

Editor's Note



Welcome to the Fall 2021 issue of *Field Notes*! As is our custom, we begin this edition by reflecting about the impact of our Educator Preparation Program (EPP) as seen through the eyes of program participants. Longtime school partner and Cooperating Teacher

Stephanie Valentino provides an analysis of data from the 2020-21 student teaching perception evaluations in her article, "Student Teaching During a Pandemic: Finding Opportunities in Uncertainty".

This issue also includes spotlights on new faculty and special initiatives, including the ever-popular UK STEM Experiences camps. These features are meant to stimulate thought as we continue partnering to guide the growth of teacher candidates enrolled in our certification programs.

I also want to formally share some announcements. This is my last issue as *Field Notes* editor, a role I have played since we launched the newsletter in 1995 and have shared with Mary Henderson for some time now. Thankfully, Mary will continue in her editorial role producing attractive, informative issues each semester, as she has in the past.

I am also stepping down as director of the UK College of Education's Office of Field Experiences, a position I held for 37 years. Shifting gears will allow me to focus on expanding our international school partnerships and deepening our global footprint in ways that connect to our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives. As I transition fully to my new position, others with new energy and ideas are stepping in to lead the important work of preparing high quality teachers for what is arguably the most important profession in the world. As Andy Rooney so wisely said years ago: "Most of us end up with no more than five or six people who remember us. Teachers have thousands of people who remember them for the rest of their lives".

Here's to a productive year of preparing teacher candidates who have the mindset and skill set to uplift the lives of all the students in their reach throughout their careers!

With warmest wishes,
Sharon

Student Teaching During a Pandemic: Finding Opportunities in Uncertainty

Stephanie Valentino, 4th Grade Teacher
Cassidy Elementary, Fayette County

The 2020-21 school year will be remembered as one unlike any other. Students, teachers, administrators, and families were all asked to take on new roles and challenges while adapting to life and the realities of COVID-19. It was not easy, but our community was up to the task.



School hallways were eerily quiet, but virtual classrooms were buzzing with new learning as we all navigated the digital world. Schools embraced platforms like Zoom and Google Classroom to help bring the content to the homes of students in every grade level. The adjustments were executed quickly, and across the country, teachers and students kept instruction moving forward.

The year was filled with many uncertainties as we formulated plans to implement necessary safety measures. Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI), hybrid instruction, and the return to in-person learning were common topics of discussion and at the forefront of all educators' minds. With the rollout of the vaccine and ensuing decline of cases, Fayette County Public Schools were able to gradually welcome students back into the classroom starting mid-February. We were able to finish out our school year with a hybrid instructional model while masking and following social distancing guidelines.

While each school year shows us effective teachers must be flexible and responsive, 2020-2021 brought more opportunities to master these traits than ever before.

"Alternating between NTI and in-person learning was very beneficial. Although it was very challenging... moving through the two allowed me to progress my skills in new ways each time."

Student teachers were given a unique experience over the course of the pandemic as their student teaching placements were split between digital learning and in-person, hybrid models. Each year, the student teachers are asked to reflect on their

time in the University of Kentucky Teacher Education Program (TEP). The following is a summary of their responses.

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Students' perception evaluation results regarding the value of the TEP were overwhelmingly positive. On a four-point scale (four being most effective), the value of student teaching in preparation for the teaching profession was rated at 3.8; the value of student teaching seminars in promoting professional growth was rated at 3.6; and overall value of the TEP in preparation for the profession was rated at 3.7.

In their open-ended responses about the most beneficial aspects of the TEP, students mentioned the variety of placements, lesson plan and unit development assignments, reflection activities, and experiences with diverse student populations. Many students stated that teaching in person, particularly during their solo week, was the key to their preparedness, due to the firsthand experience it provided of the everyday requirements of the teaching profession:

“Having multiple solo weeks allowed me to refine my classroom management strategies.”

“The day-to-day act of being in schools, interacting with students, is the best preparation for an actual position.”

“One thing I found most beneficial was solo week. At first it was very intimidating, but I realized it was exactly what we need to prepare for our own classrooms!”

Students also mentioned the invaluable opportunity of navigating in-person instruction and NTI, noting the increased use of technology to support student learning:

“With online learning, I was able to focus more on content delivery, which I think will serve me well.”

“Alternating between NTI and in-person learning was very beneficial. Although it was very challenging, I was able to adapt and move out of my comfort zone to change how I taught. NTI and in-person are very different and require very different things. Moving through the two allowed me to progress my skills in new ways each time.”

“I am grateful I got to work in both an NTI setting and an in-person/hybrid setting, because I learned how to facilitate the transition effectively while maintaining quality instruction for both online and in-person students. I also learned crucial classroom management skills and practiced real world problem solving and student assessment while working alongside my cooperating teacher.”

Editorial Staff **104 Taylor Education Building**
Sharon Brennan **Lexington, KY 40506-0001**
Julie Cleary **859-257-1857**
Mary Henderson **E-mail: fieldexp@uky.edu**
Martin Mills **<http://education.uky.edu/OCP>**

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Along with the benefits of NTI came some setbacks. Many students felt unprepared for classroom management as a full time teacher because of the decreased amount of in-person experience. Across the two open-ended questions asking if there were any aspects that were not adequately covered, 15 responses mentioned classroom management. One student teacher commented:

“Given the restraints of the pandemic, I think our program did everything they could to prepare us. My only complaint is that there could have been more practical coursework on classroom management. While I enjoyed the theory and readings, I would have liked time to read about real experiences and techniques and discuss with fellow classmates.”

Some other criticisms of the program included a lack of preparation for differentiation and an outdated technology course. Most comments about the general education curriculum were positive. However, Music Education majors felt that content in general education courses did not fit well with their professional development needs or their schedules. Special Education (SPED) majors had similar comments. One quote that reflects the concerns of both majors was:

“SPED has a few collaboration classes with elementary education majors. These classes are geared toward the elementary majors' schedules, and while I did take things from these courses, and I understand they have a purpose, I felt like the SPED majors had to do a lot of extra work and re-arrange our schedules to fit with the elementary ed program. It was frustrating to feel like we were in classes that weren't really for us, where our perspectives weren't always appreciated, with assignments that didn't always apply to us because we were in high school placements, etc. I wish these collaboration courses would be more inclusive to both majors involved.”

Upon reviewing all of the survey feedback, I am left with an altogether positive impression of the University of Kentucky Teacher Education Program. It is obvious that student teachers feel valued and prepared for their future careers because of their robust experiences with cooperating teachers, professors, and P-12 students. The student teachers touted their cooperating teachers' and university supervisors' invaluable feedback as well as their professors' selection of course material, seminars, and resources:

“UK's teacher preparation program is unmatched. The professors are dedicated, experienced, and passionate. They care about their students and want to provide quality instruction for the next generation of teachers.”

In spite of the many obstacles presented by COVID-19 during their student teaching experiences, these teacher candidates are ready to take the lessons they have learned and begin their teaching careers!

Youth Return to Campus for UK STEM Experiences Camp

Amanda Nelson, Co-Director of Communications
University of Kentucky College of Education

Students in second grade through high school were back on the University of Kentucky campus this summer for in-person STEM Experiences camps. The program also hosted two weeks of virtual camps, giving students the chance to take part from any location.

For 11 years, STEM Experiences camps have given youth opportunities to get a sneak-peek of what it feels like to learn in university classrooms. The UK College of Education buildings were once again buzzing with excitement and innovation after the camp moved to a virtual platform last year due to COVID-19 precautions.



During the week-long day camps, diverse groups of youth explored science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through hands-on activities.

“Often, students grow up feeling they do not belong in the STEM community, and that can be particularly true for non-White, non-male people,” said Dr. Margaret Mohr-Schroeder, a UK College of Education associate dean and professor in the Department of STEM Education who co-founded the program in 2010. “By bringing a diverse group of students to the UK campus each year, we are working to disrupt the systems that make some people feel as if STEM is not for them.”

UK STEM Experiences is a collaboration between the UK colleges of Education, Engineering, and Arts and Sciences. This summer, the STEM Experiences program hosted STEM Camp, Vex Robotics Camp, Lego Robotics Camp, and Chem Camp.

“Students don’t need to have a love for STEM subjects to take part, but we hope they leave with an increased interest and confidence through learning to collaborate, build trust, and apply STEM concepts to real-world challenges. We give them an informal, low-stakes environment to explore and make sure every student is able to show their brilliance in STEM,” Mohr-Schroeder said.

Student Teachers as Substitute Teachers: A Successful Pilot Project Continues

Margaret Mohr-Schroeder, Associate Dean
University of Kentucky College of Education



In December 2020, the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) acted to address the shortage of substitute teachers, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, by granting emergency approval for student teachers (STs) to serve as paid substitute teachers (“subs”). At UK, the pilot period proved to be very successful, with about 450 days of instruction covered by our UK STs during the Spring 2021 semester! Due to the success of the program statewide, EPSB extended approval of the policy into the 2021-22 school year.

The program was beneficial not only for providing much-needed subs to school districts, but also for providing more opportunities to our STs to fully run their classrooms--while also receiving pay.

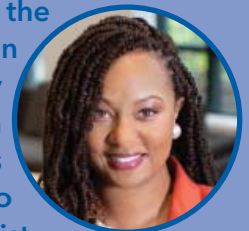
For more detail, review UK’s policy on the Field Experiences “Resources for Student Teaching” webpage. The policy is the last bullet point in the top section marked “All Audiences”:

<https://education.uky.edu/ocp/resources/>

We do recommend that interested STs who are approved by program faculty begin the sub application process before the semester begins, because it takes some time to complete all the steps.

Spotlight on New Faculty

Dr. Thais Council joined the University of Kentucky as an Assistant Professor of Literacy and a Faculty Affiliate of African American and Africana Studies in 2021 after nearly two decades as a reading specialist,



literacy advocate, and teacher educator. Her scholarship focuses on how literacy policy and Black-led community-based practices can repair structural inequities and harm imposed upon historically marginalized urban schools and disenfranchised communities. She employs the Black Intellectual Tradition as a theoretical lens to privilege the lives and wisdom of Black people and participatory research methods as a methodological alternative to academic research conducted through a hegemonic gaze.



University of Kentucky College of Education
Office of Clinical Practices & School Partnerships
104 Taylor Education Building
Lexington, KY 40506-0001

PD Opportunities: Professional Learning Series

Enhance and elevate your skills and knowledge through the Professional Learning Series. Designed by the UK College of Education, which is ranked among the top 30 public colleges of education in the nation and number one in Kentucky, the series offers unique learning opportunities. World-class faculty can guide you through enriching experiences, ranging from mini-workshops to micro-credential programs.

When you successfully complete a workshop, you earn a digital badge that you can add to your résumé, email signature, professional website, and more to show the additional work you have done in these areas.

Visit the website:

<https://education.uky.edu/learning-series/>

Contact Program Coordinator
Mariama Lockington:
COELearningseries@uky.edu



Collaborative Connection: Sharing Ideas

We want to feature your ideas about teaching and learning, and stories about collaborative projects taking place between and among university and school-based partners.

- How do you foster student learning and promote quality teaching?
- What challenges have you faced, and what changes did you make to overcome them?
- What collaborative projects have you observed or implemented?

Send stories or ideas to:

mary.henderson@uky.edu

Mark Your Calendar!

Aug. 13 2:00	University Supervisors' meeting, 109 DH
Aug. 16 2:00	First day of student teaching placements ST Orientation, TEB Auditorium
Sept. 22	Mentoring Workshop, Southern MS, Fayette Co.
Oct. 18	Dual placement student teachers begin 2nd half placements
Nov. 19 8-12:30	Professional Seminar for Student Teachers Gatton Student Center
Dec. 17	End of Fall 2021 semester

Tuition Waiver Program for Cooperating and Resource Teachers

State universities provide cooperating teachers a tuition waiver for 3-6 credits depending on duration of student teaching supervision.

Resource teachers were also eligible for tuition waivers, but the KTIP program is currently on an indefinite hold due to state budget cuts.

To redeem your waiver at UK, you must:

- use your credits within one calendar year of completing the assignment,
- gain admission to the university and be a student in good standing,
- complete a tuition waiver form prior to each semester enrolled,
- submit the waiver form to the associate dean's office prior to the first day of classes for each semester of enrollment.
- visit <https://education.uky.edu/ADeanARGS/tuitionwaiver> for contact info and an application to redeem your waiver at UK.

To claim your tuition waiver at other Kentucky universities, visit:

<http://www.epsb.ky.gov/mod/page/view.php?id=142>