

# Teacher Preparation In North Dakota



North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

A Report from the North Dakota  
Association of Colleges for Teacher Education



University of  
**JAMESTOWN**

**M** Minot State  
UNIVERSITY



**UND**



**VALLEY CITY**  
STATE UNIVERSITY



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**NDACTE**



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## North Dakota Common Metrics

In 2015 North Dakota educator preparation programs collectively agreed to use a common set of surveys to measure perceptions of preparedness from three stakeholder groups: (1) student teachers through the *Exit Survey*, (2) program completers in their first year after completion through the *Transition to Teaching Survey*, and the supervisors of first-year teachers who completed ND teacher preparation programs through the *Supervisor Survey*. This report presents a three-year summary of the findings from these three surveys to provide an overview of program participant demographics as well as areas of preparation strength and areas for improvement<sup>1</sup>. The surveys contain a set of common items for rating preparation, allowing for cross-survey comparison. The surveys were developed by [Network for Excellence in Teaching \(NExT\)](#), and [validity and reliability analyses](#) for each survey can be found on the NExT website.

### Exit Survey: Student Teacher Perceptions

***94% of student teachers would recommend their programs to others.***

The Exit Survey is administered fall and spring near the end of the semester to student teachers. During the academic years of 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019, **1,541**, or approximately 84%, of student teachers from participating institutions completed the Exit Survey. Seventy-six percent reported being female, and 92% reported being White. Over half of the respondents were in elementary education; 10% were in early childhood education, 15% were in K-12 programs including music, physical education, and art; and 33% were in secondary education areas. These student teachers can be in more than one program.

#### ***Student Teachers are Generally Satisfied with their Preparation***

Student teachers are asked to rate their preparedness across numerous items representing the skills of teaching. Some areas in which they felt best prepared are listed below with the percentage of respondents that *agreed* they were prepared following the item description.<sup>2</sup>

- Creating a respectful learning environment for all students—97%
- Planning instruction aligned with state content standards—97%
- Knowing the content in their licensure area—96%
- Designing lessons to meet their students' learning needs—93%

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<sup>1</sup> Not all ND educator preparation programs chose to contribute their data to the aggregate. This report presents findings from the following institutions: Dickinson State University, Mayville State University, Minot State University, North Dakota State University, Turtle Mountain Community College, University of Jamestown, University of Mary, University of North Dakota, and Valley City State University.

<sup>2</sup> This list of items represents highlights from the survey results. Institutions have full results both for the ND aggregate and their own institution.

- Using educational technology—90%
- Supporting their students’ use of educational technology—89%

Most items had 90% or higher agreement from student teachers. The areas rated lowest on the survey are presented in the next section.

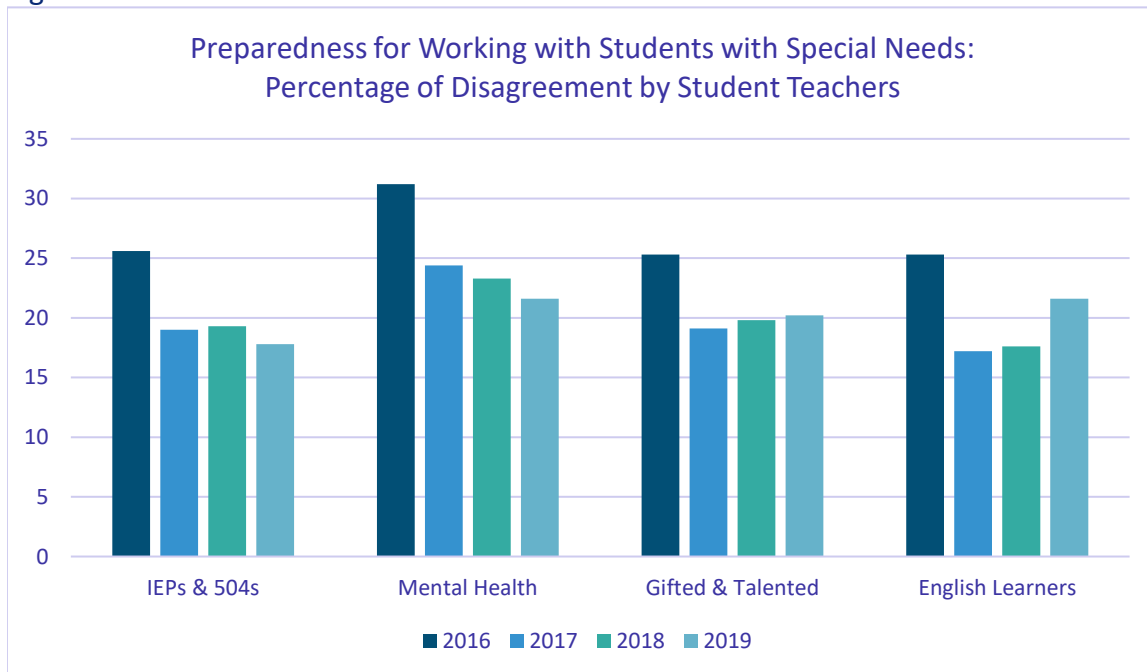
**Program Areas Identified for Improvement**

Some areas for which student teachers feel underprepared include the following items with percentage of respondents that *disagreed* they were prepared following the description.

- Planning instruction for students on IEPs and 504 plans—19%
- Teaching students with mental health needs—23%
- Meeting the needs of students who are classified as gifted and talented—20%
- Teaching English Language Learners—19%

Preparing teacher candidates to support students with special needs has been an area of focus for ND educator preparation programs for several years, and initiatives are in process across these programs to address areas for improvement. Initiatives include adding curriculum and field experiences focused on students with special needs as well as adding training in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and trauma-informed practices to increase readiness for teaching students with mental health needs. Figure 1 shows changes in disagreement over time, tracking student teacher perceptions of preparedness from 2016 to 2019. All areas show a tentatively positive trend, with decreasing percentages of disagreement with the exception of the increase in preparedness for working with English learners in 2019. NDACTE will continue to monitor these items to draw data-informed conclusions about the effectiveness of program changes.

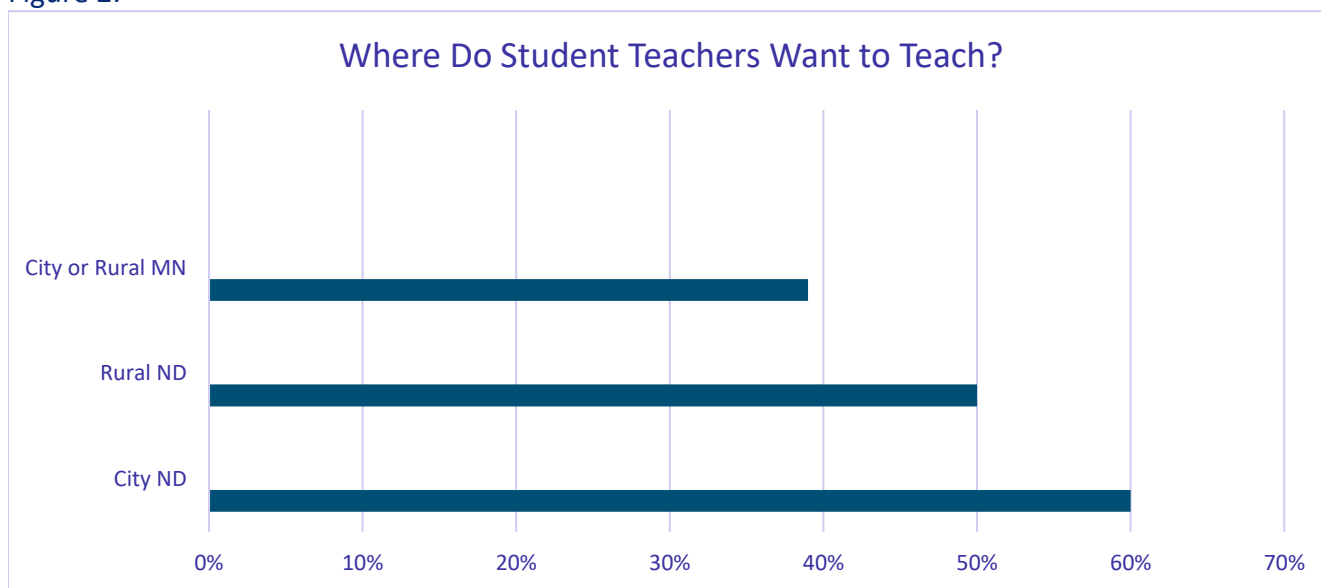
Figure 1.



## Teacher Shortages and Placing New Teachers

Because of teacher shortages in North Dakota, it is also interesting to look at areas where student teachers expressed a willingness to teach. Figure 1 below shows the percentages for the top three locations for which student teachers expressed an interest. Half of the student teachers reported a willingness to accept a position in rural ND, but it is not known if there are some communities these future teachers would consider too rural. Most respondents prefer to teach in a ND community with a population of 20,000 or more. Just over 11% indicated a willingness to teach on American Indian Reservations, a known high need location for teachers.

Figure 2.



## Transition to Teaching Survey: First-Year Completer Perceptions

*96% of TTS respondents reported applying for a teaching license.*

The Transition to Teaching Survey (TTS) is administered late spring each year. During the 2017, 2018, and 2019 administrations, **786**, or approximately 47%, of completers from participating institutions completed the TTS. Over 77% of respondents had applied for a ND teaching license, followed by 22% in MN. Of those respondents who had not applied for a teaching license, the top two reported reasons were not yet passing licensure exams (25%) and not planning to pursue a career in teaching (25%). Most respondents had not applied for jobs outside of teaching, and for the nearly 14% who had, the top reported reason was a limited number of teaching positions available in their content area (36%). Nearly 27% of those who pursued a job outside of teaching reported preferring that work environment.

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Almost 50% of the 737 respondents who applied for teaching positions applied in communities of 20,000 or more in ND followed by 37% in rural ND communities and 18% in rural MN communities, which is similar to Exit Survey results. Less than 4% applied for a teaching position on an American Indian Reservation. Over 90% of the respondents received an offer for a teaching position, and for those who did not, the top perceived reason was a competitive job field (52%).

**79% of new teachers said they planned to remain in teaching for 11 years or more.**

### ***New Teachers are Generally Satisfied with their Preparation***

The respondents who reported being employed in a school setting as a teacher (608/786) were asked to rate how well prepared they felt for their first year of teaching and to describe their school environment. Some areas in which they felt best prepared include the following items with the percentage of respondents that *agreed* they were prepared following the description.<sup>3</sup>

- Planning instruction aligned with state content standards—97%
- Knowing the content in their licensure area—96%
- Using assessment inform practice—96%
- Creating a respectful learning environment for all students—95%
- Following laws related to student rights and teacher responsibility—94%
- Promoting student engagement—93%

Most items had agreement higher than 85% from new teachers, and those areas rated lowest on the survey are presented in the next section.

### ***Program Areas Identified for Improvement***

Some areas for which new teachers feel underprepared include the following items with the percentage of respondents that *disagreed* they were prepared following the description.

- Teaching students with mental health needs—36%
- Meeting the needs of students who are classified as gifted and talented—31%
- Teaching English Language Learners—30%
- Planning instruction for students on IEPs and 504 plans—26%

The lowest reported areas by new teachers match those identified by student teachers, but the percentage of new teachers who reported feeling underprepared increased. It is important to note that student teachers are in an apprenticeship position with support from both a cooperating teacher and university supervisor. New teachers, even with mentoring, do not have this same level of support, and their responsibility for students increases, likely accounting for these higher percentages.

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<sup>3</sup>This list of items represents highlights from the survey results. Institutions have full results both for the ND aggregate and their own institution.

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Over the years, there has been a tension between state licensure requirements and adequately preparing new teachers to meet the needs of all students. Even as pathways into classrooms are made easier through legislative action, educator preparation programs continue to improve preparation and increase rigor in areas such as working with students with mental health needs, for whom English is not a first language, and who are served by IEPs and 504 plans.

### ***School Environment for New Teachers***

***96% of new teachers agreed their schools were safe.***

New teachers generally agree their school environments are positive and supportive. For example, 92% agree their colleagues provide valuable support. This number drops slightly when asked about the administration, with 86% of new teachers agreeing their administration is responsive and supportive. Nearly 16% reported not having the technology resources needed to do their jobs, and even more striking, 30% reported not having adequate time for collaborating with colleagues. Given the challenging and isolating nature of being new to a profession as well as research findings about teacher attrition and the necessity of collaboration for new teachers (Goldstein, 2015; Reeves, Pun, & Chung, 2017), this is a finding of concern.

***30% of new teachers reported not having enough time for planning with colleagues.***

### **Supervisor Survey: Supervisors of First-Year Teacher Perceptions**

The Supervisor Survey is administered in the late spring of the school year to the supervisors of first-year teachers who completed a ND educator preparation program. During the 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 administration years, a total of **430** out of 1022 possible supervisors completed the survey for a response of 42%.

### ***Supervisors are Generally Satisfied with New Teacher Preparation***

***Supervisors generally agree first-year completers of North Dakota educator preparation programs are well-prepared.***

There were only six items for which at least 90% of supervisors did not agree the new teacher was prepared. Some areas for which they felt the new teachers were best prepared include the following

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items. The percentage of respondents that *agreed* the new teachers were prepared follows the description.<sup>4</sup>

- Uphold laws and carry out responsibilities—97%
- Advocate for students—96%
- Use technology for learning—96%
- Knowing the content in their licensure area—95%
- Use collegial feedback—94%

### ***Program Areas Identified for Improvement***

Some areas for which supervisors felt new teachers were underprepared include the following items with the percentage that *disagreed* following the description.

- Help students self-assess—14%
- Use valid and reliable assessment—14%
- Meet the needs of students who are classified as gifted and talented—14%
- Use assessment data—13%
- Make interdisciplinary connections—11%
- Respond to student behavior—11%

Although both new teachers and student teachers self-identify as feeling least prepared to work with students with special needs, including those with mental health needs, supervisors appeared most focused on assessment. Three of six items with less than 90% of supervisor agreement were related to assessment.

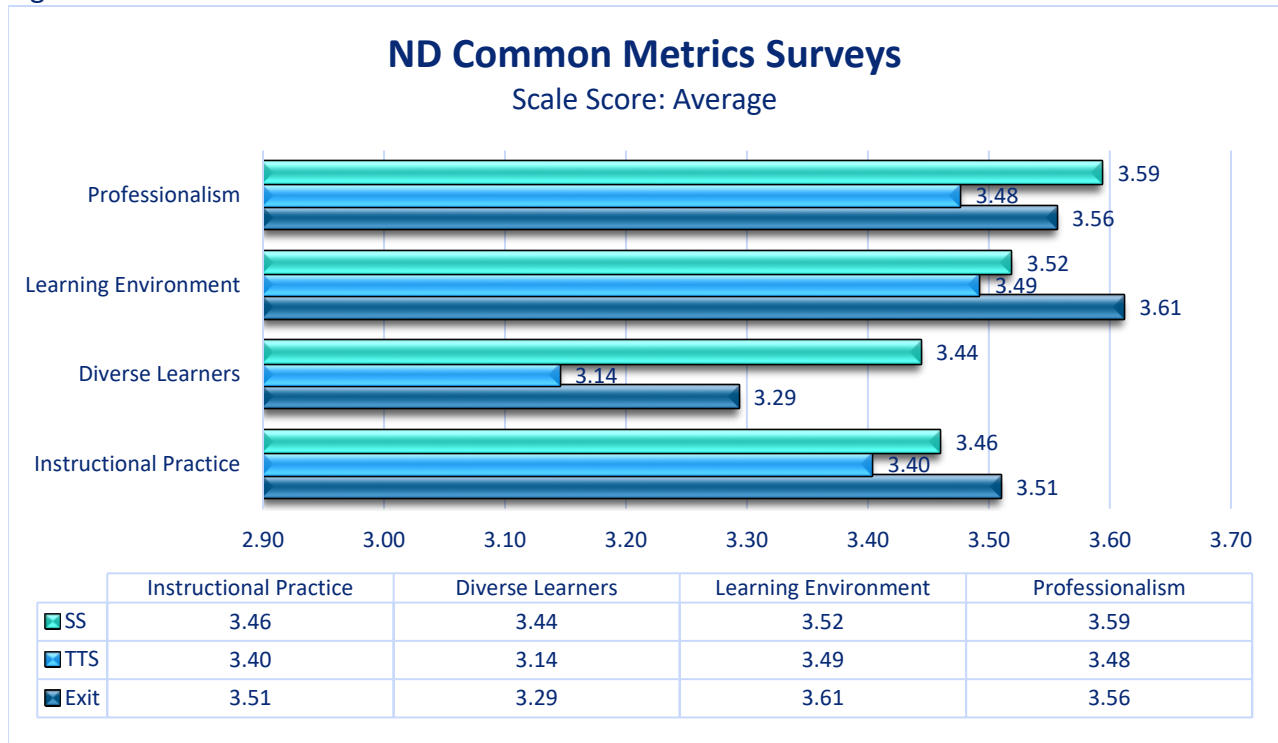
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<sup>4</sup> This list of items represents highlights from the survey results. Institutions have full results both for the ND aggregate and their own institution.

## Cross-Survey Comparisons

As noted above, the *Exit Survey*, *Transition to Teaching Survey*, and *Supervisor Survey* include common items that can be used for comparison across the surveys. Internal validity analysis revealed four scales. All of the items in Section B of the surveys fell into four categories: professionalism, learning environment, diverse learners, and instructional practice. The longitudinal results for the scales are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3.



As presented in Figure 3, the scale that represents items for preparedness to work with diverse learners has the lowest overall ratings. The highest rated scale is from the student teachers and their belief in their preparation for establishing a positive learning environment, including preventing and responding to student behaviors. Their perceptions drop once they are in the classroom as first-year teachers. First-year teachers hold the lowest perceptions of preparedness for all four scales compared to student teachers and supervisors.

The survey results offer opportunities to affirm practices in place at ND educator preparation programs as well as to help in the identification of areas for change. The programs practice continuous improvement based on high quality data collected throughout the preparation of a future teacher and one year after completion. This tracking allows programs to adjust to the changing needs of schools and P-12 students.



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## References

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