



College of EDUCATION
and HUMAN SCIENCES

University of NORTH ALABAMA

**Employer and Completer Case Study
Initial and Advanced Programs**

2023-2024

Introduction

This case study was developed by UNA's Educator Preparation Program to examine completer impact on P-12 performance and completer and employer satisfaction with candidate preparation in the University's initial and advanced education preparation programs. It provides critical evidence for CAEP Standard 4 in the absence of state-provided data.

Implemented during the 2022-2023 academic year, this case study examines the extent to which recent completers of UNA's educator preparation program are satisfied with their UNA preparation, the extent to which their employers are satisfied with their employees' UNA preparation, and the extent to which the recent completers are impacting P-12 student performance and demonstrate effective teaching during their first three years post-degree program. This study is designed to capture satisfaction data from completers and employers through focus groups, semi-structured interviews and surveys (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Case study data will collect evidence for UNA initial programs addressing R4.1 Completer Effectiveness, R4.2 Satisfaction of Employers, and R4.3 Satisfaction of Completers and will be used to guide continuous improvement decision making as our EPP seeks to identify areas of strength and areas for growth across our programs. Data collected for advanced program completers will address RA 4.1.

Literature Review

Effective teachers are the product of exemplary teacher preparation programs; teacher candidates who do not complete exemplary educator preparation programs will likely fail to sustain research-based best practices when they enter the profession (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Effective educator preparation programs equip candidates with critical knowledge related to learning and modes of inquiry in the discipline and how to translate this knowledge into practical application of effective curriculum, teaching strategies and assessment (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Truly

effective educator preparation programs prepare candidates for "productive lives and careers" (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust & Shulman, 2005, pp. 441) and they are most effective when centered around three critical components: firm coherence and integration among courses and between course work and field experiences, extensive and intensely supervised field work strategically integrated into courses utilizing pedagogies that link theory and practice, and collaborative, proactive relationships with partnering schools that serve diverse learners effectively and can offer powerful examples of strong teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Even with the benefit of strong educator preparation programs, studies indicate that 20-30 percent of all teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Darling-Hammond, 2001) while most leave within the first two (Gordon, 1991). The experiences of many new teachers have been so disastrous that education has been described as "the profession that eats its young" (Halford, 1998, p. 33). A beginning teacher is expected to perform as a veteran (Andrews & Quinn, 2004) in a culture that demands teachers exhibit multifaceted skills, including those of counselor, nurse, psychologist, social worker and content expert, while being evaluated on P-12 student performance (Devon, 2016) using standardized tests often suspected to be biased and reflecting arguable performance benchmarks (Arbutnot, 2011). This difficult – and often impossible – entry level culture that often excludes opportunities for professional mentoring, causes many young teachers to exit the profession before their careers have really begun (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Educator preparation programs (EPPs), play a powerful role in the success, self-perception and persistence of recent completers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). EPPs must continuously and systematically measure the satisfaction and effectiveness of their recent completers, along with the satisfaction of their employers, to identify trends of strengths and areas for growth as part of ongoing programmatic continuous improvement efforts.

Design

This case study analyzes completer and employer evidence collected from recent completers of both initial and advanced programs and their employers. Completers in this case study completed UNA programs during the 2019-2020 academic year. Case studies generally rely on the trustworthiness of the design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998; Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This case study will rely on trustworthiness, verified by triangulation of data and persistent observation (Creswell & Poth, 2018, Creswell, 1998). Data is collected through focus groups, interviews and surveys, allowing for triangulation.

Completer Focus Groups

Initial Programs Focus Group 1

Participants

Seven recent graduates participated in the completer focus group. These alumni graduated between 2020-2022 with undergraduate degrees in Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education or Collaborative Education K-6. All are currently employed in their respective fields in different school systems representing one diverse county district and five diverse city districts. Participating completers currently teach the following grades: Pre-K, Kindergarten, First, Third and Fifth. All are employed as full-time classroom teachers. This focus group was conducted Spring semester 2023 via Zoom. Identities of participants will remain confidential; no identifying information is reported.

Reflecting on their perspectives of their readiness to teach:

#1 It was overwhelming at first! I was prepared but also overwhelmed by the workload. There was no way to feel totally prepared for how hard I would work and how much would be expected of me. I felt prepared overall but I would say I felt least prepared to teach small groups. I just didn't know where to begin as far as how to organize them and what to teach in them.

#2 I agree with that! I teach first grade and I'm really struggling with small groups and especially with centers - what to have the other kids do while I'm teaching small groups. I took over a class in January that had had a substitute for weeks and there was no classroom management in place, not much content had been taught - it was really bad. It took me a while to find the best management and discipline that would work.

#1 Yes - classroom management, too! That is probably hard for all new teachers, but I felt least prepared for that. My school is very supportive but it was still hard. And like to know what to grade and what to include to put things together to show progress to parents. All of that was something I had never really thought about. Like which assignments to grade.

#2 The workload is tremendous. I was hired mid-internship and it was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. I was completing my internship and working my first job and trying to run the class that had no management. It was hard! There was no data tracking at all - no assessment data at all. I just had to jump in and start assessing and start teaching. Differentiating instruction is something I wish I had had more experience with.

#3 I agree with what they said. Grading - how do you know what to grade for the report card, small groups, differentiating, and behavior. And I mean, like how do you

deal with straight up defiance. The behavior is something else. Discipline is really important and that's what I felt the least prepared for. And part of the discipline issue is dealing with parents. I wish I had had more experience talking to parents before I started teaching. Like how to talk to them about discipline and their child's performance in school. It's hard! And how to talk to them about test scores. I wish we had learned more about ACAP (testing). I had heard of it, but I didn't really know much about it. I wish I had learned more about how you have to build students' stamina for testing and motivate them for it. I have spent a lot of time doing that.

#4 I agree with all of that. I teach 5th grade ELA and discipline is my biggest challenge. I think you really have to learn by experience, though. One thing that was hard for me is that I interned in the fall in this class and then they hired me to be the teacher in January so the kids knew me as the intern and I feel like now they think I still don't know what I'm doing. The kids can be really defiant and I teach in a really good school district. They will just refuse to do things. No one told me I would have to be this harsh and mean when I was in school. I cried everyday the first few weeks. I just wasn't used to dealing with behavior like that and having to be so mean. It's not my nature. But I learned really quickly that I had to be touch and even harsh or they wouldn't do anything. All of the other areas I felt super prepared for, but discipline and behavior I was not. I do have to study the content a lot. If I don't, the kids know when I don't know something. They are like, she doesn't know what she's doing. So I have to work really hard.

#1 I do too! I study phonics every single night!

#5 I teach third grade, all subjects except science. I agree with everything everyone has said. Exclamation point to everything said! I think the thing I felt would have helped me be more prepared is just more transparency. Like just go ahead and tell us how hard this is going to be. Tell us the reality. Tell me how much I will struggle.

I've been thrown for a loop in so many ways and I'm learning things so fast and I'm in a great place with lots of support and I love it but just go ahead and tell us that it's going to be this hard. I also think there needs to be more of an emphasis on teacher wellness. Like you are going to work SO hard and long, long hours but don't forget to take care of yourself, because you have to keep yourself healthy first or you will burn out.

#1 Yes! No one ever said it would be this hard! This needs to be talked about in classes. It is so hard!

#5 The behavior here is not bad and that has not been an issue for me. But we do have high expectations for students and all the state testing and data collection and ACAP - I wish I had known more about that. Tell us more about ACAP and how it impacts everything. That would have been helpful.

#6 I really did feel ready. I'm Early Childhood and I felt like UNA focused so much on what the end should be and I really appreciated that. They didn't focus on what I didn't know now, but what they were preparing me for and we were so reflective all throughout the program. That really helped me. I felt confident in everything except IEP. I just wasn't prepared for teaching students with IEP's. I didn't understand them or what was in them or anything. It was overwhelming. On my first day of school, I have this student on an IEP and he was just dropped off and he's running around the room, hitting me, hitting kids, hitting parents. I wasn't prepared for that. Nobody prepared me for a student who acted like that. I wish I knew more about students with special needs and how to handle behaviors like that and about the IEP process. I had never even seen an IEP before or worked with an aide and all of that was very new to me. The first day when I looked at that IEP I was like what is this?

#7 I felt prepared to teach, as well, but I wish I knew more about discipline. I think the classroom has really changed since our professors were teaching, and I don't know if they really understand what it's like now. I just didn't feel prepared for kids throwing desks at me or flipping me off or how parents would talk to me. I just wasn't prepared for the discipline and management. But content wise I felt very prepared.

#6 I also didn't really feel confident teaching math, but I think that's because I don't like math. I don't think that's really a reflection of the program. But in our math class if we could learn more of the rules and the why. I loved making the games and those are great, but I need more background. I need to know more rules and more of the why behind how math works. We didn't get much of that.

#7 I think it would be great if UNA could use the textbooks we are using in our schools and show us how to use them.

#6 And more modeling. We need more modeling of how to teach math.

#7 We need more real world information, too. Like I new content and strategies and procedures and plans but how do I handle the student whose mother died when school started and the child who threw a desk at me - prepare us for those things.

How do you know you are impacting student performance?

#1 We constantly assess our students. We use iReady math diagnostics, Open Court reading. I really think I'm doing a good job with this. My kids have made amazing growth since the first day of school. Like they started out almost all below grade level in reading and math and now almost all are on or above grade level. These third graders are the Covid babies. They missed kindergarten and half of first grade and the gaps are just tremendous. We have worked very, very hard this year. I also work on socio-emotional growth. I try to demonstrate by my own behavior how to

handle situations and how to just help them be good human beings. It's so much more than just academics.

#5 My students have made great progress, too. We use AIMSweb for data collection. I almost get emotional talking about how much they have grown and how much progress they have made. I've noticed that my attitude impacts everything. How I approach the day and how I approach the learning. I will just say hey, we are going to learn together today. And they love that. If I am very straightforward with them and transparent, they do so much better. Those ACAP scores are under my name and I feel the weight of that, but I try to not let that show.

I speak Spanish and that has been tremendously helpful when I can teach my students who speak Spanish to see the cognates in words. It has helped so much with academic language and vocabulary. My test scores are really showing the progress the kids are making but recently a veteran teacher commented to me how much progress my students were making and it just hits differently when another teacher says it. That meant so much to me.

#3 I didn't really realize how much assessing I would be doing but it's almost all we do every week. These kids are tested SO much. It keeps going every day. The kids are so defeated because of it. I have one student who wants to read just so he can take an AR test. I'm like no! Read to enjoy the book; just read to read! It's such a testing culture here. But they are making great progress and the test scores show that.

#4 My students' scores are great! They are making so much progress. I am actually more worried about their socio-emotional growth. I have some bullies in my class. I've had to really work with them and I tell them that people won't remember who was the smartest or the prettiest or the most popular - they will remember how you made them feel. Then later I heard one of the bullies apologize to a girl he had been mean to and I heard him say, "I am so sorry I made you feel that way." I was so encouraged by that! They really are listening to me!

#1 My students need more character ed than academics. Sometimes I'm just like yall stop. Stop being mean. Stop acting this way. I try to be very proactive and supportive because you never know what they are going through at home or what they have been through before they come to your class but we still need to work on how we treat people. I always call them by name because research shows if you call them by name, they feel respected and valued. And they do better. Hearing their own name actually releases dopamine in their brains and helps them learn.

Honestly, it's just crazy in the education world today. Crazy. I try to do the best I can to meet their needs and help them grow in all ways.

#5 I just love my students so much! I mean, every teacher enjoys a good weather day but even when we are off work for weather, I'm constantly worrying about what my students are doing and are they safe. They are always on my mind.

#7 My students have made so much progress! I had students who started the year scoring zero, zero, zero across the board in every skill and now they are benchmarking. It's amazing! They have just made so much progress! It's exciting to see their brains grow!

#6 My kids have grown so much, too. It's amazing! We started the year with almost every student below grade level and now most of them are at or above benchmark and the ones who aren't there yet have made so much progress. I had one ESL student and he couldn't speak any English at all at the beginning of the year and he literally just met benchmark on our last DIBELS test and the whole class cheered for him! I had another student who was so young and had just turned 5 a month after school started and she wasn't progressing but now she is and she is the highest in the struggling group and just improving every day. I'm like now we're getting somewhere!

#1 I know - I love them so much. It's going to be so hard to let them go at the end of this year! They are family. I miss them so much over fall break, winter break, all the breaks. I miss them horribly and can't wait to come back and see them. I may be their teacher, but they have taught me SO much. I truly love teaching. It's a hard job, but it's not really a job for me - it's what I love doing most.

#2 My students are learning so much and making great progress, too and not just in the data. I had one little girl who hated school. Did not want to come every day - cried and cried. I have really worked with her and her mom told me recently that now her daughter likes to come to school and she thanked me for that. I had a really low class when I started this job and it has been a struggle and lots of hard day, but when I see things like that and realize that what I do really does matter, it makes it worth it.

#6 We are really pushing retention in Kindergarten now because of the Literacy Act and there is so much pressure. The kids really, really feel the pressure all day everyday.

#7 They do in Pre-K, too. There is so much pressure on these kids. We test them constantly and they get really stressed about it.

Advice for our COEHS programs

#1 One thing I would say is that burnout is real. It is real. This job is so, so hard. It is overwhelming. Like unbelievably overwhelming. Tell the students how hard it is and that you won't be just a teacher. You will be a jack of all trades. You will be a teacher,

a nurse, a mother, a father, a counselor, everything. You are all the things to your students. This is a tough profession and you need to be ready for it. But I wouldn't want to do anything else.

#4 Tell them that you have to be SO prepared. You can't wing it. You can't just show up. You have to be so, so prepared every single day or they will know it. And it won't work.

#1 Yes, these kids are counting on you every single day. You have to be ready for them.

#3 I agree with that - and tell them about all the assessments.

#6 Yes! Our kindergartens are required by the district to complete 6 worksheets a day and they really don't like doing it. It's really hard to keep them motivated. And we test them all day long. We are testing soon and I'm scared for this group - and they know it.

#7 The only suggestion I have is that I was Early Childhood and wanted to teach Pre-K and I do teach it now and all the classes are focused on grades 1-3. And the assignments all seem geared for elementary, not early childhood or pre-K. I wish pre-k was covered more in the curriculum.

#4 I second guess myself a lot and one thing I have learned is that if I say something, I have to stick with it. I can't go back on my word. I have to keep my promises to my students.

#1 Yes, I read a book about that. Teachers have to keep their word or kids won't believe you. And so many people don't tell them the truth - teachers need to always tell kids the truth. And tell the students that it's so much more than a Pinterest classroom. You can have a colorful Pinterest classroom, but it's what you do in that classroom that counts. It's so much more than what you put in the room. You have to work hard and plan and know your content.

#4 And be confidential. Sometimes I'm still learning who I can trust. And don't ever let the kids think you don't know what you are doing. You have to be well prepared so you can be confident. It's not just fun and games all the time. Teaching is very, very hard but it's worth it.

#1 I think they need to know that we are literally competing with technology all day everyday. These kids spend so much time on technology and they are used to living in that world. We have to keep their attention and engage them all day and it can be hard.

#6 I think more emphasis on discipline and classroom management would be helpful. Teach us strategies for managing the classroom and managing behavior. I spend so much time just keeping the class busy so I can deal with the behavior of one or two students and I wasn't prepared for that. I couldn't even do centers this year because the behavior was so bad. So just more real world stories about what it's really like and how to deal with aggressive behaviors and behaviors that are keeping the rest of the kids from learning.

#7 I had a 6 year old this year that had a tantrum and threw chairs at everyone and just had a total meltdown because she didn't want to do her work. We are making kindergarten and pre-k do a lot of worksheets and she just didn't want to do it and so she had a meltdown. If we had some strategies for how to deal with things like that, that would help. A lot of my students act up because they don't want to do the work. They don't like sitting there and doing the work. But they are 4 years old. So I understand but the behavior is really destructive.

#6 Yes, I had a student who growled and clinched her fists and was so angry because I was making her do her work. I had to call the assistant principal for help. I didn't know what to do. But really the admins don't know what to do either. When you have a four year screaming the F word at you - they aren't really prepared for that, either. They act so mature, but they aren't mature - but they have mature knowledge. It's really sad.

#7 I have to spend time keeping kids busy and safe so I can deal with the behavior. We need simulations in our classroom management class. Like walk us through scenarios - if kids throw chairs at you, if kids hit you, if kids are hitting others and saying the F word and flipping you off - what do you do? Let us practice handling that.

#6 These kids are different. They are on youtube, they watch things and know things that they shouldn't know. It's really different. The simulation would really be good. And I think it needs to be in the special ed course, too, because a lot of the behavior issues are related to IEP kids so how can we be prepared for that. What can you do as a teacher to calm yourself? What can you do to calm the kids? How do you handle really crazy behavior where everyone isn't safe.

#7 I think the classroom management course should include Conscious Discipline because most schools are using it now. Also, the technology class was really good, but it didn't give me much that I could do in Pre-K or kindergarten. I think the Classroom Management class should be just Early Childhood - just focused on PreK through grade 2 or 3 and I think the technology class should be that way, too. It's too focused on elementary. I would like more technology tools that I can actually use. How do I teach Pre-K and kindergarten students how to use an iPad and how to use a Chromebook? Teach us about Power School and iReady. Teach us how to put grades in!

Samples of Initial Level Completer Impact on Student Performance

Collaborative K-6 [Impact Data](#)

Early Childhood P-3 Impact Data below:

		Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year
Class Summary	Well Below Benchmark	56% 10 Students	53% 9 Students	22% 4 Students
18/19 Students Assessed	Below Benchmark	17% 3 Students	0% 0 Students	0% 0 Students
1 Not Assessed	At Benchmark	17% 3 Students	12% 2 Students	28% 5 Students
0 In Progress	Above Benchmark	11% 2 Students	35% 6 Students	50% 9 Students

This is data from mClass reading assessments taken in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. We test kindergarteners on their letter naming fluency, phonemic awareness, correct letter sounds, decoding, and word reading fluency. I have one student who did not test because they are on alternate standards.

A survey was used to collect responses from Employers.

Participants:

Nine principals participated in the Employer Survey. These principals indicated they currently were employing UNA graduates who completed their educator preparation programs between 2020-2022 and were currently first or second-year teachers. These recent completers were teaching in Primary, Elementary, Middle and High School settings in Kindergarten through twelfth grades.

Employer perspectives on the classroom readiness of these novice teachers:

She was very much classroom ready.

The curriculum or knowledge base was good. How to deal with real life situations are a struggle.

Somewhat. There is nothing that can replace "on your own" classroom experience. Overall, not bad.

One was "classroom ready" and the other was not "classroom ready".

Very classroom ready.

I feel they were mostly ready.

They were content ready.

Very classroom ready.

Employer perspectives on how these novice teachers could have been better prepared:

It is difficult, but providing classroom management scenarios for the students to address during their program would be helpful.

All my new teachers need help with classroom management. Now that we have Tier one and Tier two instruction in our classrooms for reading or just basic small groups, my younger teachers really need help with how to manage the entire room.

Courses need to better prepare students for reality and not theory. Classroom management is 90% of being a good teacher.

Work on overall professionalism and classroom structure.

Classroom management is a major issue for this first-year teacher. She is very non-compliant with procedures because I believe that was modeled for her during internship. My first-year teacher did not take advantage of valuable resources at her disposal.

They need to know more about classroom management/behavior of students who are more challenging.

I would like for them to have more classroom management skills. Something such as Safe & Civil Schools - Discipline in the Secondary Classroom would be helpful.

More discipline/class management knowledge.

Employer perspectives on the impact these novice teachers have had on student learning:

REDACTED has been amazing. She is a natural teacher and her willingness to assist, create, and develop lessons was beyond reproach. She has a bright future as an educator.

I love having the new teachers in our school to bring an excitement to the rest of the staff. They are eager to jump in and start their day and have a refreshing outlook on education.

They are learning and growing into being good quality teachers.

She had made very little impact.

The second-year teacher has made a positive impact on students, community and colleagues. She brings a lot of skills to the table with her contributions in areas of technologies and compassion for students. The first-year teacher has a heart for teaching but because of the lack of skill sets in certain areas she really struggled with her students making the necessary gains academically.

Strong impact.

Their students have grown quite a bit.

Both have had a positive impact.

Strong positive impact, they understood their importance.

Employer perspectives on how UNA can more effectively prepare pre-service teachers:

More classroom management techniques.

I have mentioned the classroom management part already, but it's hard to prepare teachers for our society today and how parents have changed perspectives over the years. We have tons of grandparents raising kids that do not know anything about technology or even some of today's dangers. I would love to speak with new teachers about what to expect when entering the workforce. Nothing replaces the real experience but being prepared can also head off some sticky situations. I always meet with my new teachers about several aspects of having their own classroom. As an administrator going on seven years in elementary, if there is ever a need for an adjunct class to cover these areas, I would be very interested. Thank you for valuing our opinion.

Get in classrooms!

Please stress the idea that working in a school is not college. While they will make mistakes, they should be better prepared to "hit the ground running" once they are hired as teachers.

Sincerely be honest with the students and about how they are impacting lives in the classroom. And definitely get someone to teach them about real classroom management.

Weave as much of LETRS and ARI and AMSTI training in as possible. I know y'all do as much as you can. But any of that would be so helpful for elementary.. For secondary, more prep/classes on sound instruction, blended instruction. These are just thoughts from the top of my head. I'm a UNA grad multiple times. I believe in UNA and am thankful for all you do to prepare future teachers! ROAR LIONS!

None.

I think actual training in a classroom management style would be helpful. I believe the University of Montevallo is using Discipline in the Secondary Classroom for their undergraduates.

Again, stress management and maybe the collaboration aspect to teaching with others at the same grade level.

Summary of Findings:

Data from the Completer and Employer Case Study indicate that overall, completers feel prepared to teach, and particularly feel well prepared to plan lessons and assessments and to utilize data. While completers felt confident in their preparation, particularly in their content knowledge, they felt least prepared to plan small group instruction, implement successful classroom management strategies and communicate with parents. They also shared that they were overwhelmed and unprepared for how difficult the profession would be.

Data from the Employer Focus Group indicate that while employers are, for the most part, satisfied with the classroom readiness of UNA graduates, several patterns emerged as areas for growth across programs. Classroom management was identified as an area for growth across all programs. Particularly, employers indicated that to some extent, graduates were not prepared to address traumatic/stressful home life situations of their students, had difficulty managing an entire classroom, specifically during small group instruction, and need to be more prepared to design a structured classroom environment. Employers recommended more field-based experiences for candidates prior to internship to provide more meaningful experiences in classrooms and suggested that curricula should reflect more “real life” scenarios, rather than just educational theory.

Analysis and Continuous Improvement:

It is important to note that the feelings of being overwhelmed and overworked were expressed by completers for the first time this year in focus group settings. These feelings echo those we are hearing from veteran teachers and we attribute the intensity of these feelings to three indicators: 1) the Alabama Literacy Act, which was implemented recently and has increased expectations for instruction and assessment and mandates retention in third grade if students are not reading on grade level; 2) a post-Covid environment; and 3) the teacher shortage, which has caused increased class sizes, difficulty finding substitutes and resulted in each of these completers being employed while internship or immediately after, mid-year. The perspectives on teacher wellness were particularly noted. In response, the EPP is partnering with school districts to increase classroom management content in curricula and field experiences; partnering with our Kinesiology Department to

create a Teacher Wellness Initiative; adding additional small group instruction/literacy center resources in methods courses; and implementing a new mentoring program for first and second year teachers who graduated from our programs. In this mentoring program, UNA faculty will provide support for areas such as classroom management and small group instruction that graduates identify as areas of need.

Advanced Programs

2023 Graduate Alumni Survey: [Results](#)

The Alumni Survey was distributed by email and social media to recent (2021-2022) graduates of all advanced-level programs. 27 alumni responded.

The EPP is in the process of conducting focus groups with advanced program completers. Focus groups are scheduled for the month of May. Results will be updated here through June 2023.

Early Childhood MAED Focus Group Results

Conducted via Zoom April 2023 with two participants who graduated from the Early Childhood Master's program within the past year. Both are employed in city districts. One teaches Pre-K. One teaches kindergarten. Because there were only two participants, to ensure anonymity, their responses have been summarized.

Do you feel the ECE Master's program effectively increased your content knowledge in your specialty area?

Yes! I learned so much and I think it made me a better teacher.

Yes! I learned so much! I do feel that a lot of the classes focus on elementary, rather than early childhood, though. In almost every class, I had to ask the professor if I could complete the assignment for early childhood grades, instead of the assigned elementary grades, but they always let me. They were really nice about it.

I wish it had been a true early childhood program, where all the classes were focused on early childhood. I learned a lot of elementary content that I don't feel like I can use right now.

Sometimes even the early childhood content didn't include Pre-K. I had to always ask how this relates to Pre-K. I would love to have had more focus on the Pre-K part of early childhood.

Do you feel the ECE Master's program made you a better teacher?

Yes, I do. I learned a lot of strategies.

Yes, 100 percent! I learned so much content.

Did the ECE Master's program help you increase your impact on student performance?

Yes, especially in reading. I am really tracking my data and my students are showing amazing growth.

Yes! I feel like I know so much more and it has helped me become more confident and I am a better teacher. My students are really growing and making progress. The data shows so much improvement since the beginning of the year.

What advice do you have for the program to address any areas for growth and strengthen the program?

Focus more on early childhood. Have true early childhood content in all the classes. If you could have an early childhood version of each class, that would be great.

I think we need a classroom management course at the graduate level. I would really love learning strategies for classroom management. I really struggle with that and that's what I felt least prepared as a teacher. Now that I have my own class, I would really benefit from a good classroom management class to learn strategies for dealing with so many different behavior issues.

I agree with that! But make the classroom management class focused on early childhood - not elementary. It would need to be specific for Pre-K and kindergarten and first and second grades. Because what we do in these grades is so different from upper elementary. I would love to take that class!

It could have Conscious Discipline in it because I think so many schools are moving to that now.

Overall I had a great experience and I would recommend UNA's program to anyone! I am going back to get my EDS at UNA as soon as I can.

I agree - it is an exemplary program and I would recommend it to anyone!