



**2021 Nebraska First Year Teacher Survey**  
Comments to Inform Teacher Preparation Initiatives  
A Statewide Analysis  
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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 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 a 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 on 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 40% (n = 155) of principal respondents (total n = 391) provided information for question 13, while 86% (n = 262) of teacher respondents (total n = 309) answered question 13.

Out of principals who provided comments for Q13, majority of the comments were positive while only 10% of the comments were negative. On the part of teachers, 22% of the responses were positive; and 7% of the responses were negative. (See Table 1).

**Table 1. Response Sentiment for Question 13**

Respondent	Sentiment			Total
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Principal	64	57	13	134
Teacher	35	112	11	158

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

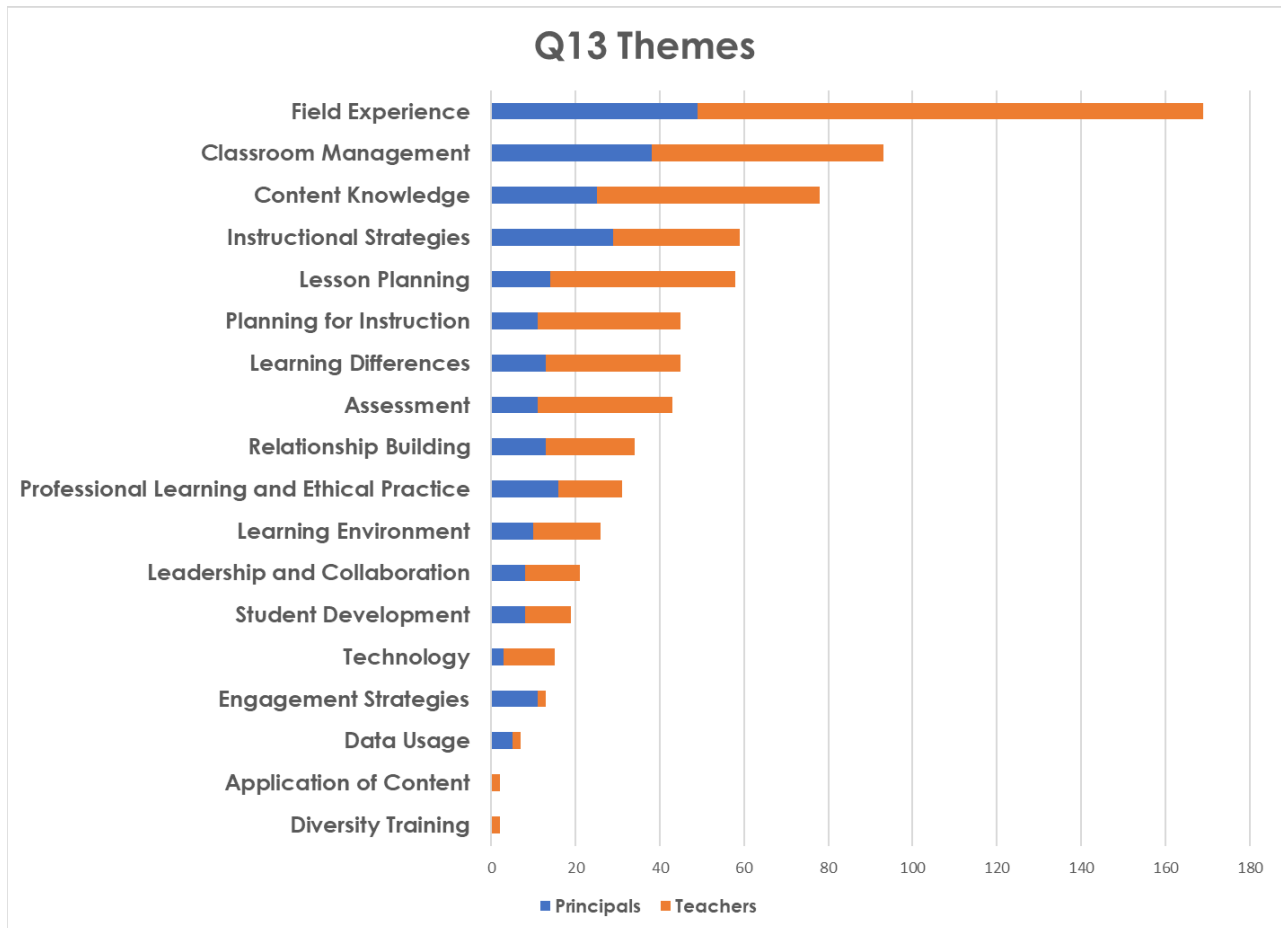
The Field Experience was the most common theme in the responses from both principals and teachers to question 13. The feedbacks indicated the critical need for providing hands on experience in order to prepare first-year teachers. Responses with this theme underscored the importance of having real-life 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 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 preparation institution on how well they prepared 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.

**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. Majority of the responses to Question 14: *“Comments which can help the Nebraska Department of Education improve this survey process.”* showed neutral thoughts, which reflected respondents’ passive attitude towards the survey. Many respondents complimented that filling out the survey was a straightforward and not time-consuming process. On the other hand, both principals and teachers had troubles understanding definition of the rating scale, and they would like to have the rating scale with some explanations and free spaces for comments. Some respondents complained about the scale design of the multiple-choice questions; and many of them wished to have a 5-point Likert scale instead of the current 4-point Likert scale for the 12 Model Core Teaching Standards questions, and a third option for binary choice questions. Another aspect was that some principals



and teachers commented on the issue of COVID-19, as some of them wished to see some questions related to the impact of COVID-19 on school teaching. 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) Add highlighted words after Question 14 in the survey to inform respondents the differentiation of this question from the previous one that asks for opinions of preparation institutions for the purpose of reducing invalid responses due to misunderstanding.
- 2) Discuss about the rating scale and make necessary changes to the survey by adding descriptions for the rating scales and boxes for additional comments.

Figure 2. Sentiment of Comments for Q13 (Principals)

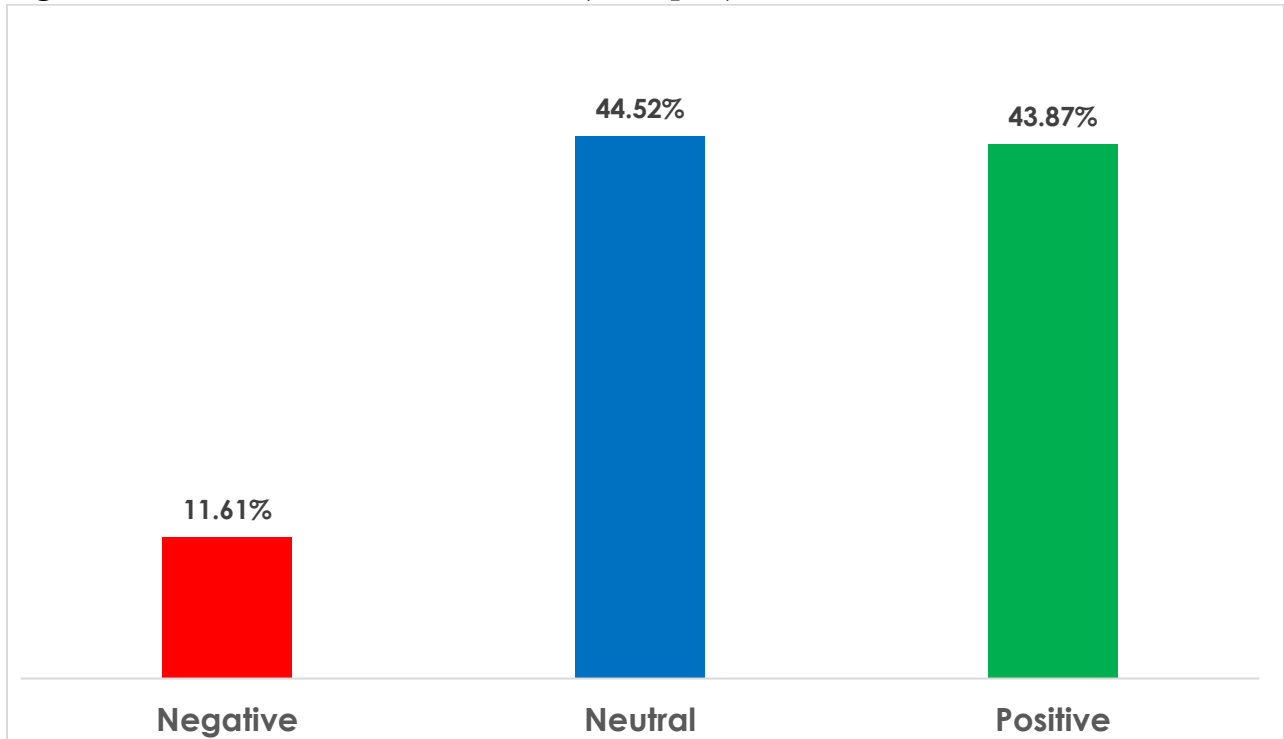


Figure 3. Sentiment of Comments for Q13 (Teachers)

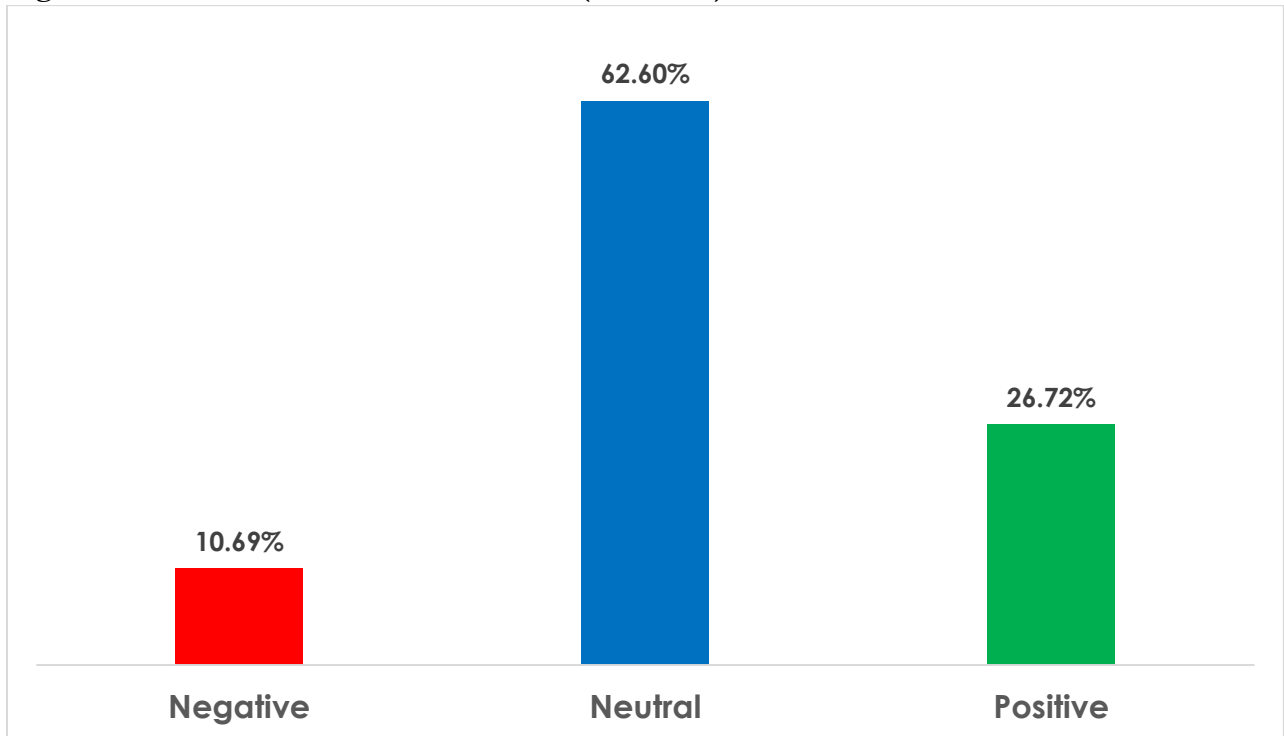


Figure 4. Word Cloud of Comments in Q13 (Principals)

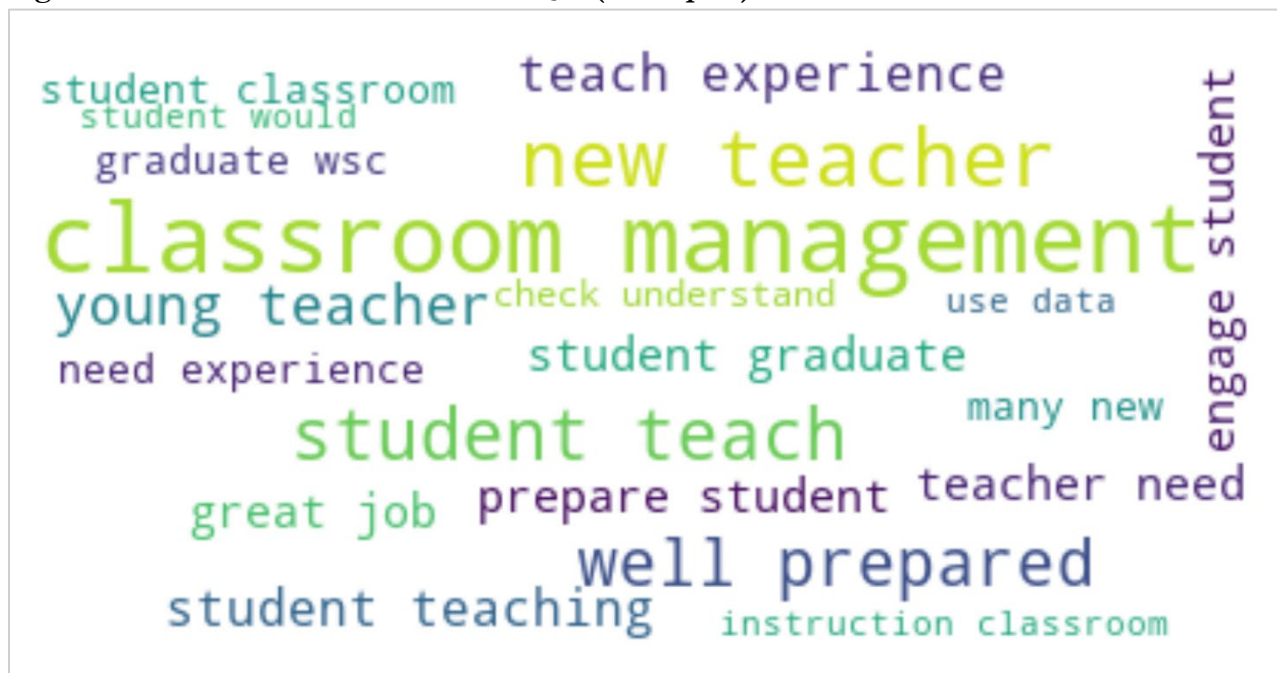


Figure 5. Word Cloud of Comments in Q13 (Teachers)

