

Fall Focus Group

Focus Group Conducted: September 8, 2021

Focus Group Topic: Urban Placement

Number of participants: 2 Alumni

Total Teaching Experience: 4 years | 5 Years

SU Program: ESEC/ELEM

INTASC Standards	Perceived Preparation Strengths	Perceived Opportunities for Growth
Learner Development	<i>"I feel like I got a lot of that [behavioral mgmt.] out of Dr. Hill special Ed. Classes."</i>	<i>"Having someone speak to you about the experiences entering a school like that would have been helpful going in. Just because the classroom mgmt. stuff sometimes just does not work, and being so routine cannot be natural for some people. We had great courses that talk to us about classroom mgmt., but it would have been helpful in senior year to have someone to come and talk to us about their experience."</i>
Learning Differences	<i>"Coming from Samford, we have a solid foundation. Like we know good teaching, and we know good teaching strategies."</i>	<i>"I think a barrier going into [an urban settings] is being okay with academic work not getting done if you have to stop and have a conversation. I found that happen a lot when I taught in Tarrant. Sometimes we just need to chat, have a classroom family discussion. At first that was a barrier for me because I was so focus on teaching the content, until I realize that the life skills are needed just as much in that setting. So, kind of having that permission to breathe a little bit is a barrier until you realize that it's okay." <i>"I didn't realize how important relationship building was. That is huge for 1st year teachers stepping into urban settings. You have to get to know your kids, you have to get to know what's going on at home. Establish those relationships, so that they can trust you before you do anything else or you would not be able to get anything else done."</i></i>
Learning Environments	<i>"My most meaningful placement was Trace crossing. I was with the same teacher and the same kids over a long period of time during my student teaching."</i>	<i>"My experience in urban setting was my first year of teaching. I was teaching kindergarten and I had 23 kids, just me, and I was completely clueless. My experience was really hard, a lot of learning experience, and I didn't have a lot of support at my school and felt alone in it."</i>
Content Knowledge	<i>"Through all the writing and reading. I have found teaching with other professionals that we have so much more experience than a lot of other educational programs in a school setting."</i>	<i>"I feel like I did not learn a lot of strategies in the [classroom mgmt. course]. We did not learn about behavior mgmt. We did not learn about making relationships with students." "I think they could have gone a lot more in-depth."</i>
Application of Content Knowledge	<i>"I think we have more academic resources than other 1st year teachers that I was with in that [Urban] setting. Like I know how to teach standards, keep them engaged and make lesson plans."</i>	<i>"I feel like you should think through your procedures and classroom mgmt. plans. Because my 1st day of teaching, not just in an urban setting but any setting, I dealt with a lot of behaviors. If I would have done the work ahead of the school year, I could have nip some of that in the bud."</i>
Assessment		

<p>Planning for Instruction</p>		<p>"I think to be ready for an urban education setting, [providing them with] a hard copy or digital copy of something like great first week lessons, conversations that they can have with their kids, or classroom behavioral mgmt. strategies. Just things that they can pull from that 1st week, when they feel like they are drowning."</p>
<p>Instructional Strategies</p>	<p>"Being willing to share resources with new teachers. I've had people come and observe me, and also being able to observe other teachers is really helpful for your 1st year of teaching. Also, having a person in your school that you can just go and talk things through with them. It's nice to have somebody to be a sounding support. It was probably the most helpful to me, is finding that person that I can do that with my 1st year of teaching."</p>	<p>"Sometimes I think we look at urban settings as scary. So strategies and knowing that if you feel like this is where you supposed to be, you can use the strategies that are given at Samford. Like getting those words out of the undergraduates' head, that it is fearful, scary, and intimidating would be helpful. It's different, but you can use what you know and will be fine."</p>
<p>Professional Learning and Ethical Practice</p>		
<p>Leadership and Collaboration</p>	<p>"I've encountered lack of parent involvement." there wasn't a lot of support from administration and coaches with so many kids. I feel like I had a lot of needs, but I didn't have enough hands to help all my kids the way they needed to be helped."</p>	<p>Collaboration: "My 1st year teaching at Oxmoor valley. I would meet with Dannie walker at Oxmoor, and she was a 2nd year teacher at that time and had the same experience as my 1st year of teaching. And that was so encouraging to have somebody who have been there; I to have someone to walk with me through it. If they could have some kind of partnership with a Samford Alumni who was teaching in an urban setting, I feel like that would make it a little less scary and they would have someone to reach out to. (Mentor program specifically for students going into an urban setting)."</p>

Unexpected Findings

Additional Barriers:

"...You bring so much home. Not necessarily work, but I would come home and worry a lot about my kids because I knew about a lot of what they were going home to. I wasn't expecting that going into the urban setting. Nobody prepare me for how draining emotionally it can be just worrying about my kids all the time."

"So, I noticed with barriers or obstacles, [Coming from Samford], we tend to be perfectionist. If Professor can talk to us that if obstacles, barriers, lessons, or parents don't go right, that it happens to every teacher. Don't look at it as something negative or something that you're doing wrong."

"Conversation that it's okay to make mistakes and fail. And knowing that it's okay to use the resources around you. That you don't have to carry it on your own. Having those conversations before your graduate"