



BUFFALO STATE
The State University of New York

Teacher Education Unit
1300 Elmwood Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14222-1095

<https://epp.buffalostate.edu/>

Teacher Education Unit

Executive Summary of Observation Case Studies (TEU Case Study Protocol)

2021-22

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Introduction & Rationale

The Teacher Education Unit at Buffalo State College seeks continuous improvement and assures program quality through our *Buffalo State Education Assessment System* (BSEAS). This system helps us to establish priorities, enhance program elements, and highlight innovations. We utilize a suite of multiple measures aimed at accomplishing these goals, one of which is the Observation Case Study.

Through this case study project, we study our program impact and the effectiveness of our completers (employed by schools) on *P-12 Student Learning and Development*. Given the unavailability of P-12 student outcome data or teacher effectiveness data from New York State Department of Education or local area school districts, we conducted a case study research project as an “inservice measure”. This method has the potential to contribute to a “powerful source of information for EPP improvement and monitoring of success (p. 1, CAEP Standard 4 Evidence: A Resource for EPPs, 2017). CAEP recognizes case studies as a direct measure of what P-12 students have learned or of teacher performance in the classroom. A pilot was conducted in the 2018-19 school year with anticipation of continuing in 2019-20 (with data collection in Spring 2020). This phase was put on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions. Case Studies were re-instituted in the 2020-21 academic year.

Background

During the 2017-2018 academic year our CAEP Steering Committee formed a three-person workgroup (Budin, Fuzak, and Renzoni) to research processes for studying the results of our preparation programs when completers are employed in positions for which they are prepared. Specifically, we sought out methods to study teacher impact on P-12 student learning and development and teacher effectiveness. We sought to validate this tool and process by conducting literature searches, attending CAEP Conferences and webinars focusing on CAEP Standard 4, and leveraging the expertise of the SUNY EPP Assessment Consortium Group to identify possible case study methods for studying program impact, particularly without access to any value-added student growth measures. Through this process, we identified a case study protocol based on the Danielson’s (2007; 2013) *Enhancing Professional*

Practice: A Framework for Teachers (with rubrics aligned to InTASC Standards and APPR observation tools used in New York State to evaluate teachers).

This protocol had been successfully utilized by other SUNY institutions (i.e., Cortland). For additional content validity, we sought feedback from the broader CAEP Steering Committee, the TEU Assessment Committee, and stakeholders from the TEU Professional Advisory Committee (TEUPAC). TEUPAC members, comprised of partners from local area school districts, expressed a willingness to assist with the case study process in the absence of other teacher effectiveness and student level growth data.

Following our exploratory research and feedback efforts, we determined that this observation case study protocol could be one measure to contribute to the assessment and evaluation of our teacher preparation programs. We designed a pilot study to evaluate this protocol for implementation in the 2018-19 academic year with the purpose of providing a direct measure of the effective application of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teachers (completers) in their classrooms. We did not conduct any studies during 2019-20 due to school closures Spring 2020. We reinstated the case study model in 2020-2021 and two were conducted by programs in English Education and Music Education. Social Studies Education program conducted a case study in May 2021, but due to timing of the final report, it was included in the 2021-22 data cycle, along with two additional case studies (Students with Disabilities Generalist 7-12 Program and Food and Consumer Sciences Program).

Methodology

The Observation Case Study Protocol (OCSP) involves in-depth study by faculty researchers across multiple teacher education programs within our unit. It utilizes the Danielson Teaching Framework which is also aligned to the New York State Teaching Standards, INTASC Standards and was then aligned to our TEU Practicum Evaluation (utilized in student teaching and methods courses). It is organized around the following domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.

Human Subject Review Board approval was obtained through Buffalo State College. All faculty participants completed Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program). Participating teachers (completers) completed an informed consent form and written approval was obtained by building principals prior to the start of any research.

Our phase-in plan for the OCSP was to conduct a pilot to study individuals who have completed one of our initial education programs and who are currently employed in P-12 school settings as the primary teacher of record. To assist in identifying a good sample of completers, we added a question item to our alumni survey (sent to completers 1- and 3-years post completion) to solicit interest in participation. Given the volunteer nature of this project, we do not plan to target specific completer cohorts, rather, must rely on a sample of convenience based on volunteer completers.

Phases: Interviews for Phase 1 (pilot) began February 2019 with observations completed by June 2019 for our first round of completers (n=3). Our expectation that Phase 2 was to begin the following spring (2020; 1 year later) with a new set of volunteer completers, however due to COVID-19 closures and the inability (and reluctance of partners) to conduct observations in person or virtually, Phase 2 was postponed until spring 2021. The original intent was to move forward in a four-year cycle, however, following COVID restrictions and the reality of the added, uncompensated workload for faculty, we extended it; thus, we will continue to conduct one case study per initial program discipline during a six-year cycle. It is anticipated that the full cycle will be complete in Spring of 2024. *See Timelines below.*

Timeline

YEAR 1 (pilot)	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6
2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Exceptional Education (now SCE)	Paused due to Covid	Music Education	Family & Consumer	Tech Ed	Math Ed
Childhood Ed		English Education	Social Studies Education*		Science Ed
Career & Tech Ed		Art Education	Generalist SWD		Business Marketing
					Science Ed

Implementation Timeline Case Study Activities:

<i>October</i>	Identify / recruit faculty & inservice teachers representing 2-4 EPP programs per year
<i>November</i>	Assure faculty have completed IRB/CITI training
<i>December/January</i>	Provide training to faculty (2 hours)
<i>February</i>	Faculty conduct first interview with teacher-participant
<i>February/March</i>	Faculty provide brief summary of data sources
<i>March</i>	Faculty conduct pre-observation interview with teacher-participant
<i>March</i>	Faculty observe effective practice and impact on students
<i>March/April</i>	Faculty conduct post-observation interview with teacher-participant
<i>April/May</i>	Faculty review artifacts, code data, analyze and summarize results. Write up Case Study using template.
<i>May</i>	Review process with Phase X faculty research team (discuss results/findings, review instrumentation, and overall debrief). Revise tools and process as needed.
<i>June</i>	Write executive summary of all observations for that academic year.

The final step is to analyze the data reported by faculty researchers at each phase and develop an executive summary report based on the individual observations per phase. We will share with all program personnel and stakeholders as part of quality assurance process during advisory councils and meetings of the Teacher Education Council. We will replicate the process each year with 2-4 additional faculty and representative completers from initial programs. We continue to seek the institutionalization of the process as a formal unit-wide assessment procedure to be completed annually, cycling through all programs across the TEU over 6 years.

Instrumentation:

See appendixes for details.

1. Case Study Observation and Evaluation Form

This form is aligned with a rubric from Danielson's Framework which is also mapped to both the InTASC Standards as well as the Buffalo State Teacher Education Unit Practicum Evaluation. It includes a detailed rubric provided by ASCD, *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching, 2nd ed.*

2. Structured Observation Rubric

This rubric is based on Danielson's Framework as well as NYS tools used to evaluate teachers (revised from SUNY Cortland). It will be used while

observing program completers (teacher-participants) during instruction and when conferencing with the teachers following the observation. Rubric criteria are 1-4 (1-unsatisfactory, 2- basic, 3- proficient, 4- distinguished).

3. *Interview Questions for Impact on Student Learning Case Studies*

Faculty Fellows will conduct three interviews with the teacher-participant during the case study process. Structured questions (revised from SUNY Cortland) will be used for each interview.

4. *Case Study Template*

This template is a report form that each Faculty Fellow will use to report their case study findings. form is aligned with a rubric from Danielson's Framework which is also mapped to both the InTASC Standards as well as the Buffalo State Teacher Education Unit Practicum Evaluation. This tool will be as a "case study report" and includes 7 sections to be completed by the faculty fellow.

5. *Executive Summary Template*

This template will be used by the Teacher Education Unit (e.g., Assessment Committee and/or Assistant Dean for Assessment and Accreditation) to evaluate the findings as an entire unit and examine ways the results may be generalizable.

Additional Details about Faculty Involvement:

- Faculty researcher conducts **three interviews** with a teacher-participant as well as **one in-class observation, at minimum**. Additional time is needed for gathering case study context information, reviewing artifacts, compiling of evidence, data analysis and summarization and commentary related to the findings using the Buffalo State TEU Case Study Protocol. (NOTE: In the future, location and type of observation may be modified due to COVID restrictions).
- Faculty are encouraged to apply effective and appropriate technology tools throughout this process, where appropriate (i.e., video conferencing).
- Because this process is viewed as "action research" and faculty will be encouraged to apply rigor to this process and explore scholarly outlets for dissemination following the case studies. Collaboration across programs will be facilitated to explore outcomes applicable across the Teacher Education Unit.
- Faculty in Phase 1 were provided with a modest honorarium (e.g., \$300). Later phases did not receive one and there does not appear to be any compensation for future researchers.
- Teacher participants (completers) were not compensated.

Analysis of Data

Three completers participated in the case studies (Participant A, B, and C). Teacher A completed her initial certification program in Social Studies Education in 2017 and has been teaching since. Both Candidates B and C teach at a first ring suburban high school that is predominately white (78%), with half the population identified as “economically disadvantaged” (78%). Completer B completed her Students with Disabilities 7-12 Degree in 2016 and has been teaching at her current school for three years. Candidate C completed her Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) degree in 2015 and has been employed at this school fulltime since that time. Information about teacher participants, students and classrooms can be found in Table 1. Three faculty participated in the data collection. See Table 2 for details.

Table 1

Teacher Participants: Demographic and Classroom Information

Completer Program	Completer Year	Grade Level	Subject	Number of students	School Setting / Location
Social Studies (initial) female N=1	2017	6 th grade	Social Studies (Government)	N=26	Rural Public School
Students w/ Disabilities 7- 12 (initial) female N=1	2016	High School	Math (Algebra) Special Education	N=8 (students with IEPs)	First-ring Suburban Public School
Family and Consumer Sciences (initial) Female N=1	2015	10- 11 th grade	Foods Preparation and Nutrition	N=20	First-ring Suburban Public School

Table 2**Faculty Participants by Department**

Social Studies Education N=1	Special Education N=1	Family and Consumer Sciences N=1
Assistant Professor	Professor	Lecturer

Results of Case Study Observation and Evaluation Form

Completer performance was evaluated using several rubrics based on *Enhancing Professional Practice, A Framework for Teaching* by Charlotte Danielson (2007, 2014). These Structured Observation Rubrics were utilized individually and are included in the individual case study reports written by each faculty researcher. In this executive summary, data for all three completers are grouped for analysis in Table 3.

Using a four-point scale (1=unsatisfactory to 4=exemplary), all candidates performed at a proficient or exemplary level on all criteria. On average, completer performance in all domains was at the “proficient” level (3.53 or higher out of 4). Completers were effective in the planning and preparation domain, scoring 3.83 out of 4. Performance by Teacher C (FACS) was judged to be exemplary; Teacher A was also rated as exemplary for most criteria as well. Two of the three teachers demonstrated 3 out of 4 in areas related to assessment., including questioning techniques. .

In all case studies it was noted that the completers were particularly effective in engaging learners and demonstrating flexibility in their responsiveness to learner need. Interactive activities were conducted in both Teacher A and C’s classroom involving motivating materials and applied activities (including learning games) for students to demonstrate and interact with the content being learned. Teacher B engaged in a lesson review but kept it well paced and interactive. She provided feedback and scaffolded to support where needed as well. For Teacher B and C there was a notable use of collaboration and flexible grouping during the lessons.

Summary of Impact on Student Learning

In addition to their performance on the rubric criteria listed above, in all case studies the teacher participants (i.e., completers) were actively engaged in evaluating the impact of their teaching on student learning. It was noted that the questioning techniques to “check for understanding” for Teachers B and C may not have led to a clear gauge and additional information would be needed (or more robust questioning techniques). Teacher A excelled at checking for understanding and notable learning occurred as evidenced by the electronic Exit Tickets utilized during the lesson. This was a powerful tool that captured key ideas learned and extension questions such as “which style of government would you most want to have and explain why”.

Summary of Teaching Effectiveness

As evidenced by performance on the rubric criteria listed above, all three teacher participants engaged in a variety of effective instructional practices. Many of these practices are research-validated, high leverage teaching practices that positively impact student outcomes. Based on additional observation and interviews, some of the most salient practices included:

Strengths observed:

- Use of applied and hands on learning:
 - Students engaged in project based learning that resulted in a motivating and engaging end product.
- Collaboration
 - All three teachers utilized extensive collaboration in small groups. Roles and teamwork were clear. In the social studies class students worked to develop displays and align motivating materials to the current government lesson. They were also able to review and explore other teams’ work. All roles and expectations were clear.
 - The cooking activities were divided by teams and each member had a clear role. All worked together to create an efficient, effective, and safe environment.
 - The math test review activity was a small group interaction. Students were able to write-pair-share and then debrief as a large group, giving students multiple opportunities to interact with the content.
- Visual supports
 - All three teachers utilized materials posted around their room to support learning. Checklists, visual schedules, color coded concepts, vocabulary interactive boards and anchor charts were present.

- Technology use
 - Technology was used in two of the three classrooms. Effective use of advanced cooking tools including deep fryers, air fryers, pasta makers, thermometers, and other kitchen tools were used seamlessly and appropriately by all students. While this may not be technology in the traditional sense, it was in this case.
 - Digital exit tickets

Areas for growth observed:

- Assessment: In two cases teachers utilized slightly ineffective questioning techniques such as “did that make sense”? Yes/no questions may not provide insight into student thinking and learning. In one case, this was a distinct strength.

Table 3
Structured Observation Rubric Results for Completers
 N=3

DOMAIN 1: Planning & Preparation										
COMPLETER	1a K of content & pedagogy	1b K of students	1c Setting inst outcomes	1d Demo K of resources	1e Design coherent inst	1f Design student assess		Total Points	%	Mean per Completer
Social Studies Ed (Teacher A)	4	4	4	4	3	3		22	92%	3.66
Students with Disabilities 7-12 (Teacher B)	4	4	4	4	4	3		23	96%	3.83
Family & Consumer Sciences (Teacher C)	4	4	4	4	4	4		24	100%	4.0
Mean per Criteria	4	4	4	4	3.66	3.33				Overall: 3.83

DOMAIN 2: Classroom Environment									
COMPLETER	2a Env of respect & rapport	2b Cult for learning	2c Manage classroom procedures	2d Manage student behavior	2e Org physical space		Total Points	%	Mean per Completer

Social Studies Ed (Teacher A)	4	4	4	4	4	20	100%	4.0
Students with Disabilities 7-12 (Teacher B)	3	3	3	3	4	16	80%	3.2
Family & Consumer Sciences (Teacher C)	4	4	4	4	4	20	100%	4.0
Mean per Criteria	3.66	3.66	3.66	3.66	4			Overall: 3.73

DOMAIN 3: Instruction									
COMPLETER	3a Commun w/ student	3b Quest & disc techniq	3c Engage in learning	3d Use assess in instruct	3e Domo flex & responsive		Total Points	%	Mean per completer
Social Studies Ed (Teacher A)	4	3	4	3	4		18	90%	3.6
Students with Disabilities 7-12 (Teacher B)	3	3	4	3	4		17	85%	3.4
Family & Consumer Sciences (Teacher C)	4	3	4	3	4		18	90	3.6
Mean per Criteria	3.66	3	4	3	4				Overall: 3.53

DOMAIN 4: Professional Responsibilities*

COMPLETER	4a Reflect	4b Accurate records	4c Comm w/ families	4d Participate prof comm	4e Grow & dev prof	4f Show profess		Total Points	%	Mean per completer
Social Studies Ed (Teacher A)	4	n/a	3	3	4	4		18	100%	3.6
Students with Disabilities 7-12 (Teacher B)	4	4	4	4	4	4		24	100%	4.0
Family & Consumer Sciences (Teacher C)	4	4	4	4	4	4		24		4.0
Mean per Criteria:	4	4	3.66	3.66	4	4		24		Overall: 3.87