



2020 Nebraska First Year Teacher Survey
Comments to Inform Teacher Preparation Initiatives
A Statewide Analysis
September 8, 2020

Prepared by
Shawn GU
shawn.gu@nebraska.gov
Data, Research and Evaluation
Nebraska Department of Education

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 13

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

Question 14

“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 13

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

Approximately 41% of principal respondents (n = 163) provided information for question 13, while 56% of teacher respondents (n = 274) answered question 13.

Out of principals who provided comments for Q13, majority of the comments were positive while only 18% of the comments were negative. On the part of teachers, 25% of the responses were positive; and 12% of the responses were negative. (See Table 1).

Table 1. Response Sentiment for Question 13

| Respondent | Sentiment | | | Total |
|------------|-----------|---------|----------|-------|
| | Positive | Neutral | Negative | |
| Principal | 90 | 44 | 29 | 163 |
| Teacher | 69 | 172 | 33 | 274 |

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 Lesson Planning.

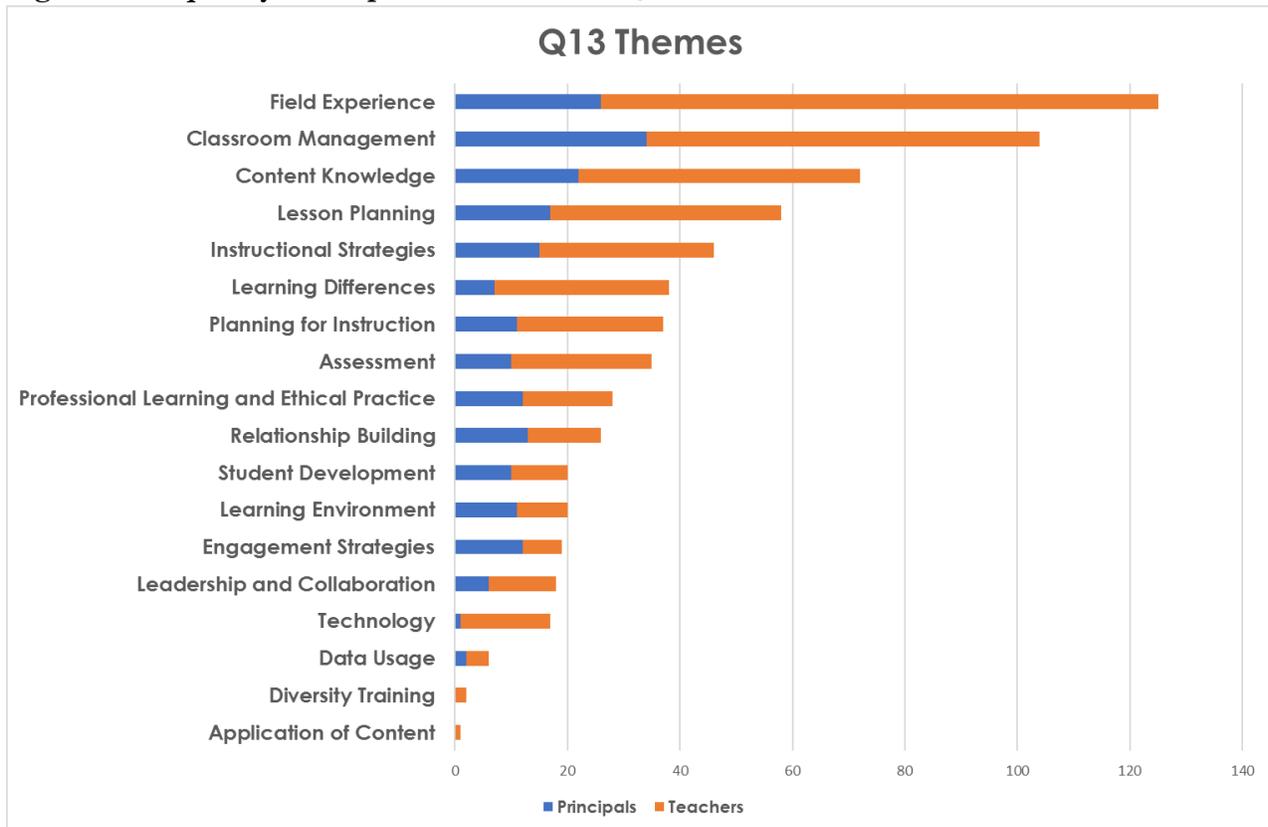
The Field Experience was the most common theme in the responses from both principals and teachers to question 13. The feedbacks indicated the critical need for providing hands on experience in order to prepare first year teachers. Responses with this theme underscored the importance of having real-life experiences in the classroom prior to beginning the educational path. This would help teachers to be prepared for actual teaching, as both principals and teachers commented on the exceptional value of their practicums or, conversely, the need for more time spent in actual classrooms.

Respondents alike commented on the need for more preparation in the area of Classroom Management. Particularly, most of the teachers mentioned preparation in the area of strategies of Classroom Management and Behavior Management. Likewise, several principals commented on the need to focus more on expectations, procedures and routines in the training of Classroom Management.

Many respondents gave compliments to the program on well preparations on first year teachers. On the other hand, some comments reflected doubts about the effectiveness of the program in the area of Content Knowledge for teaching. Some teachers expressed that they struggled to implement the content-specific skills in the classroom, especially to the students with special needs.

As some feedback revealed first year teachers’ remarkable performance in the field of Lesson Planning, other feedback suggested a pressing need for more trainings in Lesson Planning. Several teachers indicated they would like to receive a training with more realistic goals, practical experience, and instructions to varying students.

Figure 1. Frequency of Response Themes for Question 13



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. Only a minority of the responses to Question 14: *“Comments which can help the Nebraska Department of Education improve this survey process.”* showed negative thoughts, which reflected respondents’ general approbation with the survey. Many respondents complimented on filling out the survey as a simple and not time-consuming progress. On the other hand, both principals and teachers mentioned about the timeline of the survey, as many of them wished to complete the survey at the end of the school year. Another aspect was that some principals and teachers had



thoughts on the content of survey questions; they would like to see more questions related to specific teaching field and various domains and standards. In addition, there were a few feedbacks indicated that respondents had troubles understanding definition of the rating scale and survey question wordings. Some responses to Question 14, however, reflected a lack of understanding of the question; and hence, a few 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 invalid responses due to misunderstanding.
- 2) Discuss about the timeline for delivery of the survey.
- 3) Make necessary changes to the content of the survey questions and rating scales.

Appendix

Figure 2. Sentiment of Comments for Q13 (Principals)

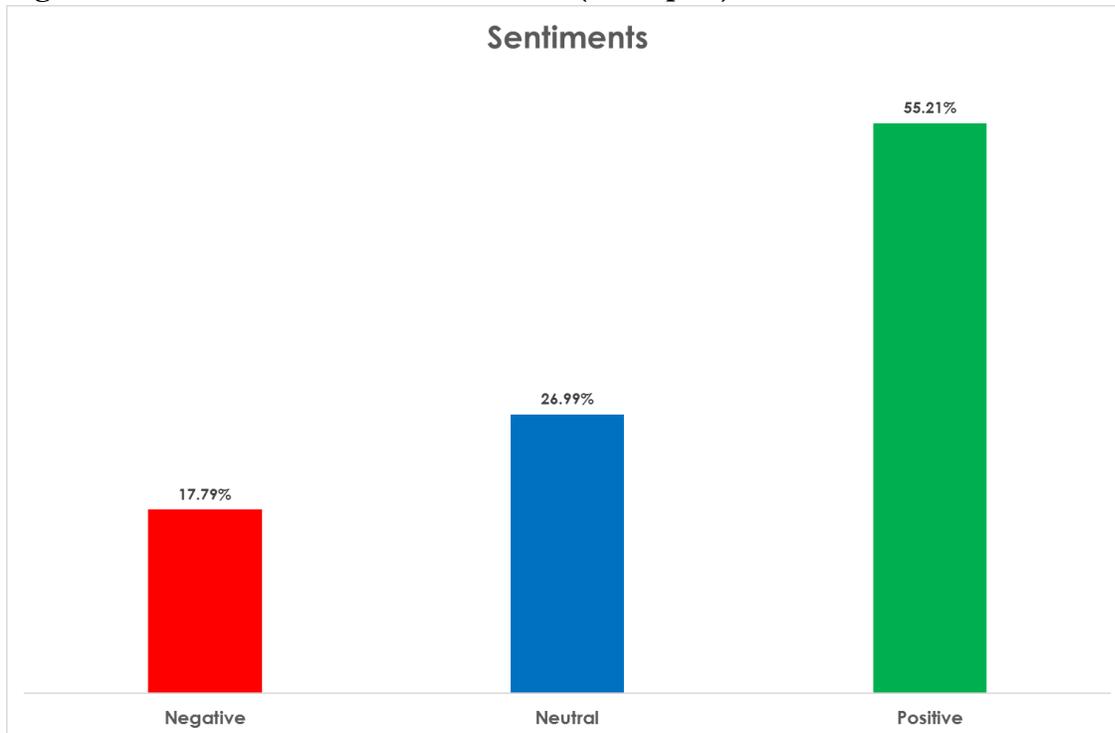


Figure 3. Sentiment of Comments for Q13 (Teachers)

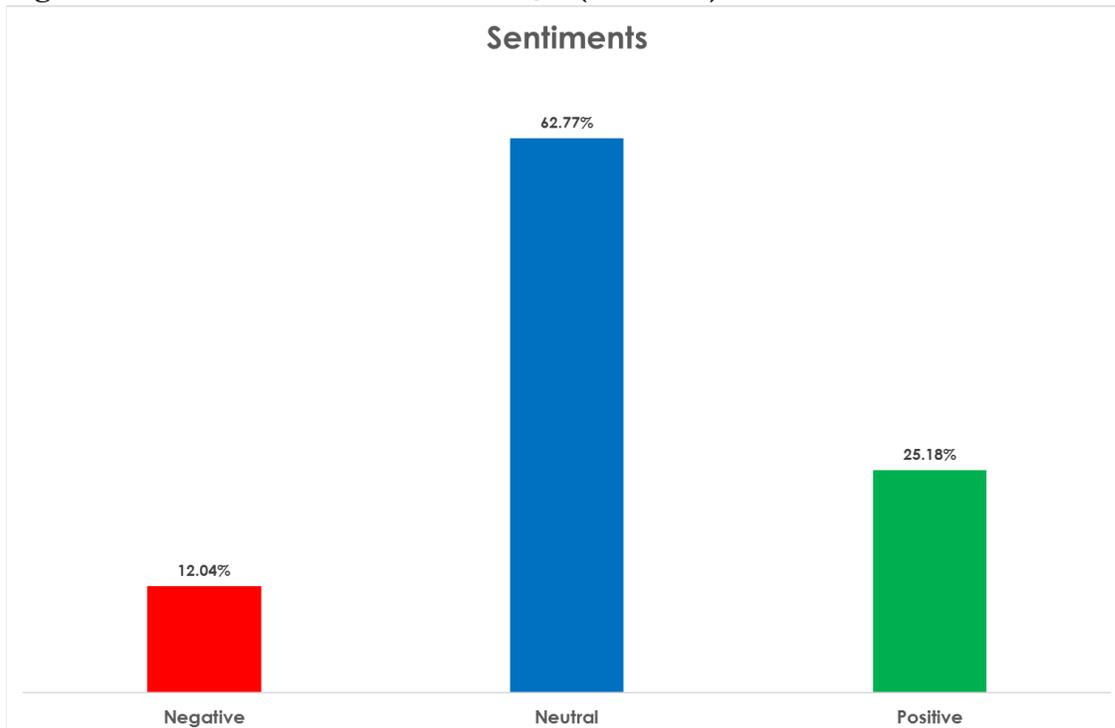


Figure 4. Word Cloud of Comments in Q13 (Principals)



Figure 5. Word Cloud of Comments in Q13 (Teachers)

