



# EDUVENTURES

Schools of Education  
Learning Collaborative  
Custom Analysis  
February 2010

Catalog No. 79SOECRR0210

## Employer Perceptions of Teacher Education Programs at William Paterson University

Methodology	Key Sources
In-person focus groups and brief survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers of WPUNJ's College of Education teacher graduates</li> </ul>

### Key Questions

What are perceived areas of strength and areas for improvement among employers working with WPU alumni?

Are employers of William Paterson University (WPU) teacher education alumni interested in partnership opportunities with WPU?

Do employers feel that teachers from WPU's teacher education program are well prepared to enter the teaching field?

Table of Contents	
Inquiry Overview	1
Methodology	1
Executive Summary	2
Guiding Framework	4
Methodology	5
Findings	7
Conclusion and Next Steps	24
Appendix	25

### Inquiry Overview

The College of Education (COE) at William Paterson University (WPU) strives to better understand employer perceptions of the preparation of graduates who have completed the teacher education program. In particular, WPU is interested in understanding areas of strength and weakness among teachers prepared at WPU. This information will be used by WPU to improve existing programs and coursework in its ongoing effort to make a positive impact on the field and in the community, and to accreditation purposes.

Employers of William Paterson teacher education graduates, i.e. school principals, participated in focus group discussion and/or completed a short questionnaire about their perceptions of WPU graduates' strengths and weaknesses.

**Custom Analysis** - *Brief analysis of issues of concern to individual members.* The SOE-LC program maintains dedicated staff to support members' needs for detailed, quick-turnaround research. Requests may be prompted by issues raised in the SOE-LC's Collaborative Research investigations, may seek to leverage the collective experience of the SOE-LC membership, or may take the form of small-scale primary research investigations or reviews of secondary literature. Requests generally take two to three weeks to complete and approximately four to six hours of analyst time. Eduventures staff work to deliver accurate, reliable data and information in all cases; however, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of data and information from all sources used.

## Executive Summary

The following provides a high-level summary of principals' perceptions, uncovered through focus groups and a web-based survey, of WPU teachers' preparation at William Paterson University's College of Education:

### **The large majority of participating principals are interested in establishing a closer relationship with WPU's College of Education.**

---

- Nearly three-quarters of principals are interested in serving on a panel or speaking to a class.
- However, only 64% of principals were aware that WPU offered an Institute for Novice Teachers and Mentors, and even fewer principals (36%) were aware that WPU regularly offered a Substitute Seminar.

### **Responding principals believe that WPU teachers are, on the whole, well-prepared in several areas of the three core competency areas assessed: *Knowledge, Professional Dispositions, and Applications*. However, there are some specific areas within each core competency that could be improved.**

---

- ***Knowledge:*** This core competency received the lowest overall ratings compared to the other two core competency areas.
  - Principals rated WPU teachers' use of traditional and authentic assessments as the lowest relative competency, with one principal noting that one WPU teacher in particular seemed to pick up those skills on the job, rather than through a teacher preparation program.
- ***Professional Dispositions:*** This core competency received the highest overall ratings compared to the other two core competency areas.
  - Principals were most satisfied with WPU teachers' professional dispositions, particularly as it related to their respect for diversity and culture, and their high expectations for all students.
  - However, principals rated WPU teachers' ability to reflect upon their teaching as the lowest area relative to other areas within the *professional dispositions* competency area.
- ***Applications:*** Principals were overall very satisfied with WPU teachers in the area of *applications*, particularly in their use and knowledge of technology as a teaching tool.
  - Another particular area of strength was WPU teachers' ability to collaborate with their peers and with other, more experienced teachers.
  - Classroom management, not surprisingly, remained an area in which principals believed teachers could benefit from additional training through a teacher education program. In a 2008 survey of WPU alumni, it was found that approximately 35% of alumni did not feel well prepared to guide and manage classroom behavior.

**Though not specifically discussed in the context of WPU teachers, focus group participants commented on a number of other areas regarding differentiated instruction in which new teachers are typically least prepared.**

---

- Principals believe that special education coursework should be more fully incorporated into teacher education programs. All teachers should receive some training in working with special needs kids, while special education-focused programs should be sure to incorporate specific subject area content as well.
- English Language Learners continue to be a population of students with whom new teachers are not well-trained to teach. In the 2008 alumni survey, only half felt prepared to work with ELLs.

**Key Takeaway: Principals are generally very satisfied with teachers prepared by WPU's College of Education, and feel that WPU teachers are particularly adept, compared to teachers prepared through other teacher preparation programs, at working with diverse populations and using technology. Areas in which principals feel that WPU teachers are least prepared – classroom management and using assessments – are not uncommon areas in which most new teachers struggle.**

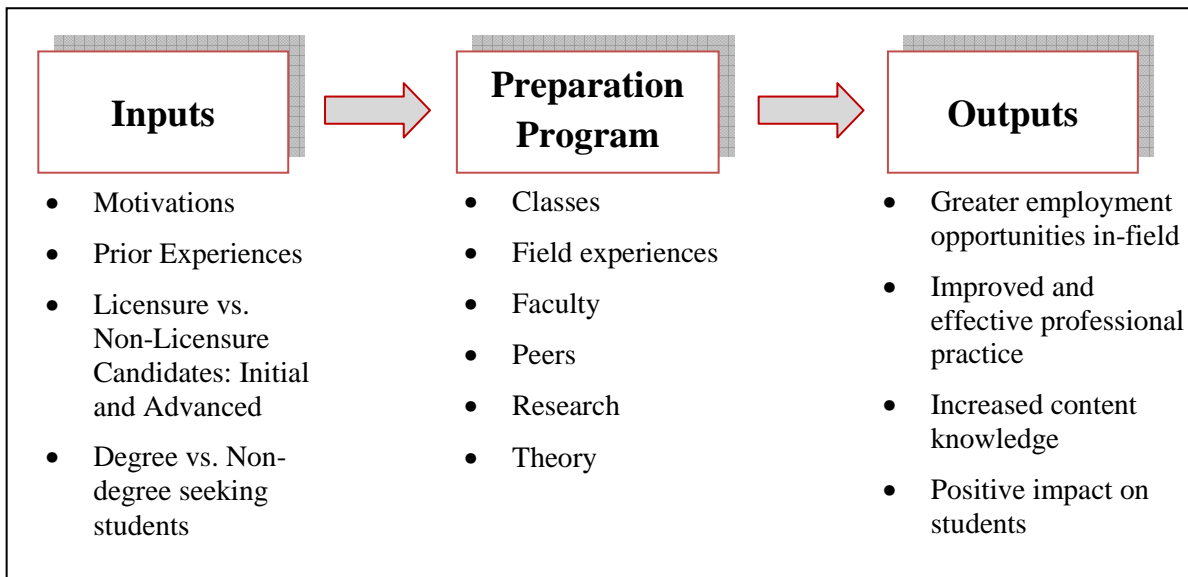
## Guiding Framework

As part of their commitment to offering programs that adequately prepare highly qualified educators, schools of education are required to collect direct feedback from school principals and administrators who have hired teacher education graduates. Increasingly, as part of the accreditation process, schools of education are responsible for demonstrating that their program produces high quality educators.

Principals and administrators are in a unique position to observe first-hand the teachers hired within their schools and districts on their competency and perceived preparedness as a result of completing a teacher education program. These employers are often asked to describe how well teachers perform in several competency areas, including working with diverse populations, teaching within their subject area of expertise, and managing classrooms and student behavior.

Figure 1 presents a process model for anticipated outcomes of a university preparation program. The inputs list types of students and the prior motivations, expectations, and experiences they may have; the intervention include various traditional university program experiences; and the outputs are accomplishments expected of graduates. **The results reported within this report are focused on outputs as a result of teachers' preparation at William Paterson University.**

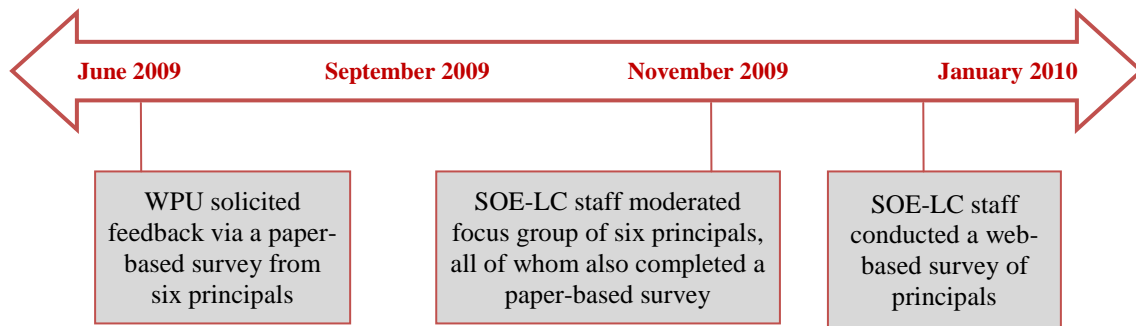
**Figure 1. General Input-Output Process Model for University-Based Preparation**



## Methodology

### *Procedures*

To understand principals' perceptions of teachers prepared at William Paterson University, WPU's College of Education and SOE-LC staff undertook the following steps between June 2009 and January 2010:



The same set of survey questions, developed by WPU, was used for all three groups of principals from whom feedback was solicited between June 2009 and January 2010. The survey asked principals to identify their level of familiarity with WPU, their satisfaction with WPU graduates, and to provide open-ended comments about areas for improvement. Please see the Appendix for a complete list of the survey questions.

In all, 24 principals completed the survey and provided additional comments regarding WPU graduates perceived strengths and weakness. Two principal's responses were dropped from the analysis due to their choosing "not observed" on every measure assessed; thus, this report includes the findings from a total of 22 principals.

### *Participant Sample*

Six principals completed the paper survey in June 2009. In November, six principal participated in a 75-minute face-to-face focused discussion on WPU's campus about their experiences with WPU teachers in addition to completing the same paper survey. As a follow-up to this focus group, 43 principals were invited to participate in a web-based survey. Twelve principals completed the survey, garnering a 28% response rate.

### *Respondent Characteristics*

All focus group and survey participants were school principals or vice principals who had hired or experienced working with a teacher prepared by WPU's College of Education. Figure 2 on the following page displays the school or district in which participating principals and WPU teachers are employed. Due to the amount of time that passed between the two focus groups and the web-based survey, there was some administration turnover at two of the schools, resulting in completed surveys from both current and former principals. These are noted on the following page. Feedback regarding WPU teachers' performance from both administrators was similar, if not identical, in both of these instances.

**Figure 2. School or District in Which Principals and WPU Teachers are Employed**

District	School
Bloomfield	Bloomfield Middle School
Butler	Aaron Decker Elementary School
Fort Lee	Elementary School No. 4
Garfield City	Garfield Early Childhood Learning Center
Haledon Public Schools	Haledon Public School
Hillsdale	Ann Blanch Smith Elementary School
Kinnelon	Kiel (Primary) School
Little Falls Township Public Schools	School No.1
Little Falls Township Public Schools	School No.2
Morris Hills	Morris Hills High School
Passaic City Schools	Grant School No. 7
Passaic City Schools	Abraham Lincoln Middle School
Passaic City Schools	William B. Cruise Memorial School No. 11
Pompton Lakes	Pompton Lakes High School
Randolph Township Schools	Randolph Middle School
Wayne	George Washington Middle School
West Milford Township	Maple Road Elementary School
West Orange Public Schools	Roosevelt Middle School
West Orange Public Schools	Thomas Edison Middle School
Wyckoff Public Schools	Washington Elementary School

Both the current principal and a former staff member participated in the survey.

Both the current and former vice principals of curriculum and instruction participated in the survey.

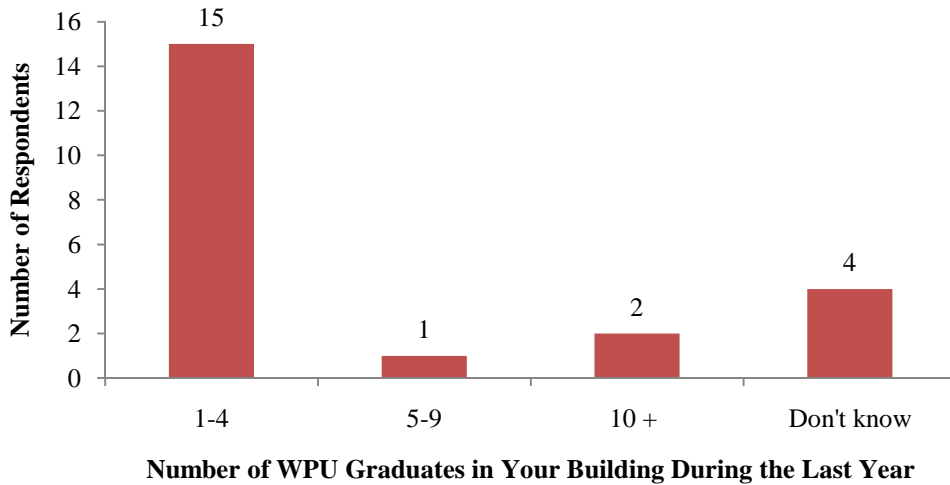
Three school districts – Little Falls Township Public Schools, Passaic City Schools, and West Orange Public Schools – are represented more than once, though different schools within each district are represented.

**Familiarity With and Interest in Partnering With WPU**

The large majority of school principals surveyed are interested in partnership opportunities with WPU.

The principals surveyed are fairly familiar with William Paterson University’s College of Education and the teachers prepared there. The majority of principals have worked with or hired less than five teachers within the past year, though two principals indicated they had worked with 10 or more WPU teacher education program graduates.

**Figure 3. Number of WPU Graduates Working in Schools at Which Respondents Are Employed (N=22)**



Eight principals (36.4%) are alumni of William Paterson University. However, the number of principals interested in working more closely with WPU is much higher, as revealed in the chart below.

Partnership Opportunities	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Interested in a closer partnership with WPU	19	86.4%
Willing to speak to a class or serve on a panel	16	72.7%

The names of individuals interested in developing closer relationships, speaking to a class, or serving on a panel are contained in the Appendix. Email and mailing address information is provided for principals who participated in the web-based survey.

Not only are the majority of principals interested in fostering a closer partnership with WPU, but one focus group participant indicated that, in fact, William Paterson was in their top tier of schools from which they interviewed teacher candidates.

*“There are schools [from which] I just will not interview [their candidates] because I just haven’t been pleased with the educators that they’ve been producing. William Paterson just isn’t one of those schools. We take that really seriously. **That’s a big piece for me, to be on our list of schools where we will look at the candidates.**”*

Regarding their awareness of services offered through WPU’s College of Education, principals were less familiar.

Awareness	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Aware that WPU regularly offers an Institute for Novice Teachers and Mentors	14	63.6%
Aware that WPU regularly offers a Substitute Seminar	8	36.4%

**Key Takeaway: WPU’s College of Education should reach out to school principals who indicated an interest in partnership opportunities to further cultivate those relationships. Additionally, WPU should consider ways it can increase awareness in the community of its Institute for Novice Teachers and Mentors and Substitute Seminar.**

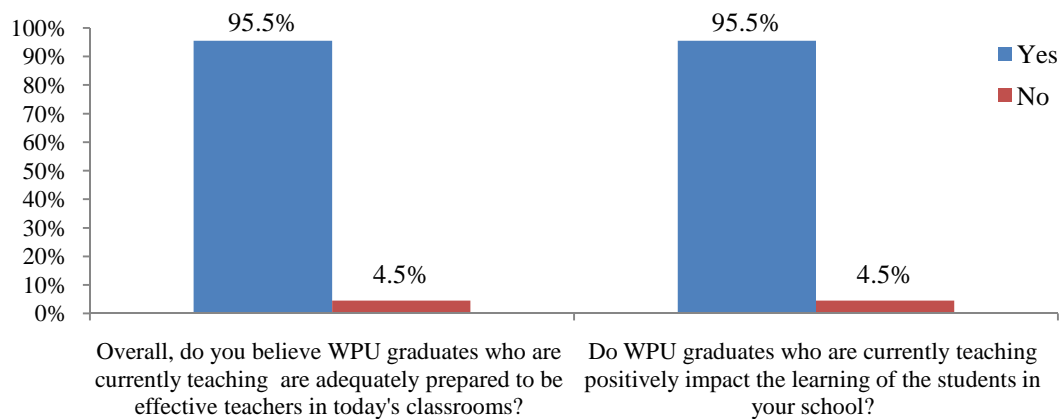


## WPU Teacher Graduates' Performance in Key Competency Areas

Principals are overall very satisfied with WPU teachers, but were least satisfied with WPU teachers' ability to utilize a variety of traditional and authentic assessments.

Overall, employers are satisfied with teachers they have hired or worked with from WPU's teacher preparation programs. All but one participating principal believe that WPU graduates are adequately prepared to be effective teachers, and that WPU graduates positively impact the learning of students within the school. Figure 4 displays these results.

Figure 4. Principals Overall Satisfaction with WPU Teachers (N=22)



The following feedback indicates that school principals believe WPU is preparing teacher education students well; principals believe that WPU teachers have a strong work ethic and the skills necessary to be successful within both the school and the community. Three principals also noted that they hired WPU student teachers full time upon completion of their teacher preparation program.

*"We've hired some teachers from William Paterson, and they've done very well and have been successful."*

*"We have a lot of graduates from William Paterson that we've hired at Bloomfield over the years at the elementary school and the middle school, so a lot of my colleagues and some of the young teachers that we have, we've gotten our student teachers from them [WPUNJ], and we've had really good experiences with them."*

*"We do get a lot of William Paterson student teachers that come in[to our school], and I have to say, for the most part, they're really well prepared. I've hired several of them who are extremely successful...For new teachers who are just coming in, it can be a tough town—the parents expect a lot—but they've risen to the occasion...I really think they come in very well-prepared with good lesson plan background, and good work ethic."*

***“Recent graduates are well-prepared, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and willing to learn. As a principal, I have had positive experiences with student teachers also.”***

***“They share best practices and strategies. They truly lead by example. What they don't already know, they pick up quickly and with an open mind. It's a big plus when new teachers are eager to learn new methods, programs and strategies.”***

***“I can speak to the two teachers that we hired just last year...The two teachers that we hired from William Paterson who did student teaching with us, they have become the leaders in language arts department in their grade level, which is 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I have, at this point in time, my senior teachers to go visit them for the LEADS program—a differentiated instruction program we have—they do a fantastic job on it because they put the work into it. All of the preplanning they put into it seems to be above what other teachers are doing that have been there a long time. I have a group of teachers—good teachers, that have been there a long time—that have struggled with the new program because there was so much time that needed to be invested in learning the program and pre-planning for the lesson (because that's what it takes)...they watched both of the William Paterson teachers teach it [the new program], and it was fabulous. I then was able to turn to my colleagues that are my age and say, ‘look, this works.’”***

***“Candidates are very well prepared in understanding best practices. They are comfortable transitioning into the classrooms. Behavior expectations are appropriate and all seem responsible, passionate, and will be successful.”***

Some principals have had an opportunity to work with student teachers in the middle of their teacher preparation program at WPU, and generally have positive things to say about them as well:

***“We're very pleased with who we've had as student teachers, and then who we've hired from them as a result.”***

***“WPU student teachers have mastery of content, are highly motivated, truly dedicated, and professional. They have the background and ability to reach our students. The College of Education is doing a fine job in preparing student teachers to enter the workforce.”***

One principal commented on the format of WPU's teacher education programs as a positive:

***“Their program that incorporates real world experience is so important to me...I've been very impressed.”***

Two principals acknowledged that student teachers from WPU didn't always necessarily perform well, but that WPU was willing to intervene when necessary:

*“The other thing for me with William Paterson is that we had a student that wasn't cutting it. **The professors were very supportive** in helping us get the message across in the most professional way, which is another piece that I really appreciated. You're not always going to hit a home run.”*

*“The advisor knew that the person wasn't doing okay, and they spoke to the person and **really tried to make it work.**”*

Employers were asked to rate teachers who had graduated from WPU's College of Education teacher preparation programs on a number of specific measures within three core competency areas:

- *Knowledge*
- *Professional Dispositions*
- *Applications*

Employers were asked to rate WPU teachers on the following scale: *unacceptable (1), needs improvement (2), satisfactory (3), very good (4), or exemplary (5)*. **No principal used the rating of unacceptable on any of the competency areas assessed.** The following three sections provide detailed information about employers' level of satisfaction with teachers prepared by WPU across a number of specific measures within these three areas.

**Competency Area: Knowledge**

The specific competency areas related to *knowledge* received the lowest scores across the three broader competency areas assessed. However, principals assigned an average rating of *very good* or better to four of the six areas measured. Principals were most satisfied with WPU teachers' ability develop lesson plans and incorporate the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards appropriately.

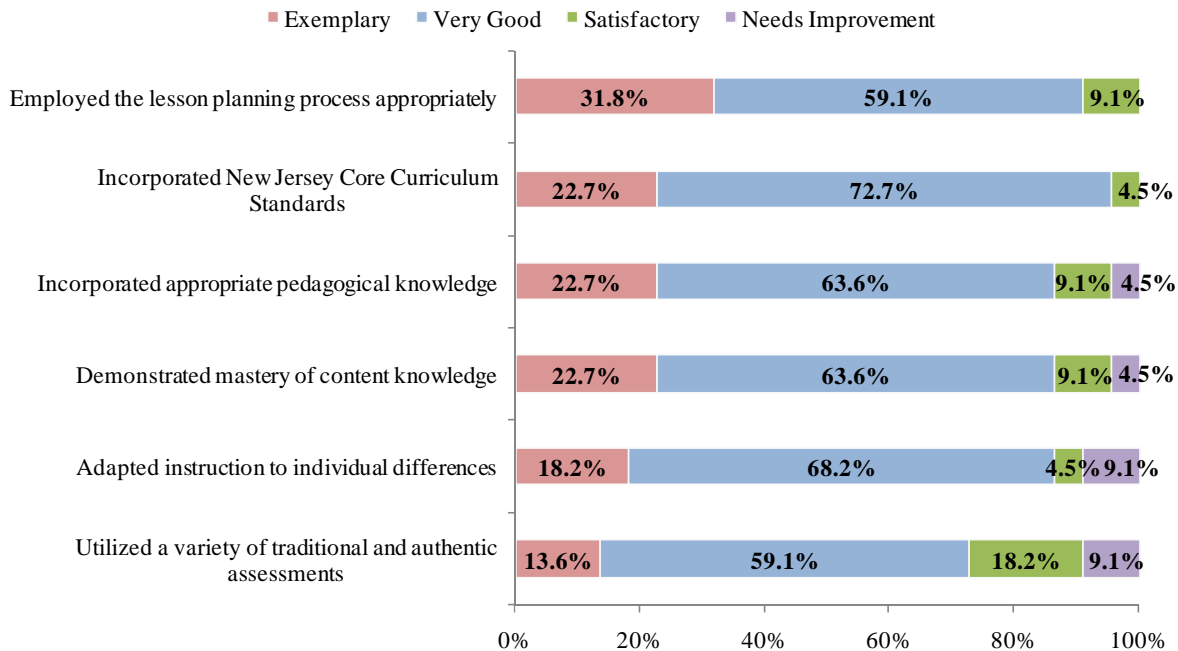
Figure 5 displays the mean scores assigned by principals to WPU teachers within each specific *knowledge* competency area, and Figure 6 shows the breakdown of scores by percentage of respondents.

**Figure 5. Mean Ratings of Satisfaction with WPU Teachers in the Knowledge Competency Area (N=22)**

<i>Knowledge Measures</i>	Mean
Employed the lesson planning process appropriately	4.23
Incorporated New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards	4.18
Demonstrated mastery of content knowledge	4.05
Incorporated appropriate pedagogical knowledge	4.05
Adapted instruction to individual differences	3.95
Utilized a variety of traditional and authentic assessments	3.77

1 = unacceptable, 2=needs improvement, 3=satisfactory, 4=very good, 5=exemplary

**Figure 6. Satisfaction with WPU Teachers in the Knowledge Competency Area (N=22)**



Over 95% of principals believe WPU teachers are exemplary or very good at incorporating NJCCS standards into curriculum.

Within the *knowledge* competency area, principals were most satisfied with WPU teachers' lesson planning processes and knowledge of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards (NJCCS), as revealed through both high ratings and open-ended feedback:

*"We currently have only one William Patterson graduate on our faculty. She appears to be **well prepared and diligent in her planning** which provides very good structure for her lessons."*

*"WPU graduates have the technical aspects of teaching. **They know the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards** and come equipped with technological skills."*

*"Grads are **very familiar with state standards and current pedagogical thinking.**"*

*"They are well versed in technology and **thorough with lesson planning.**"*

*"They, as a whole, are on **the cutting edge when it comes to student-centered classes, technology, detailed lesson planning, and overall readiness.**"*

A quarter of principals believe WPU teachers' use of assessments is satisfactory or needs improvement.

Although the specific area of *utilized a variety of traditional and authentic assessments* received the lowest scores both in the *knowledge* competency area and across all three competency areas, approximately 73% of principals still rated WPU teachers *very good* or *exemplary* in this area. Surveyed principals and focus group participants indicate that William Paterson's graduates have strong assessment and evaluation skills.

*"I have seen that with the young people—they love to jump into their test scores at the end of the year and look back. They use benchmarks for programs...**they seem to be very involved in looking at the data** and sharing their successes. I can say they're very interested [in the data], much more so than some of the more senior teachers."*

*"Driving your instruction through your assessment pieces—[WPU teachers] know that already. But what I find that's really great is that **they have openness to learning more.** So it's not just what they're coming in with, it's that they are sponges, which I think is really terrific."*

*"That message [that data should drive instruction]—I think the colleges are getting out there—I think **William Paterson is definitely getting it out there.** Data should drive instruction and decisions moving forward...cultivating that attitude is really what we need."*

*"In my experience, they are very organized and eager. **Through assessments, the students demonstrate knowledge and success.**"*

However, while one focus group participant notes that William Paterson graduates' assessment and evaluation skills are strong, he attributes some of this to effective role modeling during field experiences rather than to WPU student teachers' preparation.

*"I can say I have [seen William Paterson teachers use assessment and evaluation techniques], but again, I'm not quite sure if it's because of the knowledge they're coming in with or if it's because of the model they're put in. My teachers are quite good, and they don't expect the student teachers to jump in with both feet and do the developmental reading assessment, or do any kind of math assessment right away. They instruct, they model it, and then the student teacher jumps in and starts doing it, and then they keep those real specific anecdotal records which drive their instruction. So again the teacher is showing them how to do it...I think so much of it is having good role models, and then they have a willingness to jump in and do it."*

Another principal suggests introducing WPU students to more assessments available, and teaching them how those assessments are used to drive instruction:

*"[Students need] deeper knowledge of current assessments such as DRA, NJASK, NJPASS and how those results drive instruction."*

*One in ten principals are unsatisfied with WPU teachers' ability to differentiate instruction.*

The second lowest rating within the knowledge competency area, *adapted instruction to individual differences*, also received positive ratings from 86% of principals, and from one focus group participant in particular:

*"I have had a great experience [in differentiating instruction] with those teachers from William Paterson. They seem to somehow have been trained to differentiate for each group...I walked into a classroom the other day, and I was pleased to see how well these kids were doing, and in inclusive classes. They [P-12 students] were all working in small group structures, and within each group, there was a different mini lesson going on."*

*"Teachers' enthusiasm and passion were motivating factors for the students. The new teachers became immediately involved in the extracurricular program. They had a comprehensive knowledge of instructional strategies (i.e. differential instruction)."*

**Key Takeaway: Principals are satisfied with the WPU teachers' development of lesson plans that incorporate statewide core curriculum standards, but feel that WPU teachers could improve in their ability to use assessments and to differentiate instruction for different populations of students.**

**Competency Area: Professional Dispositions**

Overall, employers were most satisfied with WPU teachers’ performance in the *professional dispositions* area. The mean scores for all competency areas within *professional dispositions* were higher, on average, than scores for the areas evaluated within the other two main competency areas. Mean scores and percentage breakdowns are provided in Figure 7 and 8, respectively.

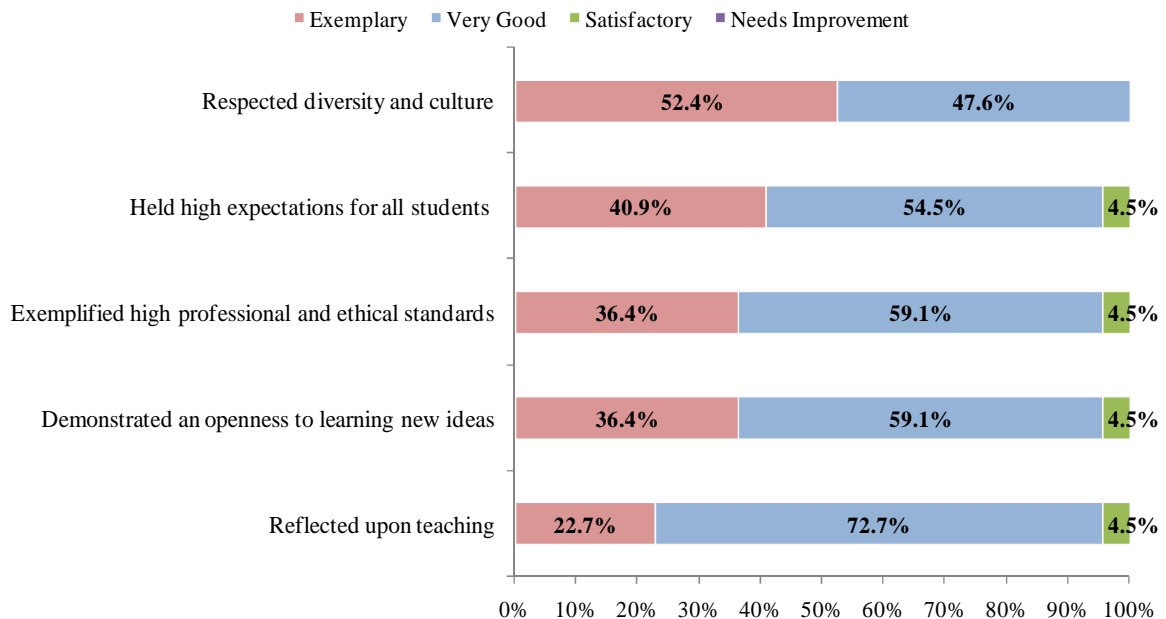
**Figure 7. Mean Ratings of Satisfaction with WPU Teachers in the Professional Dispositions Competency Area (N=22)**

<i>Professional Dispositions Measures</i>	Mean
Respected diversity and culture	4.52
Held high expectations for all students	4.36
Demonstrated an openness to learning new ideas	4.32
Exemplified high professional and ethical standards	4.32
Reflected upon teaching	4.18

1 = unacceptable, 2=needs improvement, 3=satisfactory, 4=very good, 5=exemplary

As displayed in Figure 8, employers did not believe that teachers needed improvement in any of the *professional dispositions* areas; all competency areas were rated as satisfactory or better.

**Figure 8. Satisfaction with WPU Teachers in the Professional Dispositions Competency Area (N=22)**





Virtually all principals rated WPU teachers as *very good* or *exemplary* in all five categories within the *professional dispositions* competency area, with only one respondent indicating that teachers were *satisfactory* in four of the five categories. *Respected diversity and culture* received the highest mean score across all measures assessed within all three main competency areas.

100% of principals are satisfied with WPU teachers' display of respect for diversity and culture.

Focus group participants describe ways in which William Paterson teacher successfully connect with kids from different cultures or ethnicities, as well as show promise in working with ELL students:

*"We have a large percentage of Spanish speaking students that have moved in. We only have one part-time ELL teacher who is only here two periods a day, so a lot [of responsibility] is on the classroom teacher to help with the oral vocabulary and so forth. We have a student teacher from William Paterson who is really taking an interest in the students, especially for tutoring. So I do see her being very effective with the students."*

*"I haven't had any problem with the William Paterson people that came in, in terms of adapting to an environment that I know they didn't grow up in. And they've been wonderful about it. I haven't heard anything negative about it."*

*"I have about five teachers from William Paterson that we have that are fairly new. They came here because they wanted to come here. They had other choices, and these are some quality teachers. But they did student teaching, and they just loved the environment they were in and the school they were in. They knew it was difficult, but that's where they want to be. I know they had suburban job offers, and they didn't take them."*

Over 95% of principals believe WPU teachers hold high expectations for students.

Additionally, in regard to the second highest rated *professional dispositions* area assessed, at least one focus group participant agreed that William Paterson graduates hold high expectations for students:

*"We have a new science teacher right now, fresh out of William Paterson, but it's almost weird—she's too difficult on the students. She has raised the bar so high for the students, especially for the ELL students, that it's been difficult for her to modify her expectations. I don't know if that's intrinsic, or what. I don't know if that's what William Paterson teachers their teachers to be like, but we find that they really raise the bar very, very high for the kids."*

**Key Takeaway: Principals were overall very satisfied with WPU teachers' professional dispositions in the classroom. Particular areas of strength included respecting the diversity and culture of others, as well as holding high expectations for all students.**



### Competency Area: Applications

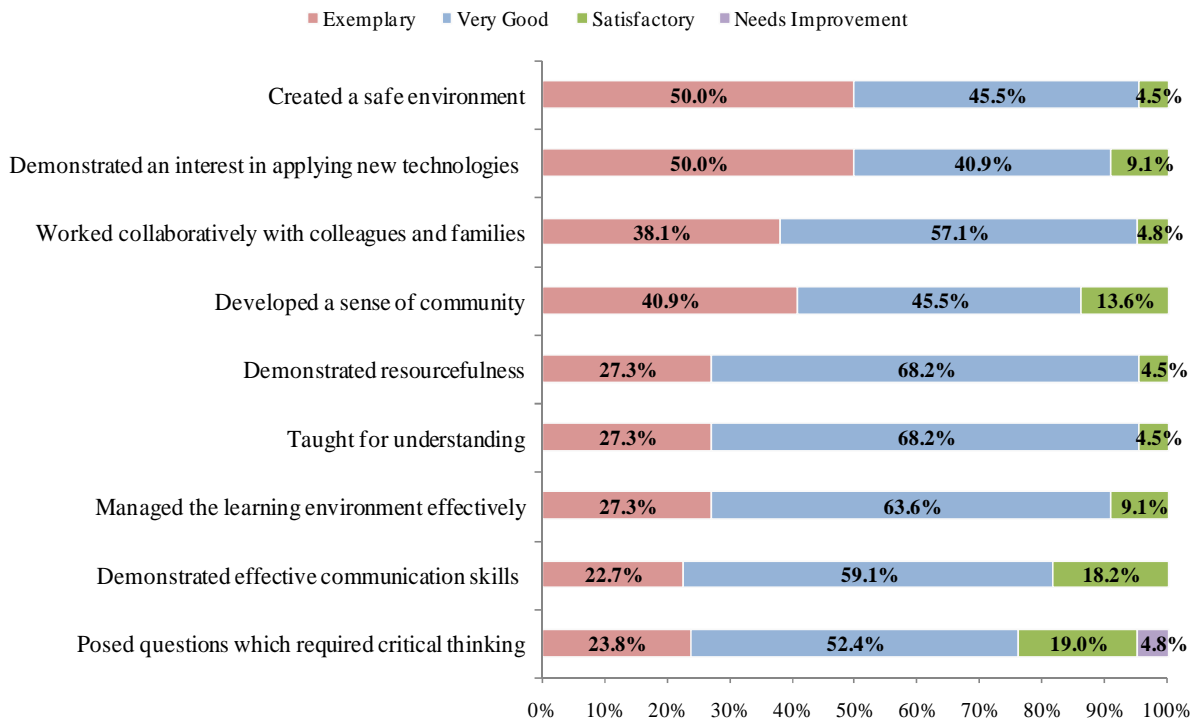
Again, school principals are overall satisfied with WPU teachers' performance in the *application* competency area, as revealed through the mean scores listed in Figure 9, and the percentage breakdown of respondents by level of satisfaction, in Figure 10. Relative to other areas assessed, principals were least satisfied with WPU teachers' ability to *pose questions which required critical thinking*.

**Figure 9. Mean Ratings of Satisfaction with WPU Teachers in the Applications Competency Area (N=22)**

<i>Application Measures</i>	Mean
Created a safe environment	4.45
Demonstrated an interest in applying new technologies	4.41
Worked collaboratively with colleagues and families	4.33
Developed a sense of community	4.27
Demonstrated resourcefulness	4.23
Managed the learning environment effectively	4.18
Taught for understanding	4.18
Demonstrated effective communication skills	4.05
Posed questions which required critical thinking	3.95

1 = unacceptable, 2=needs improvement, 3=satisfactory, 4=very good, 5=exemplary

**Figure 10. Satisfaction with WPU Teachers in the Applications Competency Area (N=22)**



Over 95% of principals believe WPU teachers are exemplary or very good at creating a safe environment.

Half of surveyed principals believed that WPU teachers were *exemplary* in creating a safe environment and demonstrating an interest in applying new technologies. Within focus group discussions, several principals had anecdotal evidence to add about WPU teachers' broad usage of technology. Focus group participants note that one of William Paterson teachers' greatest strengths is understanding and integrating technology.

*"We're using smart boards, we're blogging; we're looking at the social groups on the internet and are thinking of how we utilize them. We're looking at how we use cell phones—we can't ban them...so looking at how do we now take this and kind of embrace it and make it work for us, because we're certainly not going to eliminate it. [We're also using] laptops, and document viewers. **When you can get those young kids that come in and they're excited about it the technology, that's great.** And when they come in they have the attitude of showing others how to work with something, it's great."*

*"I find that with **our student teachers [from William Paterson], are very, very technologically savvy.** For example, the LCD projector—they use it every day. Not just when someone comes in when they're being observed. They really get to the core of who the kids are, and they focus on the student-centered aspect of the classroom. **They just seem to really understand the new ways of teaching**—that you really have to teach the whole child, especially at the middle school level; you don't just teach the subject. You want the kids to make the connections to what they're learning. They have a nice understanding of who a middle school child is, and how to get to them, and how to use technology as a way to do it."*

*"I agree with the technology piece. I have found that two of the student teachers that we've had, who are now teachers in the building, they're not just savvy [with technology] by themselves. They have an ability to share with the rest of the staff in a non-threatening way, which is wonderful. **People that are seasoned staff that might be a little bit more afraid of the technology piece go to [WPU teachers] because of their openness and their gentle way...**they are running before and after school institutes, and the seasoned staff are in there, because they're not afraid to ask questions. That's been very, very helpful for our whole building."*

*"I find that our **William Paterson teachers will come in and they will use the blog, they will use whatever type of technology they need to in order to get to the kids.** Sometimes the seasoned teachers will feel threatened because they're still using that archaic way of writing things down, whereas that's not how the kids are going to be moving around in this world. The kids seem to identify more with the teachers that understand that this is the world that they live in...I find that sometimes the more seasoned teachers don't understand that we're not going back to the paper and pencil world, and they won't let go of it."*

*"I have one teacher from William Paterson that used to be a 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, but now she's our technology coordinator, and she's fabulous. **She takes the initiative to explain things, and she works with all the teachers on things like podcasts and their websites, she does the morning show for us—we have little TV studio.** She's great."*

95% of principals believe that WPU teachers are very good or exemplary at working collaboratively.

Focus group participants also feel that a key strength of William Paterson's graduates' is in working collaboratively with colleagues and family.

*"Being collaborative and cooperative as a team...when you are a young person and you're coming into a multi-age group in your grade level team, it can be a little intimidating, especially when they look at someone who's been teaching for twenty years that they admire. But the nice piece is when they realize that everyone does have talents, and being open to what they can learn from those that have thirty years' experience, and then knowing what they can contribute. **More often than not, their technology piece is such a huge contribution to those that have more experience...being able to really be collaborative and to listen, that's important.**"*

*"What they're fostering there [at William Paterson] is collaboration."*

*"Those teachers that come from William Paterson take the initiative—they're go-getters. They are instructional leaders. They are team players. They work cooperatively with the administration, the parents, their fellow colleagues... On a whole I think that they just produce great teachers."*

*"They have **helped our more experienced staff in a number of ways** such as technology, best practices, and student assessment."*

91% of principals are satisfied with WPU teacher's ability to manage the learning environment.

While 91% of surveyed principals feel that WPU teachers are *very good or exemplary at managing the learning environment effectively*, this particular competency was rated as being in the bottom half relative to other areas assessed. Additionally, focus group participants indicate that classroom management tends to be a key area of weakness for William Paterson graduates, though this is true of most new teachers, regardless of their particular teacher education program.

*"For me, I would think [behavior management] is [William Paterson graduates'] weakest spot. We have seventh and eighth graders, and we have lots of overage age kids, some are fifteen or sixteen in my building. So they get intimidated when they have a sixteen year old in their room who could really care less about having to be there. We've had to work with them in that area quite a bit. But to their credit, they have persisted and have managed to make it work...and have figured out a way, again with a lot of guidance, how to make it better. **I have to give them credit for persistence, but they don't come in prepared to work with the rough kids.**"*

*"That's always been a problem for anyone going into education at the beginning of their career. No one necessarily has that bag of tricks. I tell everyone, steal every good idea, and put it in your pocket. Then you need to figure out which ones work for you and which ones don't. This isn't generic to William Paterson, it's in general—it's everyone. And some of its growth and maturity, but as long as they have that willingness to learn, that's what's important, and you can mentor them."*

*"I believe that **more emphasis needs to be put on classroom management and dealing with difficult children.** In order to be truly effective, teachers must find*

*alternate ways to create discipline and management in their own classrooms. They must raise the bar and believe that children in our district can achieve!”*

However, one focus group participant observed that William Paterson graduates seem to have strong skills in building positive classroom learning environments.

*“I did find that the young teachers have a much better...they seem to do a fantastic job of classroom set-up and working to build a good learning environment. They have projectors on the board, and the whole set up, the word walls, student work...the young people coming in, they like to put up their bulletin boards and do all that stuff.”*

**Key Takeaway: One of WPU teachers’ greatest strength related to the *applications* competency area is in understanding and using technology. Principals were also satisfied with WPU teachers’ collaboration skills. However, *managing the learning environment* was identified as an area of improvement among focus group participants.**

## Suggestions for Consideration

---

Focus group participants commented on a number of other areas in which new teachers generally could improve, particularly in the following areas:

- Special education
- English language learners and bilingual education
- Literacy instruction, among elementary school principals

According to Eduventures' national survey, only 30% of teachers feel prepared to teach ELLs.

Findings from Eduventures' 2009 *Recruiting and Preparing Educators* study in which over 1,500 current teachers completed a survey assessing their overall preparation echo the findings revealed by principals. According to the national survey, teachers felt least prepared to teach English Language Learners relative to other competency areas, with only 30% of teachers indicating they feel *prepared* or *very prepared* in this area. Additionally, 21.5% of teachers feel *unprepared* or *very unprepared* to differentiate instruction.

William Paterson University should consider the following comments and reflect on whether the teacher education programs offered at the College of Education address these issues.

Regarding special education, principals believe that more emphasis is needed on special education coursework within teacher preparation programs, particularly due to an increased need for special education training even outside of special education-focused classrooms.

*"I think prospective teachers should be required to take a special ed. class, or more special ed. classes than they already are."*

*"[New teachers] should all come out of the universities with a good background in teaching special ed. regardless of their intended grade level or subject area, because it's going to be their life. Every time I see a special ed. teacher and the skills that they have to work with these kids—it's just so much greater than the regular classroom teacher. They have all these techniques and they understand the developmental thought process of a learning disabled child and how they react. I would increase that [special education courses for classroom teachers], whatever it is, up another level."*

*"The gamut of special ed. is just so big now, and there's a lot that they could potentially be trained with...you really have to be flexible enough to come out and be prepared to work with all levels of kids."*

Focus group participants also recommend that more emphasis be placed on understanding Individualized Education Plans (IEP)'s and autism:

*"A lot of [new teachers] don't understand what IEP's are. The whole piece with the IEP's and the child studies team--they're not taught that. They're really not. It's a whole new world for them."*

*“My experience is primarily with Special Education. As such, I find that SE teacher candidates have had adequate pre-teaching experience as it pertains to mild/moderate disabilities. Given the vast increase in the autistic population, **additional training relative to autism and other significant disabilities is advisable.**”*

However, another focus group participant recommends that special education teachers become more specialized in teaching content/subject areas, rather than focusing solely on special education:

*“Special ed. teachers...certainly become a lot more marketable if they’re special ed. and science, or special ed. and math. We’re moving towards a totally inclusive model, which is great; the research is moving in that direction. But the concern now is that the **special ed. teacher and the content knowledge they offer is so-so.** And on the other hand, you’ve got classroom teachers who say they’re content people, and the special ed. instruction isn’t so great.”*

English language learners (ELLs) comprise another population of students for which teachers are not typically adequately prepared. Focus group participants describe the challenges of finding teachers competent to work with ELLs, or to teach in a bilingual classroom.

*“We’re 90% Hispanic, so [teaching] ELL is a way of life...**we don’t get too many young people going into those fields—bilingual education or ELL.** I haven’t been able to get a bilingual math teacher for a number of years...bilingual math, bilingual science, bilingual social studies. I’d love to see some more young teachers that have these skills.”*

*“That’s [bilingual education] something that universities should try to press a **little bit more.** In urban areas, the need is great and there are just few applicants...that’s a big concern.”*

Additionally, collaboration with others, including peers as well as master teachers, is an important piece of teaching special education and differentiating instruction, and is an area in which special education teachers could use more training within their teacher education program.

*“The special ed. teachers—they need to do a lot of training with inclusion and in-class support, and teaming with other teachers, because that’s always been a problem over the years. It seems to me like it’s getting better...**but they really need to know how to cooperate with people.**”*

*“When student teachers come in, I really try to place them with an outstanding master teacher who really knows how to differentiate instruction and embrace special needs kids so that they’re getting that great role modeling and that dialogue from that master teacher and they’re seeing [the differentiation]...it’s a little bit of both—the training they come in with, but also the guidance they’re being given in the classroom...**I think the ‘teaming’ is real crucial.**”*



Literacy instruction is another area in which principals believe new teachers could be better prepared. Focus group respondents with early childhood and elementary students, in particular, indicate that literacy instruction is a weak point for many new teachers at these grade levels.

*“When you’re in a K-2 building, that literacy piece—those foundational blocks—are so key. Instructing reading, and doing it in a differentiated way, and understanding that children come into the classroom with such varying levels of ability. Understanding how to implement that is so important.”*

*“I find that many teachers that are coming out of college now, I feel, are really **not prepared to teach reading**. I find that we’re doing a lot of professional development in that area, and especially with tiered instruction and differentiation and centers...it just seems as though they’re not prepared enough...it’s very discouraging.”*

*“Teaching reading is so monumental, and it’s pretty frightening because there’s so many layers, so **teachers need a lot of professional development**...I do find that there are differences between the colleges, and I can think of one college that will remain nameless, but those students don’t have a clue about literacy. I hate to be so cold about it, but even when you interview them, and you dialogue with them, they don’t even know the educational jargon. So you know that they’re just not ready...I have found that **most of the William Paterson people, and some other schools too, they have much stronger literacy background**. And I think it’s probably because the professors in the school have been in the trenches and know what’s important.”*

*“Getting them [new teachers] to work with small groups and leveled readers is tough—**some of them are too traditional in their approach**...they need to think out of the box a little bit and be more progressive in their approach [to teach reading].”*

*“Does [WPU] provide course work regarding the implementation of Writer’s Workshop? I think [WPU] students would **benefit from training in this area**.”*

**Key Takeaway: While focus groups did not comment specifically on WPU’s College of Education or the teachers prepared there within the areas of special education, ELL and bilingual education, or literacy instruction, William Paterson should consider ways to ensure these topics are addressed and emphasized within its teacher education programs.**

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Overall, principals are satisfied with their experiences with WPU teachers, and generally believe that they are well-prepared to teach as a result of their teacher preparation program at William Paterson University's College of Education. Nearly all responding principals believe that teachers prepared by WPU have a positive impact on their students and are prepared to be effective teachers in the classroom.

Principals were most satisfied with WPU teachers' ability to develop effective lesson plans that incorporate the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards, their level of respect and consciousness for diversity and different cultures, their openness to new ideas, their level of collaboration with others, and their use and knowledge of technology.

Despite overwhelmingly positive perceptions of preparedness and satisfaction among principals, there are areas in which WPU's College of Education could improve its teacher education programs, based on both principals' open-ended comments and their ratings on the core competency areas assessed. Figure 11 presents these areas and the potential next steps WPU's College of Education should consider.

**Figure 11. Areas for Improvement and Potential Next Steps**

<b>COE-Wide Areas for Improvement</b>	<b>Suggested Steps for the College of Education</b>
<b>Use and application of assessments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce various assessment tools to students during their coursework</li> <li>• Consider incorporating coursework that allows students to use existing or develop new assessment tools</li> </ul>
<b>Managing the classroom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for students to model or simulate the classroom experience</li> <li>• Consider longer field experiences to provide students with hands-on experience working in the classroom</li> </ul>
<b>Differentiated Instruction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that special education and bilingual education components are introduced into the general curriculum</li> <li>• For special education-focused programs, be sure to incorporate coursework relevant to specific subject areas as well, such as math or science</li> </ul>
<b>Literacy instruction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the current standards for incorporating literacy instruction into the curriculum, and refine if necessary to ensure students, particularly those interested in teaching early childhood or K-5 grade levels, are adequately prepared in this area</li> <li>• Consider offering professional development workshops focused in literacy for working teachers</li> </ul>

To promote greater collaboration between the COE and local schools and districts, WPU should reach out to principals who indicated they were interested in establishing a closer relationship with WPU. Furthermore, WPU should consider ways to market and promote its Substitute Seminar to increase awareness in the community.



**Figure 12. Survey Instrument**

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your School \_\_\_\_\_

	Yes	No
Are you a WPU Alum?		
Would you be interested in a closer partnership with WPU?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Would you be willing to speak to a class or serve on a panel?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you aware that WPU regularly offers a Substitute Seminar?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you aware that WPU regularly offers an Institute for Novice Teachers and Mentors?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If known, please indicate the number of William Paterson graduates in your building during the last year.

- 1-4
- 5-9
- 10 and over
- Don't know

The questions below refer to your overall experiences with William Paterson graduates. Please indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how you feel about William Paterson graduates in regard to the following items:

**Knowledge Competency Area**

	1 - Unacceptable	2 - Needs Improvement	3 - Satisfactory	4 - Very Good	5 - Exemplary	6 - Not Observed
Adapted instruction to individual differences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated mastery of content knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incorporated New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incorporated appropriate pedagogical knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilized a variety of traditional and authentic assessments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employed the lesson planning process appropriately	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 12. Survey Instrument (cont)

<b><u>Professional Dispositions Competency Area</u></b>						
	1 - Unacceptable	2 - Needs Improvement	3 - Satisfactory	4 - Very Good	5 - Exemplary	6 - Not Observed
Held high expectations for all students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respected diversity and culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated an openness to learning new ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reflected upon teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exemplified high professional and ethical standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b><u>Applications Competency Area</u></b>						
	1 - Unacceptable	2 - Needs Improvement	3 - Satisfactory	4 - Very Good	5 - Exemplary	6 - Not Observed
Demonstrated effective communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Created a safe environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managed the learning environment effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developed a sense of community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Posed questions which required critical thinking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taught for understanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worked collaboratively with colleagues and families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated resourcefulness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrated an interest in applying new technologies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Do WPU graduates who are currently teaching positively impact the learning of the students in your school? If yes, please describe or give examples.**

No

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

**Overall, do you believe WPU graduates who are currently teaching are adequately prepared to be effective teachers in today's classrooms? If yes, please describe or give examples.**

No

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

**Your comments and suggestions in regard to the overall group of candidates or to specific subjects or specialty programs will be used to assess and improve our teacher preparation programs. Please make any additional comments below:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 13. Principals Interested in a Closer Partnership with WPU (N=19)**

Name	Title	Email	Address			
<b>Web-Based Survey Participants</b>						
Christine Dell'Aglio	Former Vice Principal, Curriculum and Instruction	cdellaglio@haledon.org	91 Henry Street	Haledon	NJ	07508
Faith N. Delaney	Principal	faithdny@optonline.net	36 Maple Road	West Milford	NJ	07480
Gary Borges	Principal	borges@lfschools.org	32 Stevens Avenue	Little Falls	NJ	07424
Joseph Cacciaguida	Principal	jcacciaguida@mhrd.k12.nj.us	520 West Main Street	Rockaway	NJ	07866
Kyra A. Aycart	Principal	kaycart@passaic-city.k12.nj.us	390 Gregory Ave	Passaic	NJ	07055
Scott Blake	Principal	sblake@wyckoffschools.org	270 Woodland Avenue	Wyckoff	NJ	07481
Wendy Gorab McNeill	Director of Special Services	mceinill@lfschools.org	32 Stevens Ave	Little Falls	NJ	07424
Xavier Fitzgerald	Principal	XFitzgerald@woboe.org	75 William Street	West Orange	NJ	07052
Patricia A. Ramsay	Principal	pramsay@passaic-city.k12.nj.us				

<b>Paper-Based Survey Participants</b>	
Beth Banhill DeSantis	Vice Principal, Curriculum and Instruction
Frank A. D'Amico	Principal
Frank Corrado	Principal
Jacqueline Kartanos	
John Scozzaro	Principal
Michael McCarthy	
Pat Hart	Principal
Salvatore Goncalves	Principal
Virginia Scala	Principal