Completer Effectiveness Case Study

The purpose of this pilot study is to evaluate the teaching performance of Coastal Carolina University teacher education graduates during their initial licensure phase, as a measure of completer effectiveness for CAEP Standard 4. A case study method was used because the study is bounded by participants (Coastal Carolina graduates) from within a given time frame (30 months).

Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods approach for data collection. Qualitative data were collected using pre-observation survey responses and completer responses to interview questions. Quantitative data were collected using the Danielson Framework for Teaching Rubric (Danielson, 2013). The Danielson Framework generates ratings of program completers' teaching in each of four domains: 1) Planning and Preparation, 2) The Classroom Environment, 3) Instruction, and 4) Professional Responsibility. This framework was selected based on its suggested use by the Council for Accreditation for Educator Preparation (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2017).

Participants

The EPP targeted completers that graduated from their program in the last 30 months, who were still considered initially licensed teachers by the state. Consent was obtained from program graduates across two districts and one charter school. One of the districts agreed to allow one school site for study that hired several (12) recent graduates; because this site served students from pre-K through fifth grade, that limited the population of program completers reached. Seven completers (out of 12) agreed to participate. To broaden the pool of completers, the EPP reached out to all the completers hired in another local district to determine if any were willing to participate; all eight recent completers were willing to participate*. Additionally, a completer working in a local charter school also volunteered. For future studies, the EPP plans to request permission from the districts to reach out to completers at more than one school site to broaden to sample demographics, and to target only those that completed in the last 18 months.

Table 1. Participant information (all names are pseudonyms)

Participant	Program	Graduation Semester	Grade Taught	Type of School
Elaine	Early Childhood	FA21	2nd	Public, Title I
Anna	Early Childhood	SP20	1st	Public, Title I
Beth	Elementary	FA20	4th	Public, Title I
Delaney	Elementary	FA21	4th	Public, Title I
Wendy	Elementary	FA21	5th	Public, Title I
Corinne	Elementary	SP20	5th	Public, Title I
Eliza	Elementary	SP21	4th	Public, Title I
Alice	Elementary	SP21	4th	Public, Title I
Cora	Elementary	SP22	4th	Public, Title I
Kara	Elementary	SP22	2nd	Public, Charter

June	Secondary	SP22	Middle School ELA	Public, Title I
James	Secondary	SP22	Social Studies	Public, Title I
Michael	Secondary	SP22	Social Studies	Public, Title I
Andrea	Special Education	SP22	Autism (Self Contained)	Public, Title I

*Due to unexpected schedule changes in two schools at the time of scheduled observations, two classrooms did not have students/a normal classroom setting at the observation time; therefore, their teaching could not be evaluated, and they are not included in the participant table.

Data Collection

Pre-observation survey

The pre-observation survey, completed by the completer prior to the lesson, provided general information about the school context for the observer, including grade level, number of students, lesson being taught, and other factors that the teacher feels are important. The pre-observation survey took teachers no more than ten minutes to complete.

Observation

After completing the pre-observation survey, each completer was observed for thirty minutes by two researchers, who took running notes during the observation. The researchers then used the Danielson Framework to score completer performance. The Danielson Framework generates ratings of teaching across 22 components of teaching, which are organized into four domains: 1) Planning and Preparation, 2) The Classroom Environment, 3) Instruction, and 4) Professional Responsibility. A score of 1 is considered "Unsatisfactory", and a 4 is "Distinguished". Given completers' induction status, the EPP's expectation was for completers to earn a mean score between 2.51 and 3.0 on the rubric, and an overall 66 out of 88 (75%) available points. At the end of the observation, the two researchers independently scored the participant on Domains 1-3 of the Danielson Framework, then met to gain consensus. As noted by Danielson (2013):

> The Framework for Teaching identifies those aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning. While the Framework is not the only possible description of practice, these responsibilities seek to define what teachers should know and be able to do in the exercise of their profession (p. 1).

Domain 4 was scored after the observation and an interview with the school principal to evaluate the participant's scores regarding Professional Responsibilities. Observations took place between February and April 2023.

Post Observation Conference

Finally, the completers were also interviewed in a post conference regarding the lesson and the completer's perceptions of their undergraduate program experience. Interviews were semi-structured, with a guiding set of questions for completers to respond to. All interviews occurred via Zoom and lasted 25-30 minutes. Interviews were recorded and reviewed along with interviewer notes to verify findings.

Principal Interview

While on site, the researchers met with the principal to review the Danielson Framework's Professional Responsibility Domain, so that the completer could be evaluated based on the principal's knowledge of their work with their colleagues, families, and the community. The principal was also asked about the completer's performance at the school thus far. Notes were taken during the interviews, and scoring on the Danielson Framework was completed during the principal interview. Each interview took ten to fifteen minutes to complete. If the principal was unable to meet with the researchers, an email conversation occurred where principals were asked to rate the candidates on the Professional Responsibility domain and to provide general information about their work performance.

Data Analysis

The Danielson Framework was scored independently by each researcher conducting the observation; after the observation, the two researchers would meet to discuss scores, provide evidence from the observation to support the scores, and develop a consensus. Qualitative data from the pre-conference form, field notes, and post-conference were used to support the scores across each Domain. Additionally, the EPP looked at how completer scores aligned with candidate scores on the SCTS 4.0 Rubric, an EPP-wide proprietary instrument created by the South Carolina Department of Education and utilized in the internship semester.

Findings

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

Completers (n=14) earned lower mean scores for Domain 1, Planning and Preparation (See Table 2). In particular, setting instructional outcomes (2.69) was the area of greatest struggle. For this indicator, proficiency included opportunities for differentiation and outcomes that reflect different types of learning. Completers faced challenges with differentiation and thinking about ways to vary their lesson plan for groups of students rather than use a uniform activity with the entire class. Completers did demonstrate a clear understanding of the content itself and of instructional strategies (3.15). These discrepancies align with what is often seen in the EPP's teacher candidates scores on the SCTS 4.0 Rubric, who understand the content but are still learning how to differentiate their teaching.

Table 2. Domain 1 Mean Scores

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation					
1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy	1b: Demonstrating Knowledge of Students	1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes	1d: Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources	1e: Designing Coherent Instruction	1f: Designing Student Assessments
3.15	2.77	2.69	2.85	2.77	2.85

Domain 2: The Classroom Environment

Overall, completers earned the highest mean scores in Domain 2, the Classroom Environment. Scores were highest for creating an environment of respect and rapport (3.46),

followed by managing classroom procedures (3.38) and organizing physical space (3.38). In post interview conferences, completers discussed how their programs had prepared them in regard to creating a classroom environment, including teaching the value of grouping students for seating, allowing flexible working space, and establishing procedures early in the year. In all but one (secondary) classroom, students were grouped in sets of four to six. As noted by Elaine, "I use both the data and my students' conversations do decide how to group them. Who will they ask questions with, and how will those conversations go? It's not just a high, middle, and low student – there's more to it." These scores are like candidate scores on the Environment Domain of the SCTS 4.0 rubric, where candidates earn high scores for their abilities to create a respectful culture, manage behavior, and create a safe learning environment.

Table 3. Domain 2 Mean Scores

Domain 2: The Classroom Environment				
2a: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning	2c: Managing Classroom Procedures	2d: Managing Student Behavior	2e: Organizing Physical Space
3.46	3.08	3.38	3.23	3.38

Domain 3: Instruction

Completers earned the lowest mean score overall in the Instruction Domain, for using questioning and discussion techniques (2.54). As with differentiation, this is an area where the EPP's candidates tend to earn lower scores on the SCTS 4.0 Rubric; candidates and completers alike often asked questions but did not frequently ask students to explain their thinking or to justify their ideas, which was required to earn proficiency. Candidates earned higher mean scores for communicating with students, indicating strengths in conveying the content in an accurate and age-appropriate manner (2.92), and assessment (2.92). Throughout the observations, completers were regularly seen using both informal and formal assessment strategies, including recording notes on student work on post-it notes, watching small group activities and providing direct feedback, asking students to self-reflect, and listening to students as they shared their responses and thinking.

Table 4. Domain 3 Mean Scores

Domain 3: Instruction				
3a: Communicating with Students	3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	3c: Engaging Students in Learning	3d: Using Assessment in Instruction	3e: Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness
2.92	2.54	2.77	2.92	2.77

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

Overall, principals rated completers highly on the professional responsibilities indicators, with mean scores at 3.1 or higher for all six indicators. Candidates earned the highest mean

scores for communicating with families, participating in the professional community, growing and developing professionally, and showing professionalism (3.36 on all indicators). Principals were pleased with the graduates' contributions to the school community and shared that most completers not only engaged with their colleagues and students at work, but that they also attending student sporting events and community activities. As noted by one principal:

> Mr. J and Mr. M are above proficient at this stage of their careers in the domains you noted. Mr. J is already an excellent practitioner and was voted by his colleagues as the Rookie Teacher of the Year for [our school] and will move forward in our district ROY (Rookie of the Year) process. (Personal communication, March 20, 2023)

Table 5. Domain 4 Mean Scores

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities					
4a: Reflecting on Teaching	4b: Maintaining Accurate Records	4c: Communicating with Families	4d: Participating in the Professional Community	4e: Growing and Developing Professionally	4f: Showing Professionalism
3.1	3.18	3.36	3.36	3.36	3.36

Overall Performance

Because the rubric is based on a four-point scale, the EPP's goal was for completers to earn at overall mean score of 2.51 or higher, given their status as induction teachers. It was anticipated that completers may have lower scores on indicators related to instruction, based on completer performance on the SCTS 4.0 rubric and other measures used during the internship semester, where candidates tend to earn lower scores. Thirteen of the fourteen completers earned a 2.51 or higher; one completer earned a 2.45:

Participant	Mean Score
A	3.09
B	3.59
C	2.95
D	3.27
E	3.05
F	3.41
G	2.77
H	3.04
I	2.68
J	3.32
K	3.09
L	3.09
M	2.45
N	3.09

Because the sample sizes were small due to this being a pilot study, the EPP was not able to compare completer performance by graduation semester or program. In the future, the EPP plans to expand the study to collect data from more completer classrooms so that such comparisons may be made.

Conclusion

Overall, completers demonstrated strengths in their abilities to create a nurturing classroom environment, and for their abilities to engage in professional responsibilities. Completers earned lower scores for questioning and setting instructional outcomes, which aligned with previous findings from key assessments used while in the programs. The EPP will continue to work to develop candidate skills in differentiation and questioning strategies, so that completers will hopefully earn higher mean scores in the future.

References

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2017). CAEP standard 4 evidence: A resource for EPPs. http://caepnet.org/~/media/Files/caep/standards/guidancecomponent41september2017.pdf?la=en

Danielson, C. (2013). The framework for teaching evaluation instrument, 2013 instructionally focused edition. http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/danielson-teacher-rubric-2013-instructionally-focused.pdf