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Teacher Education Unit

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

2018-2019 (Phase 1 pilot)

2019-2020 (Phase 2 pilot- postponed due to COVID-19)

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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.

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.

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 our education programs in the past 1- 5 years 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. 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. *See Timeline below.*

Timeline for Phase 1 Pilot Activities:

<i>Summer 2019</i>	Revised Alumni (completer) survey to request completer interest in participating: <i>Would you be willing to participate in a case study and/or focus group to help improve educator preparation programs?</i>
<i>February 2019</i>	Finalized instrumentation
<i>February 2019</i>	Identified / recruited pilot faculty & inservice teachers representing at least three EPP programs (n=3)
<i>February 2019</i>	Submitted IRB for approval
<i>March 2019</i>	Provided training to faculty (2 hours)
<i>March 2019</i>	Faculty conducted first interview with teacher-participant
<i>March 2019</i>	Faculty provided brief summary of data sources
<i>April 2019</i>	Faculty conducted pre-observation interview with teacher-participant
<i>April – June 2019</i>	Faculty observed effective practice and impact on students
<i>June 2019</i>	Faculty conducted post-observation interview with teacher-participant
<i>June- August 2019</i>	Faculty reviewed artifacts, coded data, analyzed and summarized results. Wrote up Case Study using template.
<i>August 2019</i>	Review process with Phase 1 faculty research team (discuss results/findings, review instrumentation, and overall debrief). Revised tools and process as needed.
<i>September 2019- April 2020*</i>	Began recruitment and training for second phase* faculty researchers and participants from additional EPP programs (n= 5) for spring 2020 implementation.
<i>April 2020*</i>	Plan to compile results for pilot and second phase of case studies (average ratings on rubrics) and qualitative analysis of interview data and observations across programs. Write phase 1 executive summary of pilot.
<i>September 2020*</i>	Dissemination of pilot results to programs and unit.

*Second phase process interrupted due to COVID-19 closures and unavailability of participants. Analysis delayed due to missing data from COVID-19 semester. Dissemination process revised from original plan. Modified plan by omitting phase 2 from report and only reporting phase 1 (to be rescheduled for winter 2021 semester).

Phase 1 Pilot: Using the instrumentation and protocols described below, three faculty representing three programs (Exceptional Education, Elementary Education, and Career and Technical Education) collaborated with classroom teachers (completers) to identify artifacts as evidence of student learning and development. They then analyzed assessment and observation data to determine impact.

Phase 2 Pilot: The above procedures were to be replicated with additional (n=5) faculty researchers across additional programs. This was postponed due to COVID-19 closures and reluctance to participate. It will be rescheduled for Spring 2021.

The final step is to analyze the data reported by faculty researchers across the three participant teachers (i.e., completers) and develop an executive summary report based on the individual observations. We will share with all program personnel and stakeholders (postponed due to COVID-19 to winter 2021). After this pilot, we will replicate the process each year with 3 to 5 additional faculty and representative completers from programs not included during these initial phases. We seek to institutionalize the process as a formal unit-wide assessment procedure to be completed annually, cycling through all programs across the TEU over 3 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).
- Teacher participants (completers) were not compensated; however, appreciation was shown through notes, emails, and a token Buffalo State “swag” item (e.g., mug, umbrella, etc.).

Analysis of Data

Three completers participated in the case studies, all of whom had completed in the past 4 to 5 years. Depending on semester of graduation and time of hire, completers were in their 4th or 5th year of teaching. Despite only one completer graduating from a special education

program (Exceptional Education), all candidates reported having students with special needs. Two included students in urban school settings all of whom qualified for free and reduced lunch. Each classroom included students from diverse backgrounds, including students for whom English is a new language, African American students, and those from non-white backgrounds. 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
Elementary Education (initial) White male N=1	2014	3	ELA	37 total (3 SWD, all at-risk and receive instructional support [AIS]; 6 ENL)	Urban Public School AIS Support Classroom
Exceptional Education (initial) White female N=1	2016	4	Math	5 total (4 ED, 1 OHI)	Urban Public School 6:1:1 Class
*Career and Technical Education (advanced) White males N =2 (data for 1 of 2 included here due to date of program completion)	2014	9	Automotive technology	35 (17 SWD; 2 504)	Career and Technical Center
SWD = students with disabilities; ENL = English as new language; AIS = academic intervention services; ED = emotional disturbance; OHI = other health impaired; 504 = eligible for accommodations via 504 Plan					ED

*Both Career and Technical Education teachers graduated from the CTE program at Buffalo State College and currently co-teach in this classroom. Although the case study narrative report written by the faculty researcher focuses on both instructors (based on the nature of the co-teaching format), only rubric data from Teacher B is reported given the timeliness of his graduation (within 5 years of observation).

Table 2
Faculty Participants by Department

Exceptional Education N=1	Elementary Education N=1	Career & Technical Education N=1
Professor	Lecturer	Associate Professor

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.

On average, completer performance in all domains was at the “proficient” level (3.27 or higher out of 4). Completers were effective in planning and preparation, scoring in the 3 to 4 range (proficient – distinguished) for this domain. Performance in the other domains ranged from 2 to 4, with the completer from Exceptional Education demonstrating some “basic” level (2) performance (but still in the acceptable range).

The Classroom Environment Domain was the highest area, on average (3.6/4), with strengths in creating positive, organized, learning environments where classroom procedures and student behavior were well managed. It should be noted that all three programs targeted in this case study emphasize classroom and behavior management as a high leverage practice important for beginning teachers. Candidates are taught the links between a successful classroom environment and positive student learning outcomes. This allows for more active engaged time, time on task, and academic learning time. The faculty who conducted case studies all reported creative use of environment and management strategies such as cooperative groups, strong routines and expectations, and organizational systems.

Although still within the “proficient” range, the Instruction Domain was the lowest overall with an average of 3.27/4. It appears the criteria that impacted this was mostly related to

the completers use of questioning and discussion techniques. This has also been noted recently on other unit assessments for our candidates during student teaching. Given the consistent nature of this as a relative weakness (although still proficient), our unit plans to discuss these findings in more detail at an upcoming program improvement retreat.

In the area of professional responsibilities, two of the faculty researchers found these criteria difficult to fully assess in the case study format. Two of the 3 completers showed strength in reflecting on their teaching and maintaining accurate records. The one completer in Exceptional Education

Summary of Impact on Student Learning

In addition to their performance on the rubric criteria listed above, in all three case studies the teacher participants (i.e., completers) were actively engaged in evaluating the impact of their teaching on student learning. All recognized the need for a variety of measures, both formative and summative, formal and informal.

Career and Technical Education: In the case of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) completer, the emphasis was on performance of tasks and activities aligned to the content being taught and “authentic” assessments such as the use of “job sheets” and simulations. They also utilized quizzes and checklists, however, the emphasis on authentic assessment is prescribed by the CTE program and was observed most frequently in this case.

Elementary Education: In the Elementary Education case study, multiple measures were utilized including curriculum-based measures, district benchmark assessments, as well as informal assessment by way of anecdotal records. Notably this teacher participant engaged in formative and summative assessment utilizing exit slips to review understanding upon completion of the target lesson.

Exceptional Education: In the Exceptional Education case, formative forms of assessment were used during lessons to make instructional decisions during the lesson. Prior to the lesson the participant shared how curriculum-based measures were used to track progress over time.

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 explicit instruction:
 - Modeling, guided practice, and independent practice opportunities noted.
 - Immediate error correction and feedback on performance.
- Flexible grouping:
 - Use of small group, large group, and cooperative learning structures.
- Differentiation:
 - Use of scaffolded supports.
 - Identification and planning linked to specially designed instructional needs.
 - Adaptation of curriculum tasks or materials as needed.
- Teaching Generalization:
 - Use of simulation or other practices to support generalization of new learning.
 - Use of Anchor Charts throughout.
- Technology use
 - Appropriate and relevant technology used for setting and tasks.
- Classroom Management:
 - Behavioral expectations were clear and practiced (verbal reminders, anchor charts, use of routines, etc.)
 - Feedback provided to students on behavioral expectations.

Areas for growth observed:

- Active engagement: In two cases (elementary and exceptional education), teachers reflected, or observers noted the need for more active engagement of students. For example, questioning techniques that engage multiple students at once or allow more active engagement overall were sought.

- **Modeling:** Although modeling was used in all cases, it was noted in all three situations that increased modeling would be valuable, particularly on new skills.
- **Reflection:** Teacher participants could benefit from more in-depth reflection on lesson outcomes.

Reliability

A second faculty observer participated in the classroom teaching observation and completed the Structured Observation Rubric during the Exceptional Education completer observation. There was some disagreement in areas related to Domain 2- Classroom Environment when on the criteria for “Establishing a Culture for Learning” and in the Instruction Domain (Domain 3) for “Communicating with Students”. The primary faculty researcher tended to score lower in these cases. The observer 1 and 2 conducted a debrief and agreed on the feasibility of the higher score but decided to keep the original rating due to some background obtained in the interview that observer 2 was not privy to, and to show that additional observer training should be considered for future case study projects using these rubrics.

All three faculty participants met with the Assistant Dean for Assessment and Accreditation upon completion of the case study. A lengthy debrief, critique of instrumentation, and overall discussion of patterns of responding noted were discussed. The results of teacher performance obtained through this debrief are reflected in the overall summary of performance in this executive summary.

Sustainability of Research with Program Completers

We seek to institutionalize the process as a formal unit-wide assessment procedure to be completed annually, cycling through all programs across the TEU over 3 years. As evidenced by this pilot valuable insight can be obtained by conducting this research across the unit. Although completers demonstrated strong evidence of their effectiveness and impact on student learning, some areas of continued growth were also noted. This information will be reflected upon and shared with programs to inform program decisions in the future.

Participation of completers will continue to be sought, however, given the current challenges teachers are experiencing due to new teaching formats during COVID-19, we are cautiously optimistic. Making additional requests of teachers must be weighed heavily with their ability to balance “one more thing”. We have increased our efforts in maintaining relationships with our completers once they graduate, in hopes that we may offer them additional professional development or act as a resource in other areas. Most recently we launched Project EASE (Encourage, Aid and Support Educators) for Spring 2020 completers. This project was aimed at continuing to mentor completers who experienced a unique student teaching experience during the Spring 2020 semester due to COVID-19 closures. As such, we believe that by fostering these relationships we may identify additional participants.

As a unit, one other challenge that persists in this form of research is the ability of faculty to continue this level of analysis once candidates leave the programs. Given faculty teaching loads, service obligations, and scholarly pursuits, additional research such as this may not be prioritized. The small honorarium certainly can act as an incentive, however, given the current fiscal climate due to COVID-19 fallout, limited resources are available for future researchers. Recruitment of faculty researchers for the 2020-21 academic year has been challenging, particularly given their additional responsibilities due to new teaching modalities (i.e., remote synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid, etc.). As we continue to “institutionalize” the observational case study process, we believe additional faculty will see the value of participating in the process.

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
Elementary Ed	3	3	3	3	3	3		18	75%	3
Exceptional Ed	3	3	4	3	3	4		20	83%	3.33
Career & Tech Ed	4	4	4	4	4	4		24	100%	4
Mean per Criteria	3.33	3.33	3.67	3.33	3.33	3.67		62	86%	Overall: 3.44

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
Elementary Ed	4	4	4	4	4		20	100%	4
Exceptional Ed	3	2	3	3	3		14	70%	2.8
Career & Tech Ed	4	4	4	4	4		20	100%	4
Mean per Criteria	3.67	3.33	3.67	3.67	3.67		54	90%	Overall: 3.6

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
Elementary Ed	4	3	3	3	3		16	80	3.2
Exceptional Ed	2	2	3	3	3		13	65	2.6
Career & Tech Ed	4	4	4	4	4		20	100	4
Mean per Criteria	3.33	3.0	3.33	3.33	3.33		49	82%	Overall: 3.27

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
Elementary Ed	4	4	4	4	4	4		24	75	4.0
Exceptional Ed	2	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a
Career & Tech Ed	4	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a
Mean per Criteria:	3.33	3.33	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a

*professional responsibilities not observed for 2 of the 3 completers, therefore did not calculate total or mean.