spring 2022.

Three mass emails were sent over the course of two weeks inviting 237 graduates and student teachers to participate in the study, along with a link to a Google Form to sign up for a focus group time. Four focus group times were offered in the first email to recent graduates. Six focus group times were offered in the first email to student teachers. Additional focus group times were added in subsequent emails, for a total of seven opportunities for recent graduates and nine opportunities for student teachers.

Six 2020/2021 graduates signed up to participate in a focus group. Two attended the focus group for which they signed up. Follow-up emails were sent after missed meetings to those who did not attend, and those four individuals did not sign up for another time.

Seven current student teachers signed up to attend a focus group. Five individuals attended the focus group for which they signed up. Follow-up emails were sent to those who signed up but did not attend. No further participation was gained.

A total of seven recent graduates or student teachers were interviewed. While there were not enough participants to call the sessions “focus groups,” five of the interviews were conducted with one participant and the two researchers, while one focus group was conducted with two student teachers and the two researchers. The following chart contains information about the study participants.

	Recent Graduates (2)	Student Teachers (5)
Early Childhood/Elementary	0	2
Middle School/High School	2	3
Male	2	1
Female	0	4
Transfer student	1	2
non-transfer	1	3

The shortest interview lasted 35 minutes, while the longest lasted two hours. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by a transcription service. Findings will be presented. Finally, themes noted by the researchers will also be presented.

Findings

Meaningful quotations will be presented as answers to specific interview questions. Participants were assured their names would be kept confidential, so answers to the interview questions are presented as a compilation of answers from either Early Childhood/Elementary majors or Middle School/High School Majors. Findings are not sorted out by student teachers or recent graduates, as there were no significant

differences between their findings. It should also be noted that names of professors have been removed from quotations.

Positive Experiences in the Undergraduate Program

- Elementary/Early Childhood Education Majors

I had a really good experience with my professors. I really liked them and I thought that they were there for me. They answered any questions that I had pertaining either to their content that they were teaching, or I had a lot of professors who answered questions that were not in their scope, but more about just the education in general and that I needed to take. They were there and they were more than willing to help me in all the activities in a timely manner.

(Reflecting on instruction during COVID) I was really impressed with the amount of effort and time all of my professors put into giving us those experiences, even if they were just virtual. And I actually think the virtual experiences were really great because it gave us a different look into the education field rather than the traditional 1:1 classroom experience.

(Regarding interview advice during senior block classes) I think that really gave us a really good leg up on competition when it went to the interview process. So I think that aspect, we got a really great experience and a unique experience that prepared us for the career field rather than like if I would have gone to school three years ago when COVID was nonexistent five years ago.

(Regarding transferring from another institution) My academic advisor, she made my experience amazing. I was not stressed at all. She kind of held my hand through the process of just kind of what I needed when I first transitioned.

So having those classes where not only did we learn about math content, but learn about math strategies helps me look at it from an educator perspective and helped me become a better student of math as well.

- Middle School/High School Majors

Just joking around with my classmates and professors, just having conversations whether, you know, it'd be like something that happened and we all turned it into a joke or something or we're just chatting. It's summed up as building relationships with your classmates and professors...Probably my professors and my two friends were probably the only thing that kept me from transferring to another college because I just knew that I wouldn't find professors like them elsewhere.... And my main reason was I've got professors. I know what they're doing, what they're teaching, and they support me.

(Speaking of a previous professor) Like I had her sophomore year and I emailed

her this year for advice and she's like, "stop by my office, we'll chat." And it's been a while since I saw her in person, but, you know, just swinging by and be like, "Hey, I need your advice on this."

(Reflecting on why they stayed in the department). It really evolved into the passion thing and a really big reason is because of the department. They've really been super supportive. Very good environment to learn and it's just been a really positive experience from the start in the Education Department.

I think the thing that helped me mentally prepare for student teaching was just having a community of other student teachers where we could share the things we were nervous about, share ideas together. I just felt great that I was able to have that community of other people. And that, I think, ultimately helped me at least accept the nervousness because everyone else was nervous, too.

It was all I could learn. There were many, many things I learned in the classroom that were extremely helpful, and my experience would not have been the same without that instruction. But honestly, just seeing students in a regular classroom environment was the best thing.

Honestly, it was the education of the exceptional child classes because, yes, there's a lot to IEPs and 504s, but you learn about the different kinds of disabilities.

The classes of special education that we had to take, like the education of the exceptional child and English language learners. I thought those two were two of the teacher classes and the Education Department I had to take. I thought those two were by far the most useful, and there honestly should be more.

She was like a public school teacher and taught a couple classes. And because she was consistently in a classroom that wasn't a college classroom, it felt like she could talk to us and give us a little bit more real world example type of stuff.

Dr. X was phenomenal. Just exceptional. Just willing to, like, work and explain things and just kind of. Especially because I transferred in my sophomore year, right at the start of college.

All three classes (in Lovinger) were a great experience and almost all of my education classes from that point have been very supportive and educational for me and helped me grow with my passion for education and becoming better.

They make sure that we specialize in middle school. We know what they're learning in elementary so that if we have students that are struggling, we're able to figure out where their weak spots are. And at first, when we're taking these classes, we're like, this is elementary. But then when we realize later on it's like, oh, this makes a lot more sense, and we come to appreciate it more. And it's one

of the things that, okay, you didn't appreciate the teachers before you, the teachers that had them before you, because they're like, you're paving the way. You're preparing my students and I'm preparing the next group of students.

But at one point during her class I was going through and she was extremely supportive of me both in and outside the classroom. So I've just had so much support throughout my entire time in the education program.

Challenges in the Undergraduate Program.

- Elementary majors

Sometimes I feel like communication is an issue...That's the issue with getting back to me in a timely and respectful manner. Sometimes I felt like it was an inconvenience to get an email and I know it's hard, like when they're working by Friday and also getting emails on the weekends as well.

(Reflecting on higher expectations at MIC than on campus) I think also my issue with the program when it comes to the academic side and not so much the student teaching side was the grading scale kind of seemed like it kind of seemed different and almost unfair from the Warrensburg campus to the MIC campus. And I felt like a lot of times that the experience I was having was completely different from hers, even though we were in the same exact degree.... But the coursework was at a point where I was really questioning if this was the right path for me at this point. And I'd spent all this time and I've dedicated and I love this degree, I love what I do. And I just felt like I was really depressed all last semester because of my course load.

(Reflecting on senior block at MIC) That course load was almost unbearable. And I felt like whenever I would, because I did express it in class and it was really hard for me because I've never done anything like that before. And I felt like every time I would say something like, I feel like this is a lot for me. I feel like I'm breaking down. I feel like I can't do this anymore. I got met with, well, that's just how it is in your senior block and you really need to learn how to deal with it.

I'm very unhappy with our advising department. I have also had three advisors because my first one left to go to take another job, the second one left to go to, I guess, pursue another job as well. And so it seems like the advising department has trouble holding on to advisors. And so that scares me because if we get somebody in there that does not know, like, is it accurate that they have under their care and guidance? And they could really mess up over a lot of people.

I feel like a lot of it was very repetitive or unnecessary. I remember doing assignments that were like, get to know me assignments at the end of September...Most of the time it was really fulfilling, just incredibly unnecessary amounts of it.

(Regarding relationships with peers at MIC) I come in here, I sit with them and I stare at them across the room and then we leave. On the other hand, I would hear from (my friend on campus) who was like, "oh, we're going to lunch with these people. Oh, we're having these activities with people" you know, because they offer a lot down there, because it's a campus process where it's like one big square building and we don't do anything here. So I don't know. I mean, just offering more opportunities to get to know the people in your school because, you know, the people in your education field. So I feel like I didn't really get to know those girls.

I think it's a matter of when you have two different people teach the same course, there becomes an issue of like a disconnect between the two campuses and they're not seamless.

- Middle School/High School Majors

I was like breaking down over that project because I couldn't get help from anywhere and I didn't know what he wanted and he would not talk to me about it. It was a disaster and it felt like this really important thing and I'm starting to question myself like, so am I the only one that's not getting this? But you can't really connect with other students because everybody was at home learning virtual.

I am really unhappy with our advising department at UCM. Whenever I first got here, because I've been prior to fully transferring, I was down to UCM like three or four or five times and they're always like, "Yeah, no, you're doing great. Things are going well. Just go ahead and transfer down whenever you're ready, things will go super great." And then I got here and I went through three different advisors.

There was a huge turnover of academic advisers for my area specifically. I'm not really sure why. I've had a different advisor for almost every single year of my degree.

Whenever it came to my content specifically, I was incredibly unprepared, especially taking the MEGA tests like I'm working through. I bought the test and I'm working through practicing. But I have taken so many tests in my life and all the tests I've ever taken, I haven't failed a single one or not passed. And that was the only one in my entire life I haven't passed. There's just no way, because the program that they're taking right now doesn't correlate to what's on the test. And a lot of the material that was on the test, I will say two thirds of it, I had no experience with....A lot of the classes that I took, while helpful, they're not geared toward teacher candidates. They're geared toward techies coming in and developing their skill set knowledge. And it's like they're geared toward automotive majors or business majors or construction majors, not teacher education majors.

The English department's got a lot of overlap. I took like four different classes that were basically all sort of in the Renaissance era, largely because that's what the professors had specialized in. And so, I mean, some of that was a little redundant.

But none of the other professors had ever taught in any of my content areas, stuff like they could care less if you were being a teacher or not. But even just asking about what does a year's worth of content look like for a ninth grade classroom? How do you organize them? Are you doing it thematically or are you doing it by skills? You know, like, how do you build it? Is it genre based? Like, what does it look like? And no one, the whole time that I was in college between two different colleges that I ever see, this is what a year's worth of curriculum looks like.

Things that Best Prepared Undergraduates for Student Teaching

- Elementary/Early Childhood Majors

UCM requiring (mock interviews) it was a great advantage to me, especially when I was going up against seasoned teachers. I felt like I was able to answer questions in a way that made sense and was also able to compete with veteran teachers that were going in the same position.

Math instruction. I really, really struggle with math as a student and as an educator. So having those classes where not only did we learn about math content, but learn about math strategies helps me look at it from an educator perspective and help me become a better student of math as well.

- Middle School/High School Majors

We were taught different lesson plan styles and those could be helpful like depending upon what's needed in making sure kids have what they need if they're gone for a while for medical leave that was able to be done to one and how to work with technology.

They make sure that we know our stuff that builds up to middle school and I've been able to use it and tutoring I some of the stuff that like why I tutor students in college I tutor elementary students and because of the classes we take, you'll see that these kids are struggling with certain things and you'll be able to connect what foundation we have not been built well, because math builds off of it, it just keeps building. If one thinks about something wrong, it's just going to keep affecting it. It's a chain reaction. So they make sure that we specialize in middle school. We know what they're learning in elementary so that if we have students that are struggling, we're able to figure out where their weak spots are.

There were many, many things I learned in the classroom that were extremely helpful, and my experience would not have been the same without that instruction. But honestly, just seeing students in a regular classroom environment was the best thing.

Doing mini lesson/lesson planning.

I was supposed to have an in-person 30-hour observation where I was supposed to teach. I can't remember how many mini lessons I was supposed to teach during this observation. I did not get to do that because of COVID. I don't think that necessarily would have made my student teaching better, but I think it would have eased the transition better.

See, honestly, it was the education of exceptional child classes because yes, there's still a lot that it's like because there's so much to like IEPs and 504s, but you learn a lot about the different kinds of disabilities.

I think I was pretty well prepared. I learned a lot of the logistical and relationship side of things.

Student Teaching Successes

- Elementary/Early Childhood Majors

I don't think that I would have gotten this same experience from anywhere else. I had an amazing cooperating teacher and an amazing program that prepared me. I felt for all my interviews, for every book that I had to write, for communicating with people in the building. I think UCM does just an amazing job preparing us for the day to day career.

I'm sorry. I hate to be, like, braggy, but I think I had the best experience of anybody in the campus!.....The school that I was in, they are amazing with working with student teachers. I mean, they're super supportive. I've gotten pretty much my entire classroom furnished from them.

I mean, after the first week of school, I was already teaching full time in there. They are really good about doing that co-teaching model that first week and making it feel natural to get in that quick and then really keeping you involved as much as possible. I was able to attend PLC meetings. I was able to attend outside of school organizations, clubs, and activities. I was involved in a lot of things. I was involved in IEP meetings, progress monitor meetings where I got to suggest ideas and my ideas are heard and implemented. And that was really reassuring for me.

A big one for me was the relationships I was able to build with my students.

- Middle School/High School Majors

I had a journal and I wrote. I had a little like one page or a few pages that I sectioned it off and kept all my happy notes in case because there were a few days that were really frustrating. A couple of highlights were there.

I know for me it was really intimidating to have hard conversations with students if it was necessary. So I think that probably the biggest success was overall growing in confidence in my abilities and practicing what I was taught in a practical setting.

For me, I count light bulb moments, successes. One where I can tell my students walk in and they're having a really rough day, but they leave just a little bit less

tense. Like when you get to know your students, you get to know what's going to be like a success for them.

Student Teaching Challenges

- Elementary/Early Childhood Majors

I just feel so bad because I don't, I really don't like talking about other people. It's really uncomfortable for me, but I feel like it came down to a supervisor versus supervisor type experience that made or broke us. My first comment from my supervisor was, "I'm really nervous about you being able to get a job because you've only taught -----," which was understandable. I understood what she was coming from, but that was really stressful for me. But that type of outlook right away was really stressful because that stress carried out through my entire student teaching semester where my supervisor really was asking me specific questions about that constantly like, "How's it going? I'm really worried for you." The reason why I bring up my experience is because I have one person. That one person could be very influential and really greatly impact the education program.

But then there would be times I would look up while I was teaching and she (the host teacher) would be gone. She'd be out of there. I wouldn't know where she was. And she could be gone forever for close to 45 minutes or more. Sometimes, like other teachers in the building noticed that she was gone. And she would tell me, she was like, "Oh, it's to prepare you for having your own classroom." It's like, I'm sorry, but I don't think you being gone for 45 plus minutes to the back door where your students are saying, "hey, where is she?" I really don't think it helped me. I think if anything, it made me more nervous because if at any moment I could look up and she wouldn't be there if I didn't know how to handle the situation.

Dealing with behaviors was an issue. But I feel like if I was prepared, I should be able to handle that without her (host teacher) being like, "guys, you need to listen to this person." Maybe having more strategies. I feel like I only got one class that really talked about behavior management. And that one class does just hone in on behavior management, talks about everything else, like the interview process and stuff like that. It's all like a whole bunch of random stuff all crammed into one course.

I genuinely feel that I needed a refresher course in special education. I had that in my fall semester sophomore block, and I only had it. And then it was almost like, okay, this topic has an absolutely amazing teacher. I love her. I think she treated us very, very well. But just because it was so long ago and I've had so many other content courses on top of that that I do not think was special education for sophomore year is enough. And I'm also coming from my experience in the classroom this past semester, this past year, we need so much more exposure to special education. And at least in my case, I would really, really appreciate it and really love more behavior management techniques and learning more about behavior management. Because while classroom management in itself, I think that class was extremely helpful. I was actually in a classroom that had a severe behavior management student. I have been screamed at, pushed, called names, and basically the teacher I dealt with was at first she was like, okay, you called me an idiot. I wish I'd had some other classes on what techniques I can use to help de-escalate a behavior student, especially one that could potentially have a history of screaming, throwing things.

I mean, a lot of the stuff they taught us in the behavioral management class was prevention, not, hey, here's the behavior. What? You have that hard conversation. Okay. Well, what do you do now? So that was kind of weird. I had support systems where I could kind of, like, stumble through it, but that was one of the things that I really wish I would have had a better experience with throughout college.

They've got some audacity to them. And they are just like here. And I'm like, who gave you the audacity to say or like, what's going through your head when you say stuff? So a behavior management on top of classroom management would be extremely helpful. And even if it's like a couple week refresher course on special education, it would be really helpful. Now, I know we had a professional development course on special education, but personally I did not feel it hit what I needed it to hit. Talked to more about the history of special education and going over the acronyms and everything like that. And while that was helpful, that is not what I needed. During my student teaching I needed more tips and tricks on how to help my students who are in my classroom, who have special needs or who are receiving services. That is what I personally needed.

I think also my issue with the program when it comes to the academic side and not so much the student teaching side was the grading scale kind of seemed like different and almost unfair from the Warrensburg campus to the MIC campus. And I felt like a lot of times that the experience I was having was completely

different from hers (friend at Warrensburg campus), even though we were in the same exact degree.

But that was more of an individual problem when it comes to the grading scale. My issue was with my supervisor when we started. She scored me on all twos on my score and I'm not like, I don't want to be someone that is, for lack of a better word, really cocky. But I knew that I deserved more than a two on at least one of those... She said, "Oh, I just grade this way. Usually I give everybody zeros or ones on their first observation, regardless of what they do, because it's just a start out score." And so (host teacher) was like, so you don't grade the person individually, you grade them on just ones or twos regardless. And so they kind of had a spat with that. And so what I noticed was that this scenario that I was having was completely different than every other classmate I had. Everyone else was like, "Oh yeah, my, my supervisor's really relaxed" or "She's really understanding or she's really supportive of me."

- Middle School/High School Majors

Classroom management discipline in a way, because it's like, "Oh, guess what? No, you can't change someone's name into a curse word."

My biggest challenge was definitely figuring out how to both be authoritative and also still be kind. But it was really difficult for me to find that authoritative teacher's voice because I try to be a very sweet person. I am not very, I'm not harsh. I try not to. And I did not want to create a negative experience for my students.

I'm not sure what is already provided to cooperating teachers and what they're already instructed to do. But I remember in the beginning I was nervous because I didn't know what was going to be expected of me as a student teacher because every teacher is different.

(Reflecting on how COVID impacted student attitudes) But just finding, helping find ways to keep kids motivated or encourage them to work. They kind of got used to, oh, this is optional. It's okay not to do this. And that's been the hardest part, is finding ways to kind of help these kids realize, like, hey, because next year they're in high school where their GPA will start affecting them for those that want to go to college.

The transition between observation and student teaching was abrupt.

(Reflecting on the impact of COVID) I think I was pretty well prepared. I learned a lot of the, like, logistical and relationship side of things. The hardest part for me was the schedule because with everything being in half, because we had the morning shifts and the night or the afternoon shift, I never had like a full class. It was always half.

Student Teaching Supports

- Elementary/Early Childhood Majors

I thought I had good support from her (university supervisor). But there were times that during my observations, and I understand forming that relationship with the cooperative teacher as well, that there would be times during my observations where she would be talking with my cooperating teacher, not maybe about me, but about my cooperating teacher personally. And I was like, that kind of struck a chord with me just because I'm like, I'm sorry, and I don't want to sound rude or selfish, but I'm like, you are there to be watching me and seeing how I can improve. I don't understand why that needed to come up, at least during my time teaching. But other than that, I thought she was really very helpful.

But she gave me a lot of really good ideas in that aspect, which I was responsible for, and I really did try to incorporate.

I don't think that I would have gotten this same experience from anywhere else. An amazing cooperating teacher and an amazing program that prepared me. I felt for all my interviews, for every book that I had to write, for communicating with people in the building.

- Middle School/High School Majors

I think the thing that helped me mentally prepare for my student teaching nerves was just having a community of other student teachers where we could share the things we were nervous about, share ideas together. I just felt great that I was able to have that community of other people. And that, I think, ultimately helped me at least accept the nervousness because everyone else was nervous, too.

Definitely the support of my university supervisor. And oh my goodness, I don't know how I would have gotten through without her because she provided some

great advice, but also very much listened to what I was saying. She helped build my confidence by helping me refer back to what I already knew and giving a little bit of extra advice.

My cooperating teacher and my university supervisor. They've been absolutely wonderful. Honestly, extremely supportive. Every time she'd come on to observe, she'd start off with a question. "How are you doing? How are you taking care of yourself?" In fact, we teachers, we always take on other people's. Find out what other people are dealing with and a lot of times put off what we are dealing with. So she wanted to make sure that I was doing all right, that I was taking care of myself and my family was doing all right. And she just gave me a lot of advice.

I'm still in contact with a lot of the music faculty, especially in terms of beyond just professional, like, hey, like asking questions like they still check on me, make sure everything's going alright. And if I'm in town, I'll come up and get dinner with a couple of them.

I remember our first day when she (cooperating teacher) was introducing me to people. She's like "yeah, I would like for you to meet XXXX. She is my student teacher." Just hearing that introduction is amazing because it's saying they are happy to have me and it's not like "Oh, here's the student I've been assigned."They've accepted me and it's just an amazing feeling.

Overall Suggestions from Participants

- Elementary/Early Childhood Majors

There were times where I needed to reach out and I didn't hear anything. So that sparked that communication tool that I said that might need a little bit of work is just having more standards for communication guidelines with students like if I need you and I'm emailing you it's for a reason.

I definitely push for an emphasis on the current or the current education majors is building these relationships is important because that ultimately is what gets kids to keep coming to your class or keep in school. So it's kind of like I feel like it's the relationship you build with these kids that's kind of keeping them involved in school and not falling through the cracks. So just keep having the education classes push how important that relationship is with these kids.

And so I would really have appreciated and I think others especially with COVID, I think a lot of other students. Student teachers would really, really benefit from a big hit from a very specific behavior management course. I think that is a course that is needed in the education program.

So a behavior management on top of classroom management would be extremely helpful. And even if it's like a couple week refresher course on special education would be really helpful...During my student teaching. I needed more tips and tricks on how to help my students who are in my classroom, who have special needs or who are receiving services.

The whole program, as a whole, is really great. And I don't think, from what I've heard from friends in the same field, I don't think any other university has made us where we're at right now. I think that, overall, we're really prepared. We're having great experiences...The only thing I could suggest, and this is just like really not super-important, is I felt like I just felt kind of disconnected at MIC. I felt disconnected from campus. I felt like I was at another community college feel and not really feeling connected to my school and my school community.

- Middle School/High School Majors

I only had 50-hour observation and practice teaching with classmates in one class before student teaching (COVID eliminated a 30-hour observation). I don't think that necessarily would have made my student teacher better, but I think it would have eased the transition better.

So there are some things that we can't in a way truly be prepared for. We have to experience it. We can be aware that this could happen. You could deal with a drug dog, you could see your student getting pulled out for something. You could hear the teacher next door yelling and someone break up this fight.

There's nothing that can prepare you for being with your students. And I'm just going deer in the headlights and then going.... But it still doesn't do anything compared to actually experiencing it because you don't deal with it when you go over it, you don't have the actual reactions of the students.

You're teaching the whole day. Like that's your job. It was like, "Oh, this is a lot more than I was prepared for." Like, so just having ways to have students get in like one of the requirements for student teaching or whatever or observations having to teach for a day. That way they realize like, okay, this is kind of what a

full day feels like, not just to our period of observation with a 15-minute mini-lesson.

I would say that maybe just trying to do a little bit more real-world learning would be very helpful because I almost wonder if they just assume, well, you have to go do field experience. There's your real-world learning. But until you're a student teacher, no one that's a representative of the college goes into those classrooms to see what you do. They don't sit there with you.

I'd done 180 hours of classroom observation. And during that time between both (other college) and UCM, the only thing that I was ever allowed to do by any of those teachers I was paired with was a single day mini-lesson. I never graded. I never helped plan. All I did was sit and take notes. And when you asked to be more involved, the teacher was basically like, "You're not ready for that because you're not a student teacher. You'll get plenty of experience in that." So all you do is sit in the classroom and observe like that.

But it definitely felt very repetitive and most of it was like, let's read Harry Wong's book, which is great, you know, but at the same time, like it wasn't really practicing stuff. It's just looking at it and writing stuff out, you know? There's not a whole lot of hands-on classroom management, even just getting out of your head and doing role playing type of stuff that never happened in classrooms. It's always just basically theory. Here's what it says in the book. Let's read the book. Let's talk about the book. Let's write some stuff down. Let's answer some questions, but never really do anything.

Improvement would be one more classroom management that comes with the experience due to the pandemic. Sort of lost a little bit of that chance due to one of my field experiences just got turned into virtual but classroom management. It's something that we try our best, but it's sort of like here we're teaching it, but how are we going to apply it?

Talking about kids, social and emotional learning. It's like being very, like, aware.... junior year class we talked more about like kids and how their mind develops and when they definitely need social and emotional support and just how well they're learning the other things that's affecting like that's going on.

But ultimately, I think the one of the best things that will help is just more communication between education and music departments, because that's a lot of, I know a lot of what I realized and what other people realized is, there's a lot

of subjects that are overlapped, but with music, they go a little more in-depth because it's what they're supposed to do.

I mean, a lot of the stuff they taught us in the behavioral management class was prevention, not, hey, here's the behavior. What? You have that hard conversation. Okay. Well, what do you do now? So that was kind of weird. I had support systems where I could kind of, like, stumble through it, but that was one of the things that I really wish I would have had a better experience with throughout college.

There needs to be more classes on inclusion and inclusion and diversity as a whole. Because I had at least and this is like in my industrial woodshop classes, I had at least 3 to 4 trans or queer students, LGBTQ plus students. And thankfully I've had a lot of interaction with that and I've had experience with it. So I kind of had stable ground. But like talking with other teachers and their students or using the pronouns, I mean, it makes for a really rough time for the students. I think if you would at least integrate that, if you have a behavioral management course or like a teaching course, like general stuff, especially for our student teaching, integrate inclusion and diversity and inclusion.

I'm sort of the bridge between elementary and high school in a way. I would love to have more chances to work with elementary, to work with high school.

Oh, it's a whole other world actually doing it. So that's as much as I hate saying more classes, I think there should be more information in that realm of dealing with IEPs or 504 plans.

I had a half semester course in assessment...I felt like they were just barely grazing the surface of what it really means to assess students and how you act... I feel a little bit lost. I felt a little bit lost during my student teaching on how to make a good assessment. And I think I have this information, but I think a full semester of just focusing on the process that's official for me, I think would be.

The only class that we took over testing was basically just talking to you about the three types, primary types of assessment and kind of showing you versions of it. And it lasted for nine weeks. We never talked about how to actually use data to drive instruction, what that looks like at all. And at least at my school, that's like 100% of what they want me to do. We didn't necessarily even talk about like a testing cycle inside of if you're trying to do that. Building units and things like that. We never really discussed that.

Themes

Five themes were noted. Those themes were Consistent Expectations, Communication, Relationships, Behavior Management, and Real-World Experiences.

Consistent Expectations

- Elementary/Early Childhood Majors

I think it's a matter of when you have two different people teach the same course, there becomes an issue of like a disconnect between the two campuses and they're not seamless. I know that there's a standard that is clear from the people administrating. That's like delivering that standard, but not the people that are delivering that standard. So I think that was a big issue that it wasn't.

But that was more of an individual problem when it comes to the grading scale. My issue was with my supervisor when we started. She scored me on all twos on and I'm not like, I don't want to be someone that is for lack of a better word, really cocky. But I knew that I deserved more than a two on at least one of those. . She said, "Oh, I just grade this way. Usually I give everybody zeros or ones on their first observation, regardless of what they do, because it's just a start out score." And so (cooperative teacher) was like, "so you don't grade the person individually, you grade them on just ones or twos regardless." And so they kind of had a spat with that. And so what I noticed was that this scenario that I was having was completely different than every other classmate I had. Everyone else was like, "Oh yeah, my, my supervisor's really relaxed. Or She's really understanding or she's really supportive of me."

I think it's an issue with the supervising teacher as well as an issue with there may not be a clear consensus among supervisors which directly impacts the education program as a whole, if not everyone's rated on the same scale.

- Middle School/High School Majors

Same expectations (during field experiences). It was very much very unknown of what you're supposed to do because it's like I'm supposed to listen to my supervisor, but then my friends and these other people, I thought, I know they're doing this or they're able to they're not teaching the lessons because that's not

for the first field experience or observations, but they're able to go around and answer students' questions.

I'm not sure what is already provided to cooperating teachers and what they're already instructed to do. But I remember in the beginning I was nervous because I didn't know what was going to be expected of me as a student teacher because every teacher is different.

Communication

- Elementary/Early Childhood Majors

There were times where I needed to reach out and I didn't hear anything. So that sparked that communication tool that I said that might need a little bit of work is just having more standards for communication guidelines with students like If I need you and I'm emailing you it's for a reason. That's just like a personal belief of mine that if you're going to have your students do stuff on the weekends, that you should be there on the weekends as well. And that's just how I would run.

- Middle School/High School Majors

I thought a lot about like, man, I wish I would have gone to Emporia or something else because I was not enjoying the experience and it just never really improved for me. And I tried to have those conversations with people and it didn't seem to make a difference. So I don't, I don't mean to be very negative, but honestly, it's nice to be heard a little bit from people that are connected to the college in some way because I, I genuinely felt like people were just trying to ignore it.

- Communication between departments.

If there's one thing that I would ask you to take back very specifically is that recognition that there is a disconnect and not just that's how things go, what can we actually do about it?...That is where I would start, at least as it relates to secondary education. And I don't know what that's like if that's just building bridges with those other departments and trying to figure out how we can try to even streamline this and make it work better? But like, I felt like a lot of times that maybe the people in Lovinger and like the people in whatever the English building is called, Martin, they're not even talking.

But ultimately, I think the one of the best things that will help is just more communication between education and music departments, because that's a lot of, I know a lot of what I realized and what other people realized, is there's a lot of subjects that are overlapped, but with music, they go a little more in-depth because it's what they're supposed to do. The biggest thing I think would help is just more conversation between the two to figure out what music classes should touch on a little more because education can't do that as well.

Relationships (positive and challenges)

- Elementary/Childhood Majors

(MIC student) I come in here, I sit with them and I stare at them across the room and then we leave. On the other hand, I would hear from who I was like, Oh, we're going to lunch with these people. Oh, we're having these activities with people, you know, because they offer a lot down there, because it's a campus process where it's like one big square building and we don't do anything there. So I don't know. I mean, just offering more opportunities to get to know the people in your school because, you know, the people in your education field. So I feel like I didn't really get to know those girls.

I still have relationships from my second placement from the fall semester. I still have really good relationships with a lot of those kids as well. I would get hugs from multiple ones of them in me in the mornings or after school. And I covered for that teacher on the Friday right before graduation. Yesterday I was like, "Hey, I was your sub on Friday. Where were you?" They were like, "What? I missed it. I'm sorry I missed it." So a really big moment for me. What was forever will be the relationships I felt with my students.

- Middle School/High School Majors

I think the thing that helped me mentally prepare for my student teaching nerves was just having a community of other student teachers where we could share the things we were nervous about, share ideas together. I just felt great that I was able to have that community of other people. And that, I think, ultimately helped me at least accept the nervousness because everyone else was nervous, too.

(Maybe) putting kids in a cohort together and having them take most of their classes together so that you are constantly seeing the same faces and working

with the same people. And so there might have been a little bit more help or a little bit more community building in that way. If it was actually you are incoming in this year. This is the stage that you're at and whether it's a freshman or a transfer student, like you're going to graduate this semester if you stay on track. And so these are the classes that you're taking and you're taking them in this order. And so you're going to be largely with the same students that potentially would have helped. Some of it is potentially, I guess, classroom management by professors, the way that they design some of these things. If you're not doing group work, then you're not interacting with your classmates that much. And if the classes are lecture based, then there's not really a way to build relationships unless you like to join a study group or something.

(Speaking about the difference between elementary majors and secondary majors) But like I would see these groups of eight or ten girls that when you talk about that community, they're sitting together. If you see them in a class, they're always together and like laughing and they really seem like they know each other and have built that camaraderie. And it seemed like they're just having the most amazing time of college.

Behavior Management

- Elementary/Early Childhood Majors

I mean, a lot of the stuff they taught us in the behavioral management class was prevention, not, hey, here's the behavior. What? You have that hard conversation. Okay. Well, what do you do now? So that was kind of weird. I had support systems where I could kind of, like, stumble through it, but that was one of the things that I really wish I would have had a better experience with throughout college.

And so I would really have appreciated and I think others especially with COVID, I think a lot of other students. Student teachers would really, really benefit from a big hit from a very specific behavior management course. I think that is a course that is needed in the education program.

Dealing with behaviors was an issue. But I feel like if I was prepared, I should be able to handle that without her being like, guys, you need to listen to this person. maybe having more strategies. I feel like I only got one class that really talked about behavior management. And that one class does just hone in on behavior

management, talks about everything else, like the interview process and stuff like that. It's all like a whole bunch of random stuff all crammed into one course.

- Middle School/High School Majors

More classroom management techniques; what to do with reactive kids; discuss other behavior management besides BIST.

Classroom management - different for different subject areas - classroom management for K-12 people

I think it would have been exceptional to have like if it's like a secondary behavior management have like a middle school or high school, come in like one class and, you know, just have them like act out a scenario and have a teacher pull a student aside for a big disciplinary event and be like, okay, we had a conversation. Here's what I would do. Right. Or have several teachers or interviews or something.

Real-World Experiences

- Elementary/Early Childhood Majors

I don't think that I would have gotten this same experience from anywhere else. I had an amazing cooperating teacher and an amazing program that prepared me. I felt for all my interviews, for every book that I had to write, for communicating with people in the building. I think UCM does just in amazing job, preparing us for the day to day career.

I mean, after the first week of school, I was already teaching full time in there. They are really good about doing that co-teaching model that first week and making it feel natural to get in that quick and then really keeping you involved as much as possible. I was able to attend PLC meetings. I was able to attend outside of school organizations, clubs, and activities. I was involved in a lot of things. I was involved in IEP meetings, progress monitor meetings where I got to suggest ideas and my ideas are heard and implemented. And that was really reassuring for me.

- Middle School/High School Majors

Oh, it's a whole other world actually doing it. So that's as much as I hate saying more classes, I think there should be more information in that realm of dealing with IEPs or 504 plans.

Do more than observe. I personally was told by the person overseeing me that all I was allowed to do was sit there and take notes. And by, you know. And that's what we're supposed to do. And yeah, I had tons of people around me that were able to get up, asked serious questions, like to provoke, to get them to think more interesting questions. And if we're really wanting to help train and like how to deal with disruptions in the classroom behavior management, then we needed a little bit more than just sit there and take notes.

Discussions from teachers/student teachers about real-life scenarios. I would almost say teachers or student teachers because we love our professors and we really appreciate them. But there's a lot we hear a lot about their teaching. That's very much one perspective. So. And then for some of them, a third time when they were an administrator. Some are dealing with a chair being thrown. That was when they were an administrator and another person was a teacher. So we don't know the whole story of how it went because they came in halfway.

A lot of the classes that I took, while helpful, they're not geared toward teacher candidates. They're geared toward techies coming in and developing their skill set knowledge. And it's like they're geared toward automotive majors or business majors or construction majors, not teacher education majors.

Instead of just sitting in a college classroom listening to lectures, you should probably be doing stuff in a real classroom. And I mean, we're talking about a very different version of education or of teacher prep.... I would say that maybe just trying to do a little bit more real-world learning would be very helpful because I almost wonder if they just assume, well, you have to go do field experience. There's your real-world learning. But until you're a student teacher, no one that's a representative of the college goes into those classrooms to see what you do. They don't sit there with you.

We did not analyze data ever. We did not take it and use it to drive instruction. We never, I mean, just thinking about the simple cycle of collecting, analyzing and then using that data to then drive your instruction, that never happened. And that is, at least at my school, basically 100% of what I asked them. We test them and then based on how they test, then you're going to reteach and move on and

do these other things. But it's so data driven that I, I just most of the time, I don't know what I'm doing.

I think if you would at least integrate that, if you have a behavioral management course or like a teaching course, like general stuff, especially for our student teaching, integrate inclusion and diversity and inclusion.....For me personally, but I think it would be a course that even secondary ed people could benefit from, not just the early elementary people.

And it was just like, why aren't we spending time doing the things that you have to do on a daily basis, like being practical about some of those logistics? And to me, it felt like, well, because every school is different, we shouldn't show you any of that. We can't waste time with it because then you might be doing something that you won't do somewhere you go. So then it just felt like we're just going to be hands off about curriculum at all. We're not going to broach that subject because you never know what you're going to get where you go. And I guess I understand that to a certain extent, but it also, at least for me, someone who was thinking about it like existential dread, not knowing what I'm walking into.

But I think it would have been so nice to have a class where you do like a lesson for a week or do an activity for a week, whether it be welding or engineering or digital electronics. And then you turn around and you look at the instructor's lesson plan and how they did it and how they taught it and like, I guess break it down that way. Like, that would be really, really cool for like a more content area, secondary person like myself. I don't know quite how that would work for elementary, but I think something like that and granted, I'm a little biased in my learning. I'm a little bit more like, let's do it and then work backwards kind of way. I think that would be super helpful because there are lots of things where my lead teacher was like, okay, these are the units and benchmarks that I have to hit.

But none of the other professors had ever taught in any of my content areas, stuff like they just that was not they could care less if you were being a teacher or not. But even just asking about what does a year's worth of content look like for a ninth grade classroom? How do you organize them? Are you doing it thematically or are you doing it by skills? You know, like, how do you build it? Is it genre based? Like, what does it look like? And no one, the whole time that I was in college between two different colleges that I ever see, this is what a year's worth of curriculum looks like.... The phrase for it, like a personal study, like a multidisciplinary personal study. Like you have to take these content area classes, like you have to take an automobile class, so you're going to take it with

everybody else. But perhaps instead of doing, you know, some of the activities or some of the assignments that the kids that are just taking it for their general stuff, perhaps you have a replacement assignment that is grade design, a lesson around this content or around this topic. But instead of doing that assignment, I'm with a teacher from Lovinger or whatever, and they kind of check in, in our classes and I'm meeting with the teacher in the class and the welding teacher and we would like, okay, well here's the lesson and here's exactly how I taught it, whatever. And then I would cross, analyze and do more of that stuff. And I think something like that, you know, would work for a lot of those content area classes because those are kind of some of the things that we're hearing that you're having to take your secondary majors or taking a lot of content area classes where, you know you're given information, but not necessarily information on how to teach it.

Conclusion

While the number of participants was not high, those who participated openly and freely shared their opinions. Those participants spanned a variety of majors, including elementary/early childhood education (2), middle school education (1), and several different secondary majors (4). There were two current teachers, as well as five student teachers. Data from interviews were presented, and five themes emerged from that data. Those themes included Consistent Expectations, Communication, Relationships, Behavior Management, and Real-World Experiences.

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