Winthrop University Initial Licensure Employer/Supervisor Survey
Summary and Reflection

Winthrop University has an active and engaged Partnership Network in which nine surrounding school districts are members. It is in these districts where a high majority of teacher candidates are placed for early clinical, field, and internship experiences. Thus, many candidates remain in the districts and assume full-time positions upon graduation.

Principals were asked to respond to a survey about recent graduates (new to the profession in the last one to three years). Questions measured employer perceptions in general as well as gathered data comparing Winthrop-prepared teachers to other educators. We present a summary of the data followed by action steps taken in response to the results.

Employer Data Summary and Trends

The EPP received 22 responses for the 2021 report. This included 15 elementary schools, five middle, and two high school. Twelve of the schools identified as high poverty (50% or more) and seven as rural. Teachers being evaluated represented multiple content areas (early childhood – 6, elementary – 7, middle level – 3, music – 1, high school social studies – 1, art – 1, and special education – 3).

Table 1 provides an overview of the results. Colored rows will be used in analyzing and reflecting up on the data.

Table 1. Employer Survey Results by number and percentage

Compared to recent graduates from other preparation programs, describe the WU graduate's ability to…	**Much stronger**	**Stronger**	**Similar**	**Slightly weaker**
Use assessment strategies to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses	7 (32%)	6 (27)	7 (32)	2 (9)
Use/develop assessments to guide instruction	8 (36)	6 (27)	6 (27)	2 (9)
Effectively manage the classroom	6 (27)	8 (36)	6 (27)	2 (9)
Establish a positive learning environment	10 (45)	7 (32)	4 (18)	1 (5)
Use pedagogical techniques and strategies to foster students' critical, creative, and evaluative thinking	8 (36)	6 (27)	6 (27)	2 (9)
Use teaching and learning strategies that reflect students' cultural and/or socioeconomic backgrounds	9 (41)	5 (23)	5 (23)	3 (13)
Use teaching and learning strategies that accommodate student's individual learning needs	8 (36)	6 (27)	7 (32)	1 (5)
Create an engaging learning environment	11 (50)	5 (23)	5 (23)	1 (5)
Use appropriate strategies to address literacy development across the curriculum	7 (32)	6 (27)	7 (32)	2 (9)
Use appropriate technological tools to facilitate students learning	10 (45)	6 (27)	2 (9)	4 (18)

Demonstrate knowledge and conceptual understanding of the subject matter	9 (41)	5 (23)	7 (32)	1 (5)
Demonstrate pedagogical content knowledge	11 (50)	3 (14)	7 (32)	1 (5)
Adhere to the code of ethics and principles of professional conduct of the education profession	13 (59)	6 (27)	1 (5)	2 (9)
Engage in continuous improvement for professional role	10 (45)	4 (18)	8 (36)	0
Use effective communication techniques with students	11 (50)	5 (23)	6 (27)	0
Work effectively with education professionals, parents and/or other stakeholders	10 (45)	5 (23)	7 (32)	0

Items marked in green represent more than 70% of respondents suggest Winthrop graduates are stronger or much stronger than those prepared elsewhere. The highest at 86% included adherence to ethics are professional conduct. Following at 75% was establishing a positive learning environment. A foundation of Winthrop's program is the idea of inclusive learning environments – valuing diversity and understanding students as individual learners. With a respective 73%, effective student communication and engaging learning environment scored above average by employers. These items suggest Winthrop graduates are well prepared in creating positive and engaging places for students to learn.

Yellow items are those for which over 40% of respondents marked Winthrop graduates as similar or slightly weaker (no responses were given in any category for significantly weaker). Although candidates take required Read to Succeed courses and those are prepared as defined by the State, continued efforts are needed in this area. Literacy faculty continue to work with districts to prepare candidates for processes and integration; however, this can be a difficult task given the variety of "programs" that differ by district. Diagnosing student strengths and weaknesses is also an area for improvement with 41% similar or slightly weaker than others. Candidates engage in a specific assessment course (EDCO 220/605) early in the program and then apply learned skills in future work including the edTPA. Consideration of feedback is provided in the next section.

Although holistically average results, two items resulted in higher than average numbers ranked "slightly weaker." Using technology tools to facilitate learning (4 responses) suggest candidates could have used additional preparation, most likely, in virtual teaching. The Winthrop curriculum focuses on the integration of technology to meet individual student needs versus how to use specific equipment. Understandably, this was a critical need during the pandemic. Faculty provided extra resources and practice in these areas; however, time did not allow for in depth preparation for virtual and multi-modal teaching. Three responses suggest slightly weaker performance in using strategies that reflect cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. This is surprising given the extensive preparation candidates receive in this area. With field experiences in working with students in poverty, multi-lingual learners, and students with identified disabilities, candidates are afforded direct interactions with and opportunities to

integrate research-based strategies. Elementary and early childhood programs tended to characterize the "slightly weaker" ratings. Given these two areas compose over half of the respondent pool, this is not unexpected.

The survey did allow for general comments at the end. Two quotes are notable and were shared with EPP faculty.

- Winthrop has a top notch program. We have yet to hire a Winthrop grad that we aren't impressed with. Winthrop prepares students well and the internship set up is exactly what it should be. If only they could all be Winthrop grads....
- Winthrop graduates outperform teachers from other universities.

Data-Driven Actions

In general, additional information is needed to guide improvement actions so a "comment" box will be added in future surveys for each item. Specifically, the following changes are in place that reflect continuous improvement based upon employer data:

- The EPP has instituted a *Supplemental Education Experience* (SEE) program through which candidates engage in professional development much like practicing teachers. These "events" are worth credits that candidates must accrue from specific categories for program progression. The SEE program was developed and is implemented in collaboration with Partnership Network schools through which school liaisons, teachers, and administrators often participate and even lead events. Events such as educator diversity, parent communication, empowering diverse learners, and demystifying disabilities allow candidates (and practicing teachers) to build skills beyond traditional coursework and are responsive to completer suggestions.
- Alignment with edTPA and use of Advisory Council (university and school partner pedagogy groups) feedback led to a revision of assignments in EDCO 220/602 (courses in the foundation of assessment practices). A focus on selecting appropriate assessments is a focus as well as data analysis. The Advisory Council continues to explore practical application of assessment practice through collaboration with content field experiences, which hopefully will result in stronger candidates over the next few years.
- The EDCO 305/602 inclusive technology course Advisory Council worked to engage candidates in creating activities for Partnership Network teachers to use during the pandemic. These activities were in direct request from teachers who submitted requests through a survey. Additionally, a pilot program of pairing candidates with a partner teacher identified as a "technology influencer" is providing an opportunity for mentorship from practicing educators who regularly implement best practice in technology integration.