

The Survey

The follow-up survey of 2004-2005 interns and student teachers in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, was begun in October of 2005. Following the initial mailing on October 11, two additional mailings were sent to non-respondents. The second mailing was merely a reminder, while the third mailing contained another copy of the questionnaire. Two hundred seventy-two individuals were identified as having completed a regular internship (n = 226), Lyndhurst elementary internship (n = 24), or student teaching (n = 10: 7 in music and 3 in agriculture).

A total of 103 questionnaires were returned from the 272 to whom questionnaires were sent for a response rate by mail of (37.9%). To determine employment status of non-respondents, the Knox County list of new teachers hired for fall of 2005 was obtained and matched with the list of candidates. Faculty members in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services who had worked with the interns were also contacted regarding employment of the candidates with whom they had worked. In addition, employment information for many of the interns and student teachers had been received in early fall via email communications, and some had accepted positions and reported them in the spring when supplying information for the follow up. Finally, when the list of individuals about whom we had no information dropped to approximately 40, the list was shared with the former interns with whom email contact had been maintained. Employment information from all sources provided information for a total of 256 of the 272 in the population (94.1%).

Program areas are being provided with summaries of responses for students completing their respective programs. Employment information, program satisfaction rating means, and responses to open-ended questions (What were the strengths of your teacher preparation program? and What could be done to improve the program?) are included in those reports. This report summarizes the overall results of the survey. Tables appear following the text of this summary. Note that information regarding state of residence and employment are reported for the total population while other information is available only from survey respondents who account less than half of the population. Comparable data from the previous year are not available due to a technical error in gathering data online last year.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 show the respondents are primarily female, with a median age at program completion of 24 years. The largest percentage of our teacher candidates are living in Tennessee following program completion.

Elementary and Early Childhood Education candidates accounted for over 50% of the respondents, which is fairly representative of our overall group of teacher candidates in this cohort.

Respondents were somewhat more positive in rating their overall experiences at UT than in their preparation in classroom management and assessment in Table 3. Classroom management and various aspects of assessment were targeted for evaluation based on comments by previous graduates that these were areas in which they needed more preparation. Over 92% rated their Overall UT experiences as either Good or Very Good, but similar ratings for creating and selecting classroom assessments (73%), use of multiple types of assessments (72%), using assessment results to plan instruction so every child can learn (69%), and understanding standardized assessment results (67%), and preparation in classroom management (65%) fell short of the overall ratings. The holistic ratings on knowledge of the content area by all respondents and preparation for their specific school setting (by teaching respondents) shown in Table 4 both had medians of 8 on the 10-point scale, but the mean for content area knowledge was higher than that for the school setting.

Almost 90% of the respondents reported they were employed on a full-time basis, as shown in Table 5. Of the 59% who applied for teaching positions in the school systems in which they completed internships or student teaching, the majority were offered jobs. The percentage who definitely plan to teach next year (88%) declines somewhat when projecting five years into the future (78%).

Employment information was known for 94% of the program completers. Of the 256 with employment information, almost 88% were teaching. (See Table 6) The largest number of program completers in a state outside of Tennessee are in Georgia (n = 9).

Table 7 shows responses from the 11 respondents who are not teaching this year. Not all applied for positions, and some were offered (and could have accepted) teaching positions. None of them have decided to leave the profession at this time. Their reasons for not teaching varied but were typical of those from previous years.

Responses from the 91 survey respondents who are teaching are shown in Table 8. School settings in which they teach are varied, although they generally felt prepared for their particular situations on the holistic rating in Table 4. Slightly more than half reported they were not planning to engage in Action Research in their own classrooms this year. Nine of the 17 respondents who were teaching outside the state of Tennessee indicated they did not plan to return. Better pay and personal reasons (such as marriage and spouse in another state, etc.) were the most common reasons for going outside Tennessee.

Three open-ended items were included in the survey: What were the strengths of your teacher preparation program? In what areas, if any, do you not feel adequately prepared? and Comments. The respondents' answers to these open-ended questions are provided with the individual program summaries because the comments are often related to the specific program in which the respondent participated.

Classroom management and time management were listed relatively frequently by respondents as areas in which they not feel adequately prepared. Assessment and, in some cases, teaching methods were also mentioned in different programs. One respondent reported, "Nothing out of the ordinary. I was overwhelmed at first, but am more confident and relaxed."

Comments varied under listings of strengths of their programs, with some faculty members being cited by name. One respondent found "being grouped with the special education cohort even though I am elementary/secondary education . . . helped me beyond measure so far this year." "I feel more prepared than other first year teachers I have met. The UT teaching program was intense, but I see now it was absolutely worth it!"

Under comments a respondent wrote, "The urban-multicultural program was a wonderful experience. I didn't appreciate it like I should have while I was there. I felt extremely prepared for this year and am so thankful for my time at UT." Another stated, "In talking with other UT grads and other non-UT trained teachers, I feel I made the wisest choice in completing my degree at UT. They one year internship, along with two intern placements, prepared me for things no semester-long program could." One respondent wrote, "Thanks for everything, especially believing in me to become a teacher. I think I have grown tremendously in my professional character and as an educational provider." One of the respondents who had moved to another state reported, "One of the reasons I was hired was because UT has a wonderful reputation – even way up here in New Jersey. I had many employers comment on it!"

Table 1
Respondent and Population Characteristics

Characteristic	n	%
Gender (respondents, N = 103)		
Male	19	18.4
Female	84	81.6
Age at Program Completion (N = 103)		
Range (years)	21 - 53	
Mean (years)	27.4	
Median (years)	24	
State of Residence (population, N = 272)		
Arizona	1	0.4
California	1	0.4
Colorado	1	0.4
District of Columbia	2	0.7
Florida	4	1.5
Georgia	9	3.3
Kentucky	5	1.8
New Jersey	3	1.1
North Carolina	5	1.8
Pennsylvania	2	0.7
South Carolina	5	1.8
Tennessee	191	70.2
Virginia	2	0.7
Outside U.S.: Australia, Guatemala, Spain	3	1.1
Unknown	38	14.0

Table 2
Licensure Areas of Respondents

Area	n	Area	n
Elementary K-8	37	Economics	1
Elementary 1-8	2	Psychology	3
Early Childhood PreK-4	20	Sociology	1
English	9	Agriculture Education	1
French	1	Agriscience	1
Spanish	2	Typing/Keyboarding	1
Mathematics	11	Home Economics/Consumer Science	2
Biology	7	Modified Special Education	6
Chemistry	2	Comprehensive Special Education	6
Physics	3	Special Education PreK-1	2
Earth Science	2	Visual Arts	2
History	11	Vocal/General Music	1
Government	5	Theatre	1
Geography	6		

Table 3
Program Evaluation by Respondents

Preparation Area	Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good	
Preparation in:								
classroom management	8	7.8%	28	27.2%	45	43.7%	22	21.4%
creating/selecting classroom assessments	3	2.9%	24	23.5%	49	48.0%	27	25.5%
use of multiple types of assessments	3	2.9%	26	25.2%	46	44.7%	28	27.2%
using assessment results to plan instruction so every child can learn	7	6.8%	25	24.3%	42	40.8%	29	28.2%
Understanding the results of standardized assessments	7	6.8%	25	24.3%	48	47.1%	21	20.6%
Overall experiences at UTK	1	1.0%	7	6.8%	61	59.2%	34	33.0%

Table 4
Holistic Ratings of Preparation

Scope	N	Range	Mean	Median
Respondents' rating of preparation in knowledge of content area on scale from 1 (very poorly prepared) to 10 (very well prepared)	103	1-10	7.96	8.00
Teaching respondents' ratings of preparation for their current position in their specific setting on a scale from 1 (very poorly prepared) to 10 (very well prepared)	91	1-10	7.3	8.00

Table 5

Employment Status, Activities and Plans of Respondents

Question	Respondents	
Present employment situation:		
Employed full-time	92	89.3%
Employed part-time	6	5.8%
Not employed, seeking employment	1	1.0%
Not employed, not seeking employment at this time	4	3.9%
Applied for position in internship/student teaching school system		
Yes	61	59.2%
No	42	40.8%
Of those 61 who applied, those offered a position by that system		
Yes	45	73.8%*
No	5	26.2%*
Plan to be teaching next year		
Yes	91	88.3%
Undecided	12	11.7%
Plan to be teaching five years from now		
Yes	80	77.7%
Undecided	17	16.5%
No	6	5.8%

*Percentage of those who applied to the system

Table 6
Employment of Program Completers

Employment	Program Completers		Sub-Totals	
Teaching in Knox County Schools	101	39.5%		
Teaching in private schools in Knoxville	3	1.2%		
Teaching in Tennessee outside Knox County	74	47.4%		
Teaching in other states	38	14.8%		
Teaching at Roane State	1	0.4%		
Teaching (location unknown)	8	3.1%		
Total Teaching			225	87.9%
Graduate School	11	4.3%		
Missionary outside U.S.	2	0.8%		
Restaurant server	1	0.4%		
Married, moving, grad school	1	0.4%		
Parenting, homemaker	3	1.2%		
Substitute and clerk (out of state)	1	0.4%		
Substitute	3	1.2%		
Painter, substitute	1	0.4%		
Boys & Girls club, substitute	1	0.4%		
Manicurist	1	0.4%		
Moved and waiting licensure, sales	1	0.4%		
Teachers assistant	1	0.4%		
Working at mortgage company	1	0.4%		
Not teaching (occupation not specified)	2	0.8%		
Outside U.S., occupation not known	1	0.4%		
Total Not Teaching			31	12.1%

Note. Occupational information was available for 256 (94.1%) of the 272 who completed the program. Percentages in the table above reflect percentages of those for whom information was available (256).

Note. Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Note. Out-of-state teaching positions include California (1), Colorado (1), District of Columbia (2), Florida (4), Georgia (9), Kentucky (3), New Jersey (3), North Carolina (5), South Carolina (5), Virginia (2).

Table 7

Responses from Respondents Who Are Not Teaching

Question	Respondents
Did you apply for a teaching position?	
Yes	6
No	5
Were you offered one or more positions that you declined?	
Yes	4
No	7
Do you plan to seek a teaching position at any future time?	
Yes	10
No	0
Undecided	1
What was the primary reason for not teaching at the present time?	
Graduate study	3
Lack of jobs in the geographic area in which you want to live	2
Already satisfactorily employed in another field	1
Lack of jobs anywhere	1
Other*	5

*Needed a break;

Graduate study and recently married - moving during 2005-06 year

Moved to another state after hiring was completed and waiting for license for that state

Moving/getting married

Need to pass Praxis

Table 8
Responses of Teaching Respondents

Question	Respondents	
How would you characterize the school setting and students where you currently teach?		
Urban	26	28.6%
Suburban	23	25.3%
Rural	18	19.8%
Mixed	24	26.4%
Do you plan to engage in Action Research in your classroom this year?		
Yes	17	18.7%
No	48	52.8%
Undecided	8	8.8%
If the need arises	18	19.8%
If you are teaching outside of Tennessee, do you anticipate returning to teach in Tennessee sometime in the future?		
Yes	2	2.2%
No	9	9.9%
Not sure	2	2.2%
No answer	4	4.4%
If you are teaching, but not in Tennessee, why did you decide to leave the State?		
Respondents answering Yes to previous question:		
More money, better offer, bonus, moving paid		
Marriage		
Respondents answering No to previous question:		
The education system in Tennessee did not meet my needs as an educator.		
New adventures and better pay		
Pay - lack of scholarships for out of state students		
Because I got married and moved to my husband's state		
Better pay, closer to home		
No openings in Ag this summer		
Wanted to go to a new place and Georgia pays better with a better system.		
Fiance' got a job at Georgia College		
No support from Dr. XXX in Knox County		
Wife going to Duke		
Respondent not sure about returning to Tennessee		
My religious beliefs		

Note: Percentages reflect the percentage of the 91 teaching respondents.

How could the College of Education, Health and Human Sciences be of help to you this year during your first year of full-time teaching?

Offer the courses I need to complete my master's close to Morristown.

Activities for lower level students

Activity ideas, round table of ideas, a motivation class

Send us some interesting journal articles. Let us know about other action research/lesson study that could help us in math.

Making sure I get paid for one year's experience and master's degree

A mentor – somebody to call for advice

Send information about job fair – closer to home. (TN) Nashville especially

Keeping in touch with professors

If I need resources, I know my former professors would help.

I think it would be good to have a web resource for first year teachers in that recent teachers post tips, forms they've created (that's a huge help), ideas, etc.

Providing a newsletter about different subjects – titles, instructional strategies, etc.

Conduct a group session and separate into age groups and talk about first year teaching experiences and gain ideas.

More teaching methods classes. The research classes help, but I really didn't get many methods from those classes.

You could mail us current research and findings so that we could stay up-to-date

Provide information about classroom management. I am still learning, but I have a lot of behavioral problems in my classroom.

Offer classes that would help us stay up to date. (More like workshops)

Help me with information, contacts in completing the last four hours of my Master's degree.

Would like to have my undergrad English degree count for "Highly Qualified" status on my license. Need help taking care of this, no one here seems to know what to do.

Just there in case a touchy, possibly legal issue comes up.

Web site links to excellent teaching sites

It would be nice to get together to discuss challenges we've faced, solutions, and positive practices we've observed.

Visits from professors to follow-up and give advice/suggestions of programs

Use of a lesson plan format that is reasonable in length. The one used @ UT – I don't have time to complete.

More instruction or training on organizing my classroom files/paperwork

Keep UTK email account available

Post art education lesson plans on a website

Inform me of special workshops or guest speakers

I am teaching math and language to struggling students – I'm not certified in math. This is not the University's fault. I had no idea I'd have this position.

Holding open "forums" for us to chat with previous classmates on trials – both good and bad – in our profession.

By offering resources and continued professional development opportunities

Just provide resources for lesson plans, etc.

I would love to be kept abreast of the accomplishments of other graduates.

Getting the right license

I don't think you can

Keep me informed of upcoming seminars and websites with teaching material for elementary students.

More time in classroom.

More applicable classes at UT

Grant resources

Offer workshops for professional development