

Principal Focus Groups

April 26, 2016

TOPIC ONE

What can ASU do to prepare teachers to use technology to enhance student learning?

a. What skills have you noticed that ASU teachers lack?

b. What resources are should be available to teachers during their preparation?

Group 1:

Secondary: They can work with ipads and social media but nor formal things like Google Classroom.

Communication with parents and other people in the school through technology – they need to be able to speak professionally through school email – be aware of tone

Elementary You don't have a conference on email or text with parent

It's not that they don't know how to use Word, but they are used to doing it in Texting or FB.

Admin: She let her guard down and it's a friend to friend type of thing back and forth and they say or do something too friendly. Fear of dealing with parents and how to talk to them.

They need to understand how to leverage technology in their learning. They need to be able to take a lesson and say how can I differentiate the lesson and have the student show me what they know. What are online resources my kids can go to? It's not about the hardware of software, it's about what I want my kids to do. Targeting student instruction and leveraging student instruction

Middle school – how do you keep it from being a distraction in the classroom. Cell phones, apps, how do you monitor that?

It's not about the device, but the resources at your disposal.

Resources:

Elementary: Eduphoria, dmac, disaggregation instruments. They don't know who to go in there and look through test data and sort it on the program the school uses it.

Secondary: They're already overwhelmed and they have all these things to deal with, and then we throw technology at them. If they can be ahead of the game on things like eduphoria or technology resources for student data.

You can use things like Scoratic.com and use and break down that data.

Admin: we want them to rub elbows with people who know how to seamlessly use technology in the class and have them present to our students.

They are eager to learn and want to know what is available and how to use it. They aren't scared of it, give them the opportunity to learn it and use it well.

Group 2:

Secondary: They are more advanced. It would be nice if they could see a gradebook and attendance data-base so they can see one in advance.

I don't know how to call in (AESOP)

Eduphoria/Dmac – they need to know we have it and how to use it. It's nice for them to have real data to work with (Test and measurements)

Elem: SPED students don't know how to log in and do the IEPs and paperwork. Hands on experience. How do they log in and update files. ARD minutes, how to do it. If there is a place where there is mentor teacher then they have help at times.

Dmac has a demo program. Eduphoria is region X.

Good with what's available at the time. Smartboard, iPads, etc.

Resources: Simulation programs

Intervention programs, iStation, etc. How to track student growth (K-8). Problem is keeping up with what's out there. iStation has been around for a while.

Email: respect, call you by your first name. Email etiquette, what to put and what not put on email, FB. Some are able to communicate with colleagues and parents, but some can't. It depends on personality.

The younger generation can teach the older generation about technology.

Keeping them off their phones. They can't get away from their phones. When you're on duty, you need to be watching the kids. It's not a timer that needs to be watched at all times.

Group 3: All Elementary

They are good with everything. They can use Smartboards and mimio boards. They younger generation likes to take risks, they trouble shoot things on their own before they ask for help.

Using tech with student and getting them to use it to produce work. Flip the classroom, get the students to produce something. Use technology to do a presentation or something for the class. Even at elementary they can use the Chromebooks or iPads to produce products in the classroom. (Budget issues – can it allow)

Resources in SPED – familiarity with IEPs and how to put it in and make changes.

It's getting better. They are younger. Most girls aren't gamers so the guys are better at coming up with activities in the classroom because of that. Require the students to use technology in their lesson plans rather than the teacher using the computer to teach a lesson. How to find apps, programs, etc.

Social media – awareness of it and it's like putting it on the front page of the paper. If a parent or family member sees something like that on FB, it can be an issue.

Don't respond when you see someone post something on FB or boards, blogs.

Emails are public info. Anyone can get access to it if they go through the request process.

ASU students know how to use Remind and other apps.

Group 4:

Elem: They don't know how to use the Smartboard.

They have touch screens and so many things they can do with them, but it's overwhelming and they don't know what to do with that.

It's very specific to the campus/district so it's hard to prepare them for it. Schools don't have the money to buy something for everyone. They need to know how to take the programs/apps and how they can use them in the classroom.

Teach them/practice how to research on how to find things that work for them (research an app). If you have a specific need, then teach them how to find an app to fix that issue. Learning how to go out and find something that will make a difference. They need to be in the mindset that there is something out there and I need to know how to find it.

If they don't understand something, they need to go find a way to explain it. It's like a TEKS that you don't understand. Don't just stop at the first site you find. There are plenty of things out there and you need to figure out what works best for you. The self motivation to go out and find things is not there and they want you to hand them something. Tell them there is a need and have them research how to go find it.

They may be wanting things given to them because the supervising teacher still has a stake in what's going on in the classroom because their name is on everything. They need to learn how to use data systems such as Excel. They need to learn how to use it. How am I going to analyze the data.

Advanced degrees seem to focus more on data but undergrad programs need to teach it as well. What do they need to change, they can't say "I don't have time". They don't know how to work with the data.

Professionalism is a big part of this as well. Emails, social media, etc take over and they don't know how to talk to something. Things not put in emails – you need to be alert of what you put out there.

Make the students use technology in their lessons beyond just using the computer and iPad to present the lesson.

Group 5: Mixed

Instructional relevance. What is it for? If there are no ties to the instruction, why are we using it? It doesn't always apply.

What's effective? How does the brain work. It's not a babysitter. They need to be able to step back if the technology is not available. Don't use it like the parents use it, use it for a purpose or a goal.

Grade books – they know how to handle software programs, but what about what they are going to use. Look at things like Bb from the other side, what will it look like when you're a teacher in the classroom. This is what one might look.

Social media and email – using it as if it's personal not professional.. They forge that everyone can see it. You don't put emotion in emails or notes home, just say what they did and move on. Using all caps or all lowercase letters.

Referrals are public knowledge and you are showing your frustration and the parents can see it.

Resources: If we could offer something during the summer for the new technology available to teachers.

What does it mean to put technology in the hands of the students. Get past just doing it to do it. PP is the same as notes on the blackboard. What does it mean to incorporate technology in a science class. Having the kids create a PP is no different than writing notes on the overhead.

TCEA Conference – some districts send their teachers to this

Newer teachers use a lot apps such Quizlet and Remind.

Documentation on technology – document how you use it.

Group 6:

They know how to use it but they don't know how to integrate it into the classroom. Different technology in the districts. Exposure to Smartboards or other devices.

How do you integrate technology with things on your phones, chrombooks, touch screen chromebooks, Google apps.

Get the tech in the hands of the student – how are the teachers using in the classroom – get the kids involved with using it as well.

Creating interactive lessons – how does it promote what they're learning?

There has to be a product, you can learn to use it, but why?

Google is not a reference –

If you are going paperless with a lesson, they need to do screenshots or something that shows that they really did it and how do you know they “got it”. There has to be accountability for learning.

Resources:

They need to research what technology is out there and what apps (websites) are quality. There is a lot of free stuff but that doesn't mean it's good.

Make sure you use it first and know what's in it. Preview it. You have to monitor what the kids are doing and where they are going. They can get through the filters.

How are they going to use technology to enhance student learning and how to assess it.

Email and social media –

Emails not a problem

Email is evidence – it can be requested. Teachers shoot a quick email with caddy remarks that go to the wrong person.

There are good things like Remind and Dojo.

TOPIC TWO

What can our preparation program do to prepare teachers to work with a wide variety of students who have different needs so they may be successful:

All levels (elementary, middle, high) discussed the areas below more than any other areas (they were mentioned either at all six tables or five of the six tables):

- Differentiation/Differentiated Instruction
- Poverty
- Dyslexia/Section 504
- Special Pops
- ELL certification prior to graduation
- GT training prior to graduation

What we do well:

ASU candidates/graduates:

- come well prepared, are very intelligent, are open to trying new ideas, and are high performing.
- build connections well, are creative, and provide creative lessons.
- know about special populations, are open, have content knowledge, understand diversity, are good at building relationships, and are not afraid to ask questions.

Elementary

- **Special Pops (in general)**
 - Students need to know more about all special populations
 - It is one thing to be aware that there are differences in the classroom, but being able to teach those different populations all at once is entirely different
 - Differentiation beyond accommodations
 - How do you learn about/know the student, and then what do you do once you know the student?
 - Candidates need more “tools in the toolbox” but also need to be able to use the tools once they receive them
 - Compliance (in all aspects)

- **Special Education**
 - Students need to understand:
 - Paperwork
 - Legalities
 - Preparation for ARDs
 - IEP Paperwork
 - Acronyms
 - Conduct/how to sit in ARD meetings
 - What ARDs are
 - Know and understand the TEKS
 - Know whether the lesson they (the candidates) are creating really addresses what it should address
 - When it comes to general education candidates, teach them **not** to use the terminology “those kids/your kids” when referring to special education students
 - Have the clinical teachers (and students in Block, if necessary) meet with classroom teacher to discuss the special needs child(ren) in the class
 - Understand that **special education is the law**

- **Differentiation**
 - Once candidates know what the students look like, what does that teaching look like?
 - How can it be worked into clinical teaching?
 - How do you teach the average student?
 - How do you even differentiate lessons?
 - This is key to successful learning for students but is the most difficult part

- **ESL**
 - **ESL Certification** before they arrive at the district, otherwise they miss class time getting certified

- **Gifted/GT**
 - Can we ensure or encourage students to get the 30 hours of GT training prior to graduating? Otherwise, they miss class time (as with ESL, above) getting the training

- **Assessment**

- Formative/summative assessments
 - Differences between
 - How to use
- Using data to “drive” instruction

- **Poverty**
 - Ruby Payne
 - Can we create a module that addresses poverty (similar to the way we have the other modules)?
 - Candidates need to understand that home visits/bus rides through the neighborhood are not sufficient to understanding the poverty of many students
 - Understand where this student is coming from
 - How do you modify for this student?
 - How do you honestly address/work with this student?
 - Teacher population (white, middle class) often does not match student population
 - Do not often understand poverty
 - Do not understand how to connect
 - Often lower the expectations when they should not
 - Learn how to build the relationships

- **Field Experience**
 - Exposure early and often
 - Possibly first day so the candidates can “watch” the teacher set up classroom (management, organization, rules, etc.).
 - How can the experience be more valuable?
 - More specific experiences
 - More hands-on experiences

- **Dyslexia**
 - Know the difference between dyslexia and child development
 - Specific training (above what they receive in modules)
 - Know what it is (and is not)

- **Section 504**
 - Understand that 504 is legally binding
 - Know differences between 504 and special education
 - Know when to refer a student for 504 services

- **Miscellaneous**

- Can they learn about Lead4Ward?
- Can we teach them how to navigate the TEA website?
- Learn how to address students with specific disabilities
- What do good lesson plans look like?
- What happened to the reading program between SAISD and ASU/CoE? (STARS?)
- Ongoing training, ongoing staff development, however, both are difficult for rural districts due to extensive travel and expense (particularly for rural schools)
- Students of high privilege need to be understood, as well
- Receive cultural sensitivity training

Middle school

- **Dyslexia/504**

- Candidates need to view Dyslexia as Dyslexia/504
- Candidates also need to realize that just because a student reverses his/her letters, that student is not necessarily dyslexic
- Learn to read accommodations

High School

- **Gifted students**

- Gifted students are often left out
- Differentiation of lesson so that gifted students get what they need
- Understanding how to appropriately “challenge” gifted students and realizing that it does not mean more of the same work
- Address their needs before they become discipline issues
- Can candidates receive GT training (it is only 30 hours) prior to graduating?

- **ELL**

- Who is your group (which languages)?
- Is the student only ELL? Or ELL and low? Or just currently low because the student is ELL?
- Understand what these terms truly mean
- Can candidates be certified prior to arriving in the district?

- **Miscellaneous**

- Do NOT teach to “groups” of students (ELL, bilingual)
- Do consider RTI, differentiation, tiers
- **Poverty/economically disadvantage students**
 - Understand their mind set
 - Understand how they look at education
 - Look at your expectations and/but be realistic
 - Have compassion
 - Change support structures for or figure out how to support students of poverty
 - Understand that sometimes a kid just needs to sleep/eat
 - Maslow’s Hierarchy

Private School

- Talking to parents
 - Parents do not accept children’s limitations
 - Learn how to talk to all parents, but particularly parents of students with disability
- Preparation to teach gifted students is almost non-existent
- Special education is well prepared

TOPIC THREE

How can we prepare our teachers to work with the area of student learning growth?

a. What do they need to know to work with campus expectations?

b. How can we help prepare the teachers for the expectations of the new teacher appraisal system?

Elementary responses:

- Classroom management: building relationships, not just administering punishments;
- Differentiated instruction: meeting the needs of all students, not just ELL, SpEd, LEP, At-Risk, GT, etc.; must know the difference between teaching and presenting; daily differentiation; individualized instruction – even without an IEP; teaching people at different levels

- where they are on the content; knowing the difference between GT and high achiever; what interventions are appropriate and when; meet needs of high performing students as well as low babies
- Poverty: must be able to address poverty; poverty impacts behavior and achievement; no student learning or growth without understanding of poverty; huge issue; must meet basic needs first – can't address Bloom's until you meet Maslow's
- Content readiness: content reading is a strength; need more math – seem to be afraid of math in early elementary grades; TEKS move high level math so far down.
- Data analysis: overwhelmed by data; don't know how to view the data; can't use data to guide instruction; don't know where to look for data; tracking data
- Rigor
- Resources: don't know how to access information; don't know where to gain access to resources
- Assessments: formative assessment; RTI; knowing Tier I, II, and III; constant assessment – not just a unit test at the end of a unit or lesson
- Collaboration: working with a team; working with another person in the room

Secondary responses:

- Student-centered Instruction: even in secondary, stations (centers) with student accountability are rare; most classes in secondary are teacher-centered; knowing the value of students working in groups
- Theory vs. Practice: need to be aware of the “language” used by districts – student-centered, stations, etc.
- Engagement: engaging students where they are
- Classroom management: keeping students engaged so there are no disruptions
- Data monitoring: review data, look at data, monitor progress, adjust teaching based on data; disaggregate data
- Assessment: formative assessment; reteaching; teaching to mastery
- Objectives: should be verbs; not the introductory TEKS that are general; teachers know the content but often go looking for a general objective to match their lesson rather than setting learning objectives (with verbs) first; lessons rarely match or align with the objectives

(i.e., compare); the test align with the objectives (i.e., compare); kids aren't prepared (for comparing)

Central Office Responses:

- Data analysis: working with data; knowing how to track data; organizing data; knowing how to use data to guide instruction; using data for Tier I and Tier II instruction

How can we better prepare our candidates to work with and achieve the campus and district expectations?

Elementary Resources:

- Alignment: at least be aware of vertical and horizontal alignment; seeing the bigger picture; year's worth of growth – one grade to the next

Secondary Resources:

- Campus Improvement Plans: available, should be not be a surprise; teachers should review the material before the school year; prepare for the year; go in with the data

How can we help prepare our candidates for the expectations of the new teacher appraisal system?

Elementary Responses:

- Reflection: after staff development, implementing the practice and reflecting; reflecting on their own practice
- Setting Objectives: teachers need to know where they are and where they are going – based on the data
- Using Resources: using the resources available, looking at data, review the materials available – even before school starts

What specific challenges related to student-learning growth will our candidates need to be prepared to face in the next 4 to 6 years?

Elementary Responses:

- Accountability: they have no idea what they are facing; they will face a great deal of stress and pressure; they will also get a lot of support; they are afraid of the testing years and always ask for K-2 when the need is in 3-5
- Asking for Help: no matter what they face, they need to ask

Secondary Responses:

- Special Needs: increase in special needs in classes; more students on the autism spectrum; teachers are often afraid of students with autism in their classes

Central Office Responses:

- Even when the district is changing, teachers will be supported
- Fewer people entering the teaching profession

TOPIC FOUR

What dispositions do you expect to see demonstrated by new teachers?

I decided to organize what I heard into the following four areas of dispositions: Professional Practice; Professional Qualities; Professional Relationships; and Professional Development. Then I have put some general comments at the end.

Professional Practice

- Concerns that new teacher dress was less and less professional
- It is nice to be confident but sometimes new teachers think they know it all and have it all thought out – often they don't
- Get into the practice of asking questions
- Understand that preparation is key to good teaching
- Show initiative – be ready to jump in and help, be proactive
- Demeanor – keep it positive, upbeat. Administrators want to see that you have passion for the profession.
- Ethical use of social media – don't friend your students, keep your Facebook page private and appropriate, don't blast your students or your colleagues on Facebook, don't paste pictures that your boss should not see. Don't vent on social media.
- There are immature with the use of social media – need to clean it up.
- Some new teachers come in and don't realize the time-frame of the job – are really surprised at the hours teachers work. Need to understand that they have to invest time in preparation.
- Need to develop flexibility as school is an ever changing place

Professional Qualities

- Know your content and understand that the TEKS are the curriculum – don't say "I don't know what to teach!"
- Watch the students – see how they react to your teaching – this was suggested for observations of pre-service teachers as well. Understand what is going on in the classroom when the teacher is up front and teaching.
- "Playing" school – it was said that our new teachers (sometimes) have good lessons with great activities – but they don't understand that there is more to teaching than delivering an activity. You have to make connections to prior knowledge, what comes next, checking for understanding, etc.
- Know the effective lesson cycle – Hunter model. New teachers are not checking for understanding, and some administrators have concerns that new teachers cannot evaluate student learning well.
- Need for promoting critical thinking and problem solving.
- Need to understand IEP's, modifications, etc., and not just put the paperwork in a drawer! SPED is the law, new non-SPED teachers don't seem to understand this.

Professional Relationships

- Not prepared for dealing with parents
- Being proactive in dealing with behavior situations – call the parents early
- Concern that new teachers don't know when they should call a parent, and almost seem afraid to do so.
- New generation of teachers prefers to access parents by texting or email – does not always work, need to know that sometimes a phone call is better
- Need strategies for making parents welcome in their classrooms
- De-escalating techniques would be helpful with parents
- Develop listening skills, especially with parents
- Understanding that a paper trail is important when it comes to problems concerning student behavior
- A need for understanding their school culture and how they fit it – confidence is good, arrogance isn't. They think they know it all!
- Listen to and ask for feedback on how you are doing.
- Don't say things like – at so-and-so school they did it this way. You are not at that school anymore.

- Small rural schools you wear many hats – don't be surprised at other duties as assigned.
- The beginning of the year is so important, watch how teachers build relationships, routines, and classroom management.

Professional Development

- Need to understand that they will be life-long learners, get used to it, things change.
- Parent involvement has been covered in most sections above – it is a big one!

Here are my take-ways from this meeting:

1. We need to help our pre-service teachers understand better the concept of “school” and how we teach for deep understand. The comment that they “play school” was frightening.
2. We don't seem to be doing enough in regards to parent connections – how to approach parents, when to contact parents and how.
3. The use of social media needs to be addressed in a much more serious manner.
4. More debriefing after observations – having some classes at a school (if they have room).

TOPIC FIVE

How can ASU better prepare teachers in the areas of knowledge and skills?

A. What areas have you noticed that beginning teachers lack in knowledge?

- Content Knowledge for the Certification Exam
(Several principals suggested that we require candidates to pass the content exam as a prerequisite to clinical teaching)
- Understanding the TEKS
- Understanding how to break down tested fields in TEKS
- Adapting curriculum and instruction by assessing students
- Understanding the T-TESS Rubric
- Knowing more of a variety of instructional strategies

- Strategies in student-centered learning
- The dynamics of Professional Learning Communities
- The importance of being lifelong learners (taking constructive feedback for continual improvement)
- Special Education Knowledge- Inclusion
- Special Education Candidates- Knowledge of how to teach reading
- All Candidates- Knowledge of Reading Strategies
(Such as: Phonemic Awareness, Guided Reading, Reading Workshop, and Balanced Literacy)
- Understanding- How does a student learn to read?
- Theories of Discipline
- Best Practices in Classroom Management Procedures (Such as Harry Wong, Time to Teach)
- Best Practices in Positive Discipline (Such as Spencer Henry, Conscious Discipline)

B. What skills have you noticed that beginning teachers lack?

- How to effectively run stations
- How to write effectively (Barbara Mariconda was mentioned as a great resource for writing)
- Time management
- How to group students for instruction
- Strategy to increase skills of managing a whole class for longer periods of time: maybe go back to a 14 week placement in clinical teaching
- Strategy to visualize different ways of grouping: have students physically set up lab-type classroom for a specific type of lesson (whole group, stations)
- Communication skills (Especially with parents; it was mentioned that the online block course may not be as effective for fine-tuning communication skills)
- Strategy to increase communication skills: role play
- Strategy in dealing with parents: Remind them that they are dealing with someone's pride and joy!
- High level questioning
- Cross-curricular instruction
- How to effectively coach students for success during a lesson
- How to articulate how they would teach an effective lesson (this is evident in interviews when asked to walk through a lesson on a particular subject, such as math)

- How to effectively follow the lesson cycle (such as Madeline Hunter and I do, we do, you do)
- Being part of a team
- Taking criticisms and recommendations
- How to effectively document important things (such as parent communication)
- How to use ClassDojo
- How to appropriately use social media

TOPIC SIX

Do you think that ASU teachers perceive their preparation as

- Relevant to their classroom responsibilities?**
- Sufficient to handle problems that confront them on the job?**
- Was sufficient?**

Public School

- Very positive of their experience at ASU
- Strong in content knowledge
- Common Practices
 - RTI
 - Balanced Literacy
 - Guided Reading
 - Lesson Planning
 - Classroom procedures
 - Classroom management
- Best practices
- TEKS mining
- Gradual release
- Secondary: know the content, but have to be able to work with kids
- Stations have a purpose
 - The teacher is differentiating the instructions
- Lesson Cycle
 - Making connections
- Study the TEKS
- Classroom Management
- Real life expectations
- Work ethic grit
- Everyday Teacher Responsibilities

- Grades
- Data
- Parent communications
- Procedures
- Electronic communications
- Other duties as assigned
- Some beginning teachers think they know it all
 - they don't think they need resources
- Important to talk be able to talk to others

Private School

- Other areas of issues besides of teaching
- Knowledgeable in teaching
- Need to be able to ask questions and not be defensive
 - They don't know it all
- They think they are not supposed to experience the bad