



2017 Nebraska First Year Teacher Survey
Comments to Inform Teacher Preparation Initiatives
A Statewide Analysis
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Introduction

Prior to completing the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments to inform efforts surrounding teacher preparation in Nebraska. These comments yielded rich information from principals and teachers themselves on areas that preparation institutions should focus on to improve the quality, experience, and preparedness of teachers that are produced. In order to present a structured overview of the opinions provided, a content analysis was conducted on the responses to the open-ended survey questions. The open-ended questions are worded as follows:

<i>Question 15</i> “Comments to inform [name of preparation institution] with its continuing improvement efforts toward preparing classroom-ready teachers.”
<i>Question 16</i> “Comments to inform all Nebraska teacher preparation programs to better prepare first year teachers for evolving needs in Nebraska schools.”

Methodology

Survey comments were coded at an individual level, and each comment or response was coded on two key elements: (1) sentiment and (2) theme. The sentiment refers to the attitude reflected by the response provided and may be coded as positive, neutral, or negative. The theme refers to the identified topic found in the comment. Note that a given comment may have more than one topic as principals and teachers may highlight a number of areas for preparation institutions to consider. In developing the coding scheme for the themes, the 12 Model Core Teaching Standards as identified by the Council of Chief State School Officers Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) was used. Since these standards are nationally recognized as indicators of teacher quality and are consistent with teacher evaluations during the clinical experience of first year teachers, aligning the themes behind the comments with the InTASC standards can best inform institutions how to evaluate, adapt, and improve teacher preparation programs in their current forms.

Additionally, for comments provided by principals, the target of the response was also coded. The target refers to who the response was aimed at: the teacher or the institution. Since the first full implementation of the Nebraska First Year Teacher Survey (NFYTS) in 2015, principals have often provided comments on the first year teacher instead of on the teacher preparation program (what the questions ask for). Thus, this element was coded to assess the quality and accuracy of the responses.

Comments like “None,” “N/A,” and “No comment” were excluded from the content analysis. All results are presented at the statewide level and disaggregated by respondent role (teacher or principal).

Results for Question 15

“Comments to inform [name of preparation institution] with its continuing improvement efforts toward preparing classroom-ready teachers.”

Approximately 45% of principal respondents (n = 260) provided information for question 15, while almost 60% of teacher respondents (n = 316) answered question 15.

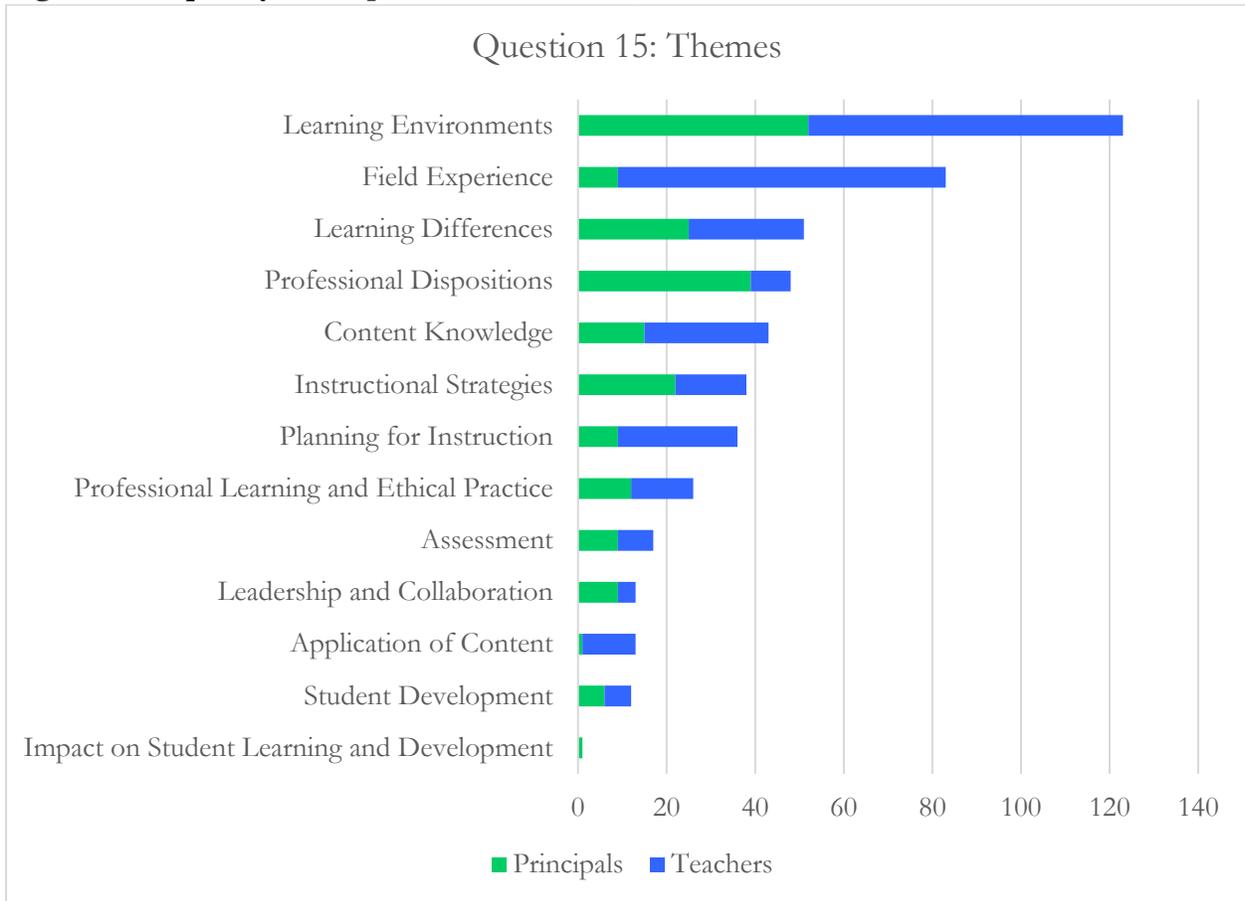
A larger proportion of principals (n = 99) provided positive comments as compared to teachers (n = 52). Nonetheless, these positive comments were mostly directed at the individual first year teacher instead of the teacher preparation program. Overall, the majority of principals and teachers were neutral in their comments to inform the preparation institution with its continuing improvement efforts (see Table 1).

Table 1. Response Target and Sentiment for Question 15

Respondent	Target	Sentiment			Total
		Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Principal	Teacher	77	13	15	257
	Institution	22	128	2	
Teacher		52	240	23	315

The frequency of themes in the comments given by principals and teachers is displayed in Figure 1. The two most frequently mentioned themes as indicated by respondents are learning environments and field experience. The theme of learning environments revolved around classroom management issues, especially with engaging students and dealing with behavioral problems. Both principals and teachers alike commented on the need for more preparation in the area of classroom management. Although not one of the 12 Model Core Teaching Standards, the theme of field experience was also frequently mentioned in the responses to question 15, especially by teachers. Responses with this theme underscored the importance of having real-life experiences in the classroom prior to beginning the first year of teaching. This helps teachers be prepared for the reality of teaching, as teachers have commented on the exceptional value of their practicums or, conversely, the need for more time spent in actual classrooms.

Figure 1. Frequency of Response Themes for Question 15



Results for Question 16

“Comments to inform all Nebraska teacher preparation programs to better prepare first year teachers for evolving needs in Nebraska schools.”

Approximately 31% of principal respondents (n = 177) provided information for question 16, while nearly 40% of teacher respondents (n = 199) answered question 16.

An overwhelming majority of principals and teachers provided neutral comments to inform statewide programs with evolving needs in schools. Unlike the responses to question 15, almost 95% of responses (n = 166) provided by principals correctly targets the preparation programs. The breakdown of response target (only for principals) and sentiment are shown in Table 2.

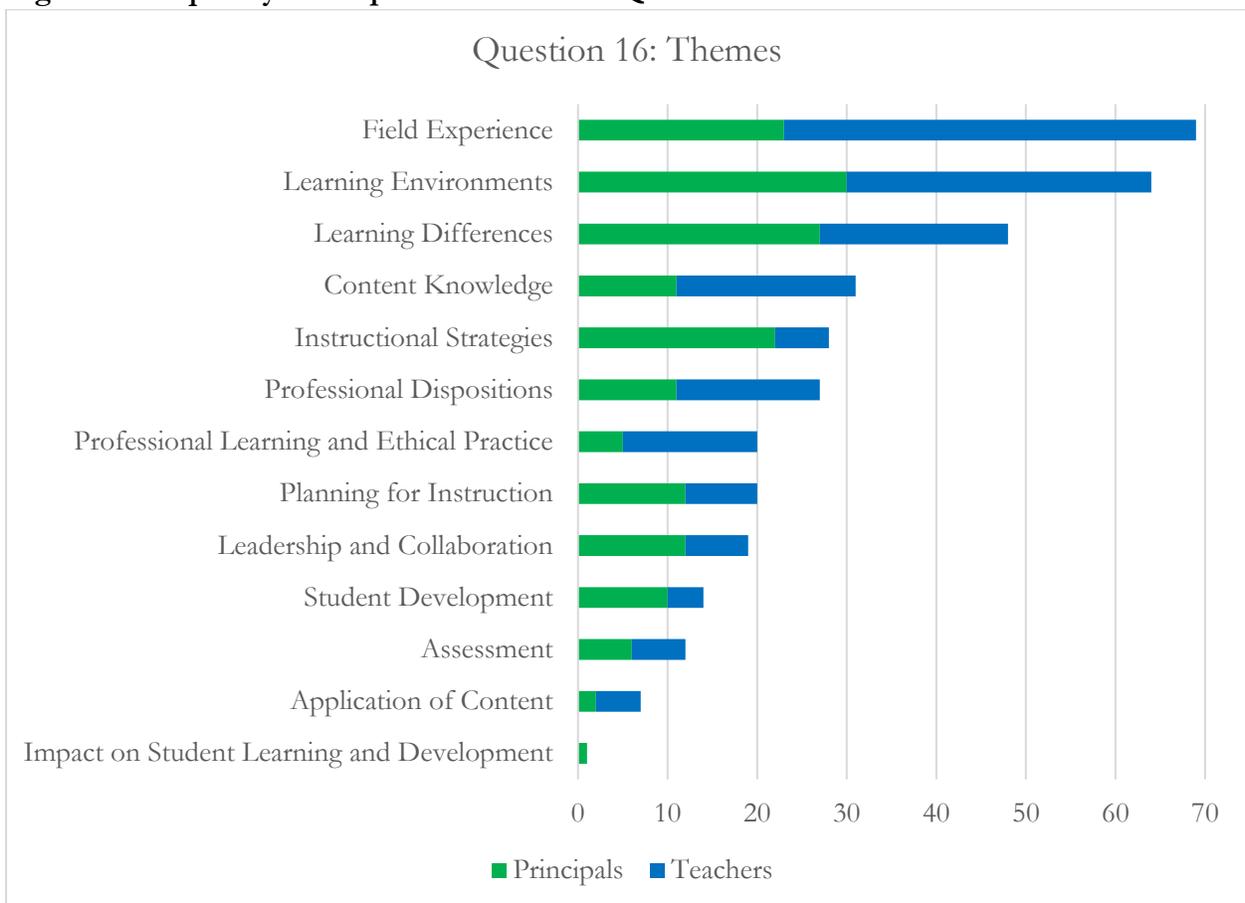
Table 2. Response Target and Sentiment for Question 16

Respondent	Target	Sentiment			Total
		Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Principal	Teacher	6	1	1	176

	Institution	1	165	2	
	Teacher	10	176	11	197

Figure 2 displays the frequency of response themes for question 16. Similar to that of question 15, the top two themes that were mentioned the most are field experience and learning environments. This is not a surprising result as question 16 asks respondents for the same piece of information as question 15, but for the utility of *all* Nebraska teacher preparation programs. Thus, principals and teachers highlighted the necessity of preparing first year teachers in the area of classroom management, and providing more field experience for students in the program before they graduate and step into the classroom as teachers for the first time.

Figure 2. Frequency of Response Themes for Question 16



Recommendations for the Survey Process

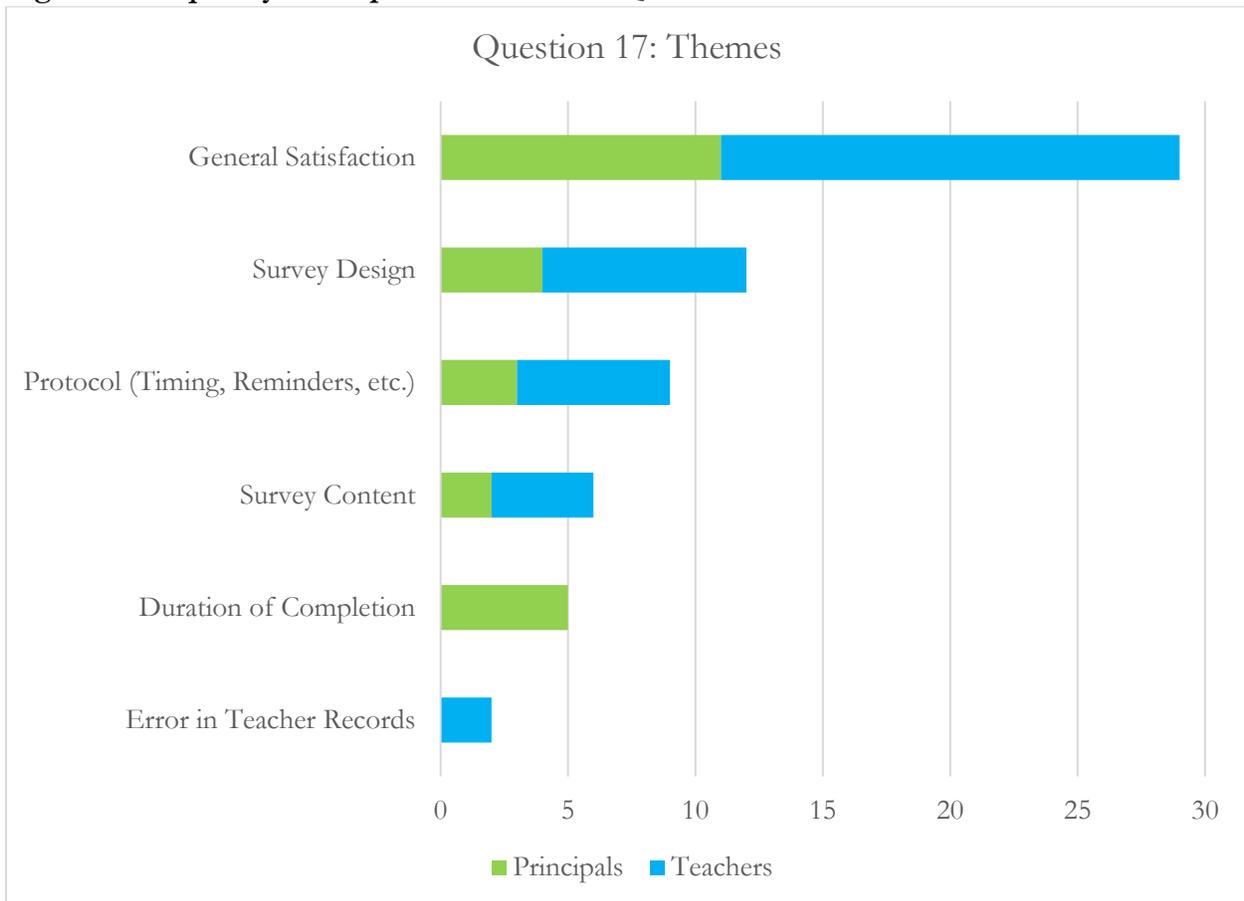
Further analyses was conducted on other aspects of the survey to identify several recommendations for the Nebraska Department of Education. These analyses are described as follows:

- 1) A content analysis on responses to question 17: *“Comments which can help the Nebraska Department of Education improve this survey process.”*

- 2) A test of differences in the time taken to respond to the Nebraska First Year Teacher Survey.

Figure 3 shows the themes found in the responses provided to question 17. A majority of the responses reflected respondents' general satisfaction with the survey, especially that of teachers. However, the first year teacher respondents also described the terminology in the survey as being slightly difficult to understand and would have preferred having more open-ended questions to express their thoughts. On the other hand, principals with multiple first year teachers described the multiple survey requests as being too burdensome.

Figure 3. Frequency of Response Themes for Question 17



Since this marked the first time the Nebraska First Year Teacher Survey was also sent to teachers, it was interesting to investigate the differences, if any, between principals and teachers in the time taken to complete the survey. Data for this analysis was obtained by Qualtrics, the survey software used for the NFYTS, which recorded the total duration of each survey session. Upon running a *t*-test on the results, a statistically significant difference in completion time was found between principals and first year teachers. Specifically, teachers were taking an average of 7 minutes to complete the survey while principals only took an average of 5 minutes to complete the survey. Since this 2-minute difference between principals and teachers was found to be significant, it

informs us about the possibility that teachers may be processing the survey questions at a slower rate and trying to provide new pieces of information with every survey question. As shown in the responses to question 17, several teachers commented on the terminology that is new to them as first year teachers. This may also be a reason why teachers were taking longer than principals, on average, as they completed the survey.

For the next iteration of the Nebraska First Year Teacher Survey that is sent to teachers and principals, several modifications can be made to the survey process and design:

- 1) Provide more open-ended questions in the survey.
- 2) Simplify terminology of the survey questions.
- 3) Randomly sample a subset of teacher records for principals with multiple first year teachers in the building to prevent too many requests being sent out to a single principal. While this comes at the cost of lesser information, burden on the principals can be reduced and higher quality data may be obtained.

Appendix

The boxplots that follow display the distribution of the time taken to complete the survey (in seconds); specifically, from bottom to top, each line of a box shows the minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, and maximum values.

Figure 4. Boxplot of Time Taken (in Seconds) to Complete the Survey (Principal)

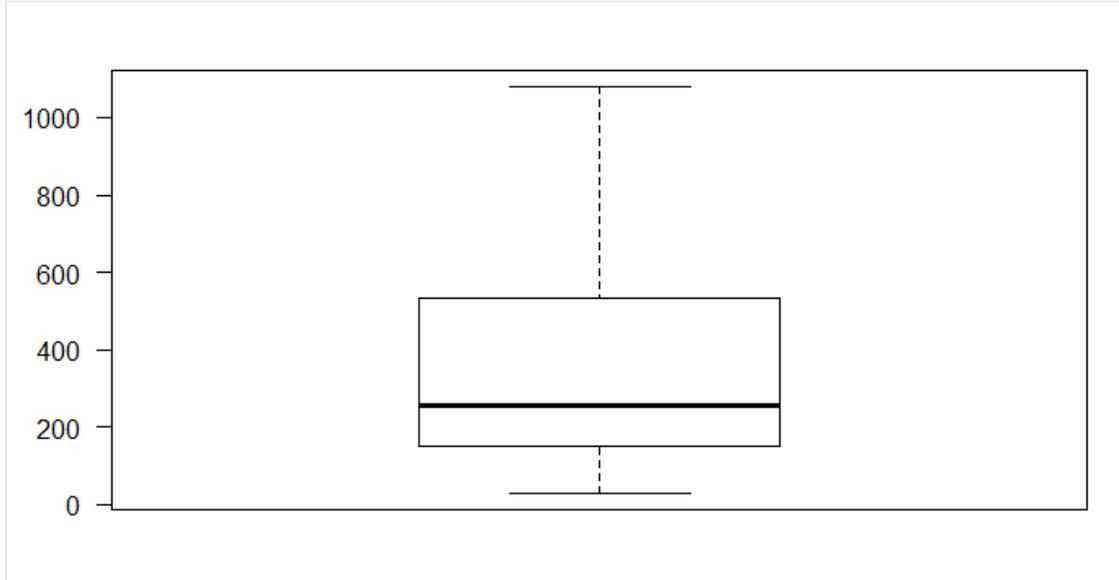


Figure 5. Boxplot of Time Taken (in Seconds) to Complete the Survey (Teacher)

