



2019 Nebraska First Year Teacher Survey
Comments to Inform Teacher Preparation Initiatives
A Statewide Analysis
March 13, 2020

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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:

Question 15

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

Question 16

“Comments which can help the Nebraska Department of Education improve this survey process.”

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 responses provided and may be coded as positive, neutral, or negative. The theme refers to the identified topics 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 (CCSSO) Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) was used as reference. 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.

Comments like “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 33% of principals (n = 215) provided information for question 15, while 54% of teacher respondents (n = 334) answered question 15.

Out of principals who provided comments for Q15, 44% of comments were positive while only 9% of comments were negative. On the part of the teachers, a larger proportion of their comments were neutral (approximately 64%) (See Table 1).

Table 1. Response Sentiment for Question 15

Respondent	Sentiment			Total
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Principal	95	97	19	211
Teacher	99	214	21	334

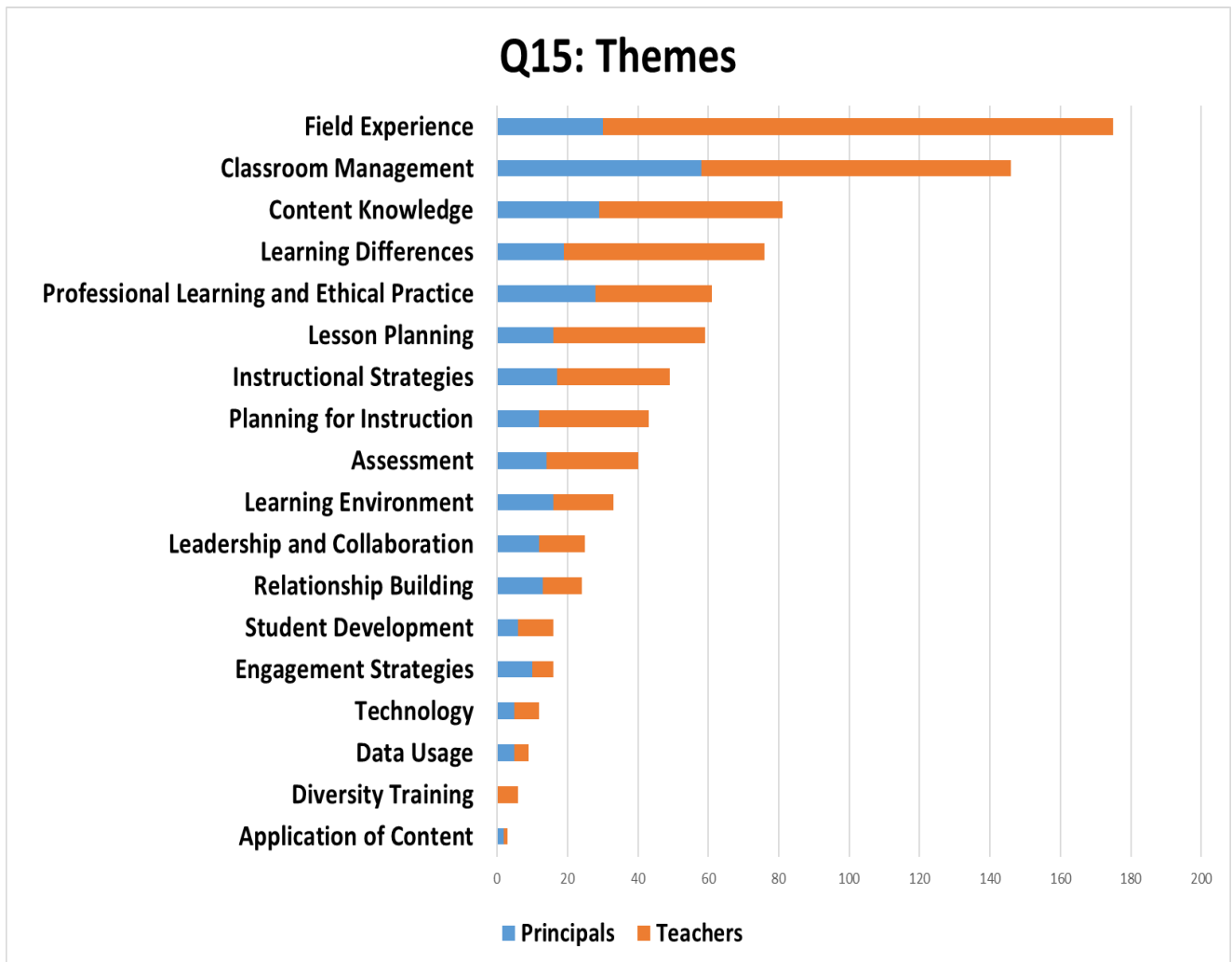
The frequency of themes in the comments given by principals and teachers is displayed in Figure 1. The four most frequently mentioned themes as indicated by respondents are Field Experience, Classroom Management, Content Knowledge and Learning Differences.

Although it is not one of the 12 Model Core Teaching Standards, the theme of Field Experience was frequently mentioned in the responses to question 15, especially by teachers. The theme of Field Experience revolves around the need for teachers to provide variety of experiences in the field prior to beginning the first year of teaching.

The comments underscored the critical need for providing hands-on experience in order to prepare new 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 to 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.

Both principals and first year teachers alike commented on the need for more preparation in the area of Classroom Management. Particularly most of the teachers and principals mentioned preparation in the area of dealing with Student Behavior. Likewise, several principals and teachers commented on the need for more training in the area of Behavior Management and Special Education.

Figure 1. Frequency of Response Themes for Question 15



Recommendations for the Survey Process

To assist the Nebraska Department of Education in identifying potential areas for improvement of the survey process, a question to receive comments about the survey process was included in the survey. A majority of the responses to Question 16: “*Comments which can help the Nebraska Department of Education improve this survey process.*” reflected respondents’ general satisfaction with the survey. Some principals and teachers complained about the survey timing out before completion. On the positive side, principals appreciated having multiple reminders while on the other hand, principals with multiple first year teachers described the multiple survey requests as being too burdensome. Some responses to Question 16, however, reflected a lack of understanding of the question and hence, some principals and teachers provided comments which were directed toward preparation institutions about the first year teacher rather than comments about the survey process.



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) Modify the open-ended questions in the survey to reduce duplication of responses.
- 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

Figure 2. Sentiment of Comments for Q15 (Principals)

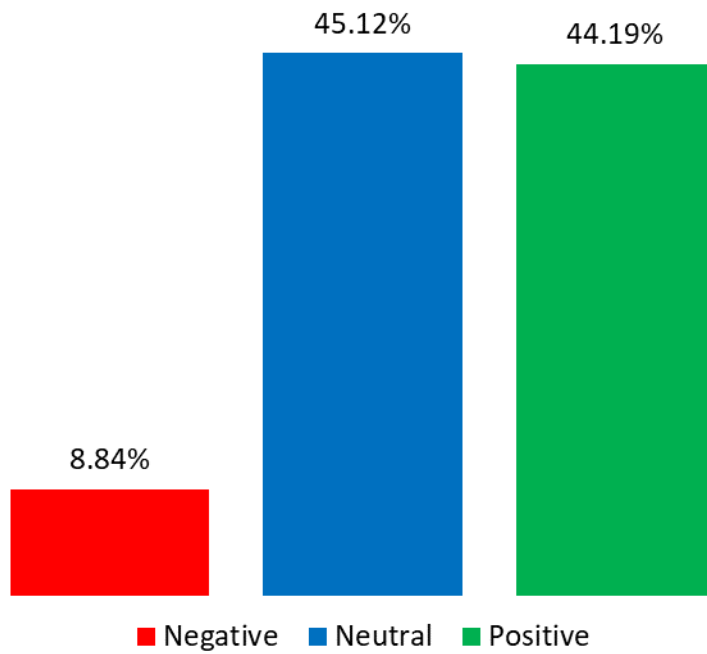


Figure 3. Sentiment of Comments for Q15 (Teachers)

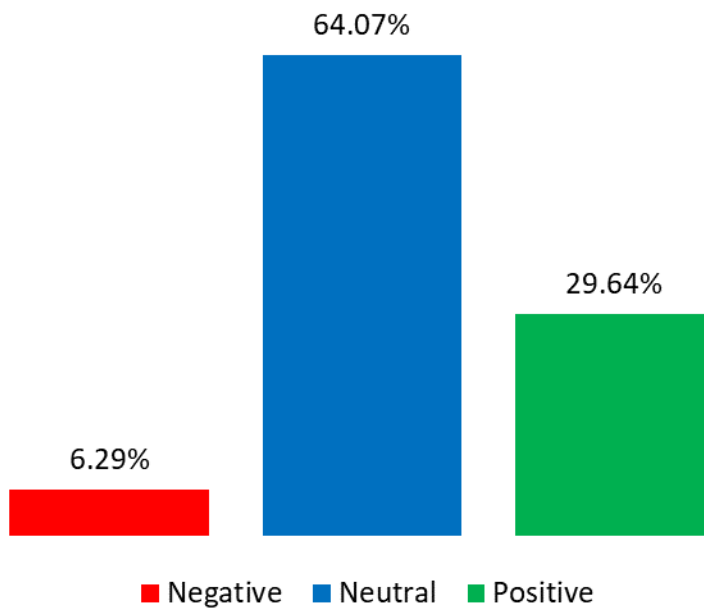
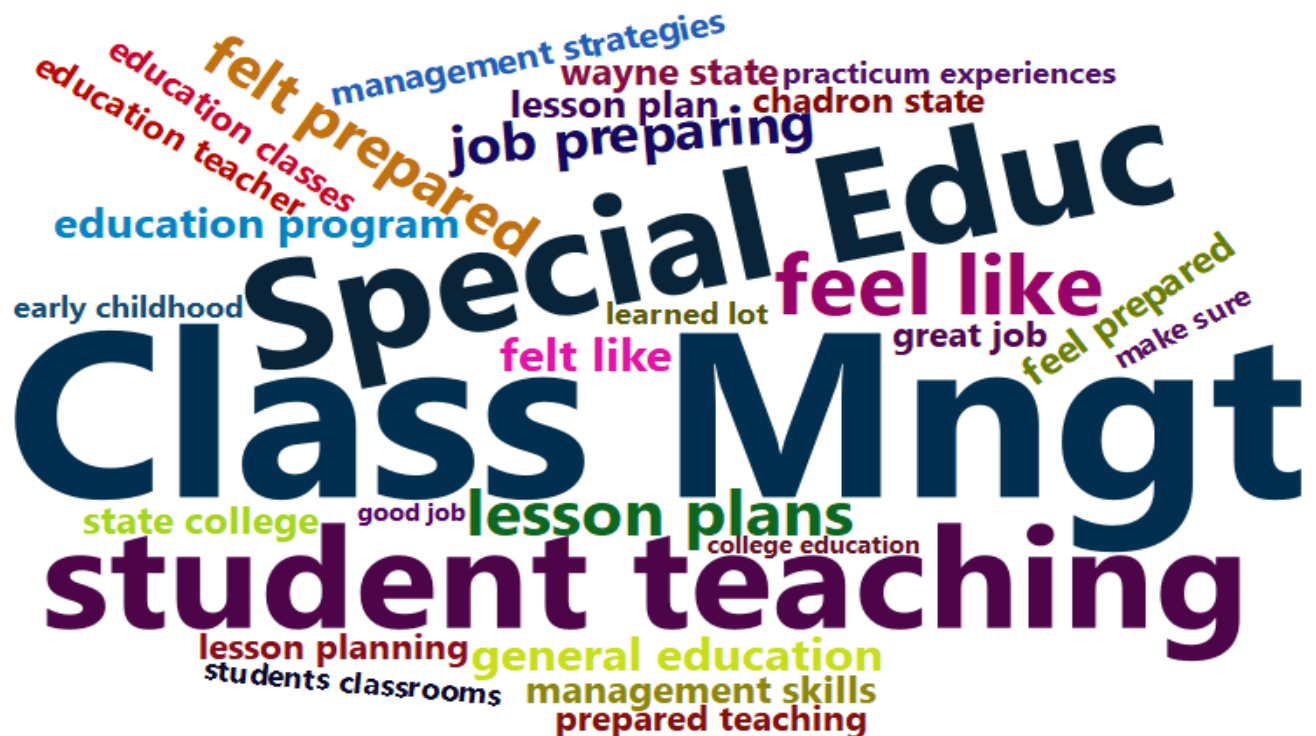


Figure 4. Word Cloud of Comments in Q15 (Principals)



Figure 5. Word Cloud of Comments in Q15 (Teachers)



Note: “Class Mngt” in the word cloud represents for Classroom Management, and “Special Educ” represents Special Education.