



TEXAS TECH
UNIVERSITY.

ELEMENTARY LITERACY TRAINING

Texas Tech University is a strong example of how increased opportunities for hands-on application of coursework improves teacher candidate instruction and student outcomes. It helps teacher candidates make a deeper connection between their coursework and practice.

Data from the 2015 school year showed that, on average, candidates begin in the student teaching practicum exhibiting lower levels of skill but end with much higher levels of skill. This outcome is due to many factors, including course reform at Texas Tech. Now, courses emphasize candidate knowledge of instructional strategies, such as presenting instructional content, questioning, and classroom management. Texas Tech University ensures candidates' mastery of these skills through mock teaching sessions, explicit modeling, and naming and analyzing instructional strategies.

Texas Tech helps teacher candidates translate coursework into skills they can use in the classroom through five core steps:

STAGE ONE:

HONING IN ON TEACHING SKILLS

Every candidate completes Apply and Evaluate (A&E) assignments in their coursework to ensure the TAP indicators are taught in the context of content. These assignments allow candidates to receive feedback and practice what they're learning.

STAGE TWO:

MAKING COMPETENCY-BASED PRACTICE THE STANDARD

In the semester prior to year-long student teaching, candidates complete a pre-performance assessment to prepare them for the rigors of the assessment system and to determine their level of preparedness.

STAGE THREE:

FOCUSING ON INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Site coordinators for candidates' fieldwork placement conduct "cluster meetings" or class meetings according to the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP). They use data to identify candidates' area of refinement and work with them to develop instructional strategies that address their challenges. Site coordinators continue to monitor candidates' teaching so candidates can further adjust instruction, if needed, to ensure improvement.

STAGE FOUR:**LINKING COMPETENCY TO STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

During the pre-conference, observation, post-conference (known as “POP”) cycle, candidates are expected to describe how they used formative assessment data to plan, differentiate and deliver their classroom instruction. This process shifts candidates to have an acute focus on student achievement and on continuously improving their practice.

STAGE FIVE:**EXAMINING DATA THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM**

Program faculty consistently review data on candidate performance to measure and guide candidate readiness for the classroom.

COURSEWORK PROVIDES A CONNECTION TO PRACTICE THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

DEMONSTRATIONS OF PROFICIENCY WITH TAP RUBRIC:

During the first semester of the program, candidates script and score a National Institute of Excellence in Teaching classroom video. This resource enables a comparison of candidates’ ratings with those of national raters to determine the accuracy of candidates’ skill at evaluating instruction.

APPLY AND EVALUATE ASSIGNMENTS: These include recording candidate teaching so candidates, peers, and instructors can evaluate instructional competency while working in a small group and (later) a whole-class setting.

TAP CERTIFIED INSTRUCTORS: The program requires its faculty to be TAP certified to ensure that all course instructors and site coordinators reliably model and use the TAP rubric. This, in turn, improves how they teach skills that are connected to classrooms.

FACULTY ACTIVITIES: All program faculty participate in double-scoring videos from their specific content areas. For example, instructors who teach the language and literacy courses observe a performance assessment video of a teacher candidate teaching reading or using content-area reading strategies. Instructors provide ratings and derive evidence of course effectiveness and areas for improvement. Another instructor activity is peer review. This year, peer reviews have focused explicitly on questioning and academic feedback. Peer review involves instructors video recording their own instruction to share, script, and rate specified TAP indicators with a peer review team. At the program level, self-scores and peer scores are aggregated to determine the extent to which observers agree. These activities help ensure that instruction is rooted in practice and is focused on helping candidates improve their instructional competency.

Remaining questions: Some questions remain around how well data gathered from courses is related to candidate performance during the practicum year. Early clinical placement – especially in departmentalized elementary schools, where students rotate classes – makes it difficult for a candidate to see instruction and methods related to each content course they are taking at the university. For example, if a teacher candidate is placed in a reading classroom in a departmentalized school, this limits their ability to see instruction and learn how to apply skills and strategies for math and social studies.

For more information:

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FOCUSING ON INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHAPING COURSES TO ADDRESS WHAT REALLY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN THE CLASSROOM.

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