Missouri First Year Teacher Survey, 2012: Northwest Missouri State University
Responses to open-ended questions

20. What has been the most difficult classroom challenge you have faced when striving to meet the needs of students?

Total N: 56

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aligning grade level curriculum in the special education setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior of the students. I am in an urban environment and urban students are very different from suburban or rural students. I feel as though universities teach to the masses...as in they prepare us for teaching in the suburbs. I was not prepared for the learning styles, behaviors, or challenges that an urban environment provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being in a self-contained classroom setting, my bigest challenge has been implementing curriculum and working with regular education teachers to schedule my students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management and parent communication has been difficult. How do I motivate the students? How do I redirect without disrupting? Pacing is also difficult, how long will this lesson take? How long should the writing process last those type of things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management. I feel confident in my content knowledge, but they don't prepare you to really TEACH.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complying with all the different IEPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a classroom environment where behavior is under control and focus can be on learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with other staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiating instruction for special education students while at-risk students are also in the classroom. At times it is difficult to meet all the needs and have students using all time effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to the fact that I instruct special education, the beginning of the year was most challenging while I figured out each specific instructional levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figuring out how each student learns individually and trying to meet every student's need and not leave any students behind either because they are low in ability or high and are bored while also trying to contain classroom management while handling classroom behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding has been the most difficult thing. Many of the materials to take students' learning above and beyond understanding to application and synthesis are not able to be purchased through the school. I would have no problem with purchasing these materials with my own money; however, I barely make enough to pay the bills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining that needed experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am teaching a different subject than I majored in and it has been very hard to adjust to different curriculum. In my current area, there are many different academic levels in one class setting and it has been very difficult to meet each students individual need in a timely manner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have found that the hardest challenge has been my principal, while teaching at Hosea Elementary School. I have seen very little support for any actual behavior encouragement or behavior correction. When asked a question about something, I was usually delegated to someone else or made to feel completely inferior and treated like a child. It is really difficult to make any sort of positive change when your principal is holding the entire school back.

I need to be more organized with my student portfolios. I am in special education and this is very important so that I can show that I keeping in sync with the students IEP’s.

I teach developmental math classes and the behaviors I encounter in my classroom are not ones I was taught to handle in my education classes.

Incorporating all the types of student learning.

Lack of parent support in the home for behavior, respect, and homework completion assistance.

Lesson plans that reflect the curriculum

Meeting every student where they need to be met. I have students reading at almost a 3rd grade level in 1st grade and then I have students that are barely reading.

My age. I appear so young and sometimes it is difficult for the students to differentiate between teacher and how young I look. I dress appropriately and I make sure the line is clear, but sometimes students forget I am not as young as I look. Only time will help this one. Eventually, after time, students learned respect for me as a teacher, but it was difficult at first.

My class is very large-25 Kindergartners. And there is a huge gape between their academic levels. I don't have many "middle" learners. I have high learners and low learners, so it's hard to teach in a way that really benefits all of their needs or challenges them, sometimes.

n/a

None.

Not all students are going to meet my expectations and not all students are going to be perfect

Parent Involvement.

Preparing differentiated lessons for the varying types of learners in my classes

Preparing the materials has been my largest challenge. I feel like I spend hours upon hours getting everything ready.

Providing formative feedback and maintaining feedback practices.

Pushing the high students, while meeting the needs of middle students, and not losing the low ones.

Remembering that some may need extra time to work on assignments.

Setting up a well organized classroom.

Students with behavior problems.

The lack of communication between students/teachers and parents.

The most difficult classroom challenge has been working with students with special needs. I feel that I was not completely prepared for that. We discussed it in classes, but to actually have a student with special needs and work with them is different than sitting in a class and learning about it.
The most difficult classroom challenge I have faced when striving to meet the needs of my students is trying to differentiate instruction to meet with all students individually on a day to day basis. It is challenging to meet and confer with some of my high students when I have to meet with my low students all the time. I am working on that. :)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The pace of teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time management with paperwork and meeting the needs of my students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to reach the lower level kids and push the upper level kids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give the same amount of attention to every student in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating students fairly while getting them to follow directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to help every child learn and be their best.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When coming into my classroom, my room was practically empty. I had old textbooks, but no other resources (besides a few science materials in the closet). I had to buy everything else on my own. Therefore, I had to create about everything myself, which was fine, but it took a LOT of time. I wish I could have had more things to work with.

| Working with a teaching assistant as a team in classroom management when they have their own beliefs and practices and have not been trained in education. |
| Working with other teachers in a CT setting, with teachers that don't like when students are pulled out. Collaborating with teachers in a CT setting that would rather me be a "push in" type of teacher for special education. |
| Working with students who are on different levels. It is very difficult to find the time to reteach basic skills that some students are lacking, while others are very advanced or on level. Even with tutoring after school and intervention times, these students still continue to struggle. |
21. What is the single most important area that teacher preparation programs should strengthen?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total N: 56</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2 areas that I felt I needed to be more prepared for would have been classroom management as well as time management.

- Classroom management
- Classroom management
- Classroom management
- Classroom management
- Classroom Management
- Classroom Management
- Classroom management
- Classroom management
- Classroom management
- Classroom management and experience prior to graduation.
- Classroom management and teacher cooperation.
- Classroom management techniques
- Classroom mangt.
- Connecting classroom management with content instruction.
- creating IEPs, how to take data, IEP meetings
- Creating units lesson plans/ideas for a variety of topics in multiple grade levels
- Effectively writing an IEP
- Embedded assessment teaching
- Formative and summative assessment
- Front-loading preservice teachers with professional education literature and models currently used in most schools. Examples being Lucy Calkins, Deb Miller, the workshops approaches. I heard about the workshops but they were never fully explained and since they are so widely used it would be a good thing to address as most schools are looking for teachers with an understanding of the workshop model.
- Get rid of them.
- Getting to know others from different schools.
- Give each student a copy of Harry Wong’s First Days of School. Nothing in school prepared me for this year... except reading that book on my own.
- how to build relationships with parents.
- How to deal with parents, co-workers and unresponsive students. It is very difficult to get that experience through college classes. Videos showing examples of how to deal with discouraged parents, unreliable co-workers, and students who refuse to work would really help new teachers succeed. Unless a new teacher has a strong mentor, these issues can be detrimental.
- I am unsure. I believe the teacher preparation program did everything they needed to provide me the tools to be effective. Having experience in the class is the most beneficial and more would probably be of assistance.
I really don’t know because the Northwest program is very thorough. They have prepared me for most of the daily activities that I will encounter. The real test comes when you come into the classroom the first day and I did not feel overwhelmed at all.

I wish I would have been a little more prepared on preparing my students for the MAP test and soon to be the common core standards. In college, we don’t really talk about testing strategies to pass on to our students to ensure they do their best. Fortunately, I am part of a great team and a wonderful district where I get that support.

In class experience.

Legal issues. Strengthen classes that focus on contracts, insurance, MSTA and MNEA organizations, any basic legal rights you have as a professional in the school setting.

Make the Kagan Cooperative Learning training a requirement. I don't know how anyone effectively teaches without Kagan's ideas.

Many public high schools lack the amount of technology that is practiced within the average college level course.

Matching the standards to fit assessments.

More classroom management skills.

More experience with lesson planning. There is too much emphasis on the forms and not the actual lessons.

More realistic teaching of what the classroom is actually going to be like. Possibly even more time in a classroom setting.

More time in the classroom. It allows for on hands experience rather than learning from a book.

Northwest Missouri State University did an excellent job! I wouldn’t change anything about my teacher preparation program.

Overall, I had a great experience. In my situation more online classes would have been beneficial.

Preparation programs should focus more on the realizations of working collaboratively with other professionals besides teachers within the school districts.

Real life experiences in the classroom

School Politics. How to properly run through channels without stepping on toes and how to fill out different sets of paperwork. It’s hard to learn on the run.

Standards based learning and teaching standardized test prep.

technology usage

The amount of actual real life experiences. Those are very important and a great way to learn first hand. I feel my university prepared me well in this aspect, and I hope that every person studying elementary education gets as much practical experience as I did. It is very important to be in the classroom from very early on and that is where I gained a lot of my practical classroom knowledge.

The amount of information conveyed about how special education works and to inform teacher more about specific disabilities rather than a broad overview.

The single most important area that teacher prep programs should strengthen is preparing non-special education instructors for working with students in their classrooms with behavior problems and learning disabilities that are not “identified” and do not get special education services.
The single most important area that teacher preparation programs should strengthen is teaching strategy variation. I was taught in only one way; therefore, it has been difficult for me to relate my content area's information in different perspectives or through different format.

Universities should focus more on diversity in the classroom. I'm currently at an urban school, and aside from my student teaching I had no preparation for this environment.

What to do those first two weeks of school is extremely important and can make or break your year. Teaching teachers how to prepare for the first day (ie syllabus, room setup, etc.) and how to teach the processes of a functioning classroom is necessary for effective content teaching later down the road.

What to do when all of your classroom management strategies don't work for one child in your room.
Missouri First-Year Teacher Survey (Principals), 2012: Northwest Missouri State University
Responses to open-ended questions
Data unavailable: response rate for this report too small.