

Educator Preparation Programs' Practice-Response Opportunities in Virtual Environments

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Executive Summary

When PK-12 schools closed during the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the face-to-face field-based experiences that Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) depend on came to an immediate halt. The need to shift quickly to more reliance on online instruction prompted members of the Arizona Coalition on Educator Preparation and Practice (ACEPP) to conduct a survey study of educator preparation programs in Arizona to learn about the impact of the pandemic on programs.

The survey of five Arizona EPPs included items to answer questions on the (a) ways EPPs changed program delivery during the COVID period March 2020-May 2021 and which program elements, activities, or tools assisted in the transition to online learning environments during this period, (2) barriers EPP faculty encountered in the process of transitioning to online learning during the COVID period March 2020-May 2021, and (c) virtual elements, activities, or tools that educators changed and want to continue using once PK-12 schools and EPPs returned to face-to-face experiences.

Results on **how program delivery changed** showed that the largest adjustment was the move to online synchronous instruction with 47% of respondents indicating this transition, an increase of 36%. Hybrid decreased to 19%. Online asynchronous instruction, already in place in one institution, increased slightly to 30%. The top instructional practices shifted from lesson planning and in-person observations to video-based evaluations and video-based observations. A variety of platforms (e.g., *Go React*) assisted faculty in the transition to online instruction.

The **barriers** that faculty encountered in the transition to online learning during COVID included those experienced when attempting to place teacher candidates (e.g., access to technology) and challenges in maintaining high expectations. Student engagement and the lack of relationship building were also common barriers.

The **virtual elements, activities, or tools that faculty identified wanting to continue, or as likely to continue**, after the pandemic included a better understanding of student needs in the areas of instruction, technology, and health, smaller class sizes, flexibility with assignments, engaging students in more meaningful discussion groups, and finding more authentic learning opportunities. Faculty also noted that to continue certain practices they needed to develop their skills in some areas, particularly technology.

Key themes were identified across survey responses: the need for greater attention and awareness of mental and physical health needs of teacher candidates, more flexibility in instruction, and more and sustained technology and design support for classes and programs.

Abstract.

Educator preparation programs were disrupted and challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic. When educator preparation programs and PK-12 schools halted in-person learning and moved to virtual instruction, preservice teachers' opportunities to engage in classroom-based practice teaching experiences were significantly limited. Field-based, face-to-face experiences, once the foundation for effective teacher training, became rare or non-existent, and educator preparation programs had to rely on creative means to supply these experiences. This study explored how educator preparation programs in Arizona navigated classroom and field-based experiences during the pandemic. We surveyed educator preparation faculty across multiple higher education institutions about their transition to virtual learning environments in terms of the technology tools they used, the training they had or needed for implementation, available resources, and, once restrictions were lifted, which of these elements remained in their programs.

Introduction

When PK-12 schools closed during the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the face-to-face field-based experiences that Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) depend on came to an immediate halt. On-site mentor teachers' concerns shifted suddenly to learning how to instruct online and how to provide support to ensure that their students had adequate resources to learn (e.g., stable internet connections for online learning and basic needs of food, shelter, and safety). Although some PK-12 mentor teachers continued to work with preservice teachers in this new virtual environment, for others, taking on the additional responsibility of mentoring a preservice teacher became a lesser priority. As a result, many EPPs were forced to adapt by creating a variety of online, hybrid, and observational experiences for preservice teachers (Barnes et al., 2022; Cho & Clark-Gareca, 2020). Furthermore, disruptions to content delivery meant teacher educators had to adapt traditional methods of classroom-based instruction to fit virtual and hybrid environments, using a wide array of instructional approaches, technology applications, and strategies for connecting and engaging learners (Eisenbach, 2021). Even fully online programs, while not experiencing disruption to content delivery, nevertheless experienced COVID-created issues in field experiences (Barnes et al., 2022). Among higher education institutions (IHEs), COVID appears to have been an impetus for change. University presidents reported that the pandemic enabled them to implement some positive, long-term institutional changes that continue to benefit the institution (Jaschick & Lederman, 2022).

Despite forcing EPPs to adapt quickly to new modalities, the pandemic did have its benefits. The pandemic made collaboration within EPPs and among PK-12 teachers a necessity, affording educators the opportunity for “rethinking and reinventing preparation, as well as schooling itself” (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020, p. 463). This opportunity to reinvent and

rethink preparation resulted in EPPs and their partnering districts developing new strategies for “engaging students in virtual learning and classroom management, dispositions for teaching, such as flexibility and adaptability, and the importance of building relationships with students” (Durand & Trevino, 2020, p 30). Arizona EPPs were similarly affected, with opportunities to reinvent and rethink preparation, even while experiencing disruptions to previous practices. The Arizona CEEDAR team members needed to comprehend the challenges and barriers faced by EPPs in the State as they navigated the transition from predominantly in-person EPP programs to a predominantly online virtual EPP practice.

The Arizona CEEDAR team – referred to as the Arizona Coalition for Educator Preparation and Practice (ACEPP) – is an active member of the CEEDAR Center (Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform). During the time of this study, ACEPP was comprised of key personnel from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), Arizona State University (ASU), University of Arizona (UA), Northern Arizona University (NAU), Rio Salado College, Grand Canyon University (GSU), and the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (ASDB)³. ACEPP is a collaborative entity to enhance teacher preparation and leader support in Arizona with targeted initiatives in (a) data-driven decision making, (b) the inclusion of high-leverage practices (HLPs) in the curriculum of preparation programs and professional learning in the state, (c) practice opportunities in virtual environments, and (d) partnerships between institutes of higher education and public education agencies to support teacher retention in Arizona. These initiatives are critical to improving learning outcomes for all

³ACEPP’s current members are Arizona Department of Education (ADE), Arizona State University (ASU), University of Arizona (UA), Northern Arizona University (NAU), Rio Salado College, Grand Canyon University (GSU), Ottawa University, Vail Unified School District, Marana Unified School District, and AZ CEC.

of Arizona's students, with a focus on students with disabilities

(<https://cedar.education.ufl.edu/ta-map/arizona-intensive-ta/>, 2022).

To continue the efforts of enhancing teacher preparation, members from ACEPP engaged in research to collect data through a survey tool to learn about the impact of COVID on EPP programs. Specifically, the survey was developed to answer the following three questions.

1. In what ways did EPPs change program delivery during the COVID period March 2020-May 2021 and which program elements, activities, or tools assisted in the transition to online learning environments during this period?
2. What barriers did EPP faculty encounter in the process of transitioning to online learning during the COVID period March 2020-May 2021?
3. Which virtual elements, activities, or tools did educators change and which did they want to continue using once PK-12 schools and EPPs returned to face-to-face experiences?

Method

ACEPP faculty members representing five Arizona EPPs developed a 35-item survey using open-ended, closed-ended and Likert scale items to obtain answers to the three research questions. Respondents were asked to consider two specific points of time during the pandemic in responding to the survey questions: before COVID (i.e., prior to March 2020) and during COVID for the period between March 2020 and the end of the Spring 2021 semester (May). In addition, demographic data (e.g., questions collecting information about participants' experience, professional roles, and institutional affiliations related to EPPs) were included in the survey.

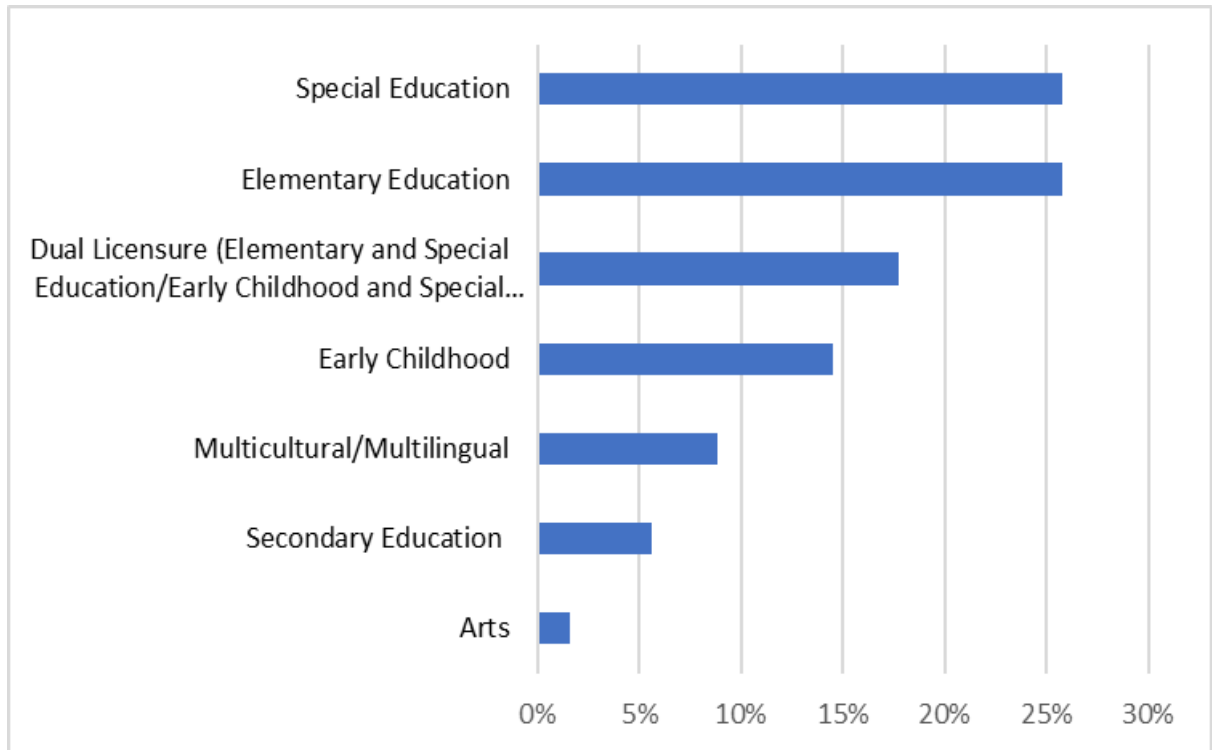
The survey was piloted amongst the membership of the ACEPP team to collect comments and feedback and to make any necessary edits and changes before disseminating the

survey to faculty at four Arizona EPPs (three state universities and one community college that offers post-baccalaureate educator preparation) agreeing to participate. The survey development and piloting took approximately three months before disseminating to EPPs. Throughout the data collection period, members of the ACEPP team emailed faculty in their respective EPP programs with friendly reminders to participate to increase the number of responses received.

Forty-eight teacher educators from the four EPPs responded. Seven respondents led programs in some capacity, 37 were full time faculty, and four were part-time faculty. Their responsibilities relating to educator preparation varied; 47 of the 48 respondents taught courses and 29 also supervised field experiences. Other responsibilities included curriculum design, research, recruitment, and mentoring doctoral students. On average, the respondents had worked in their current positions for 9.3 years (range .5 - 47 years). Additionally, several respondents indicated that they also had experience working in EPP programs at other institutions at a mean of 4.3 years.

When describing the programs where they taught, participants were asked to “check all that apply. ” Responses indicated involvement across multiple programs; of the 48 total participants, 38 indicated that they taught in “traditional” programs where the candidates take courses and field experience prior to student teaching semesters. Twenty indicated they taught in alternative path programs, where candidates are teachers of record while taking courses for licensure. Similarly, their teaching responsibilities were evenly divided among bachelor's, master's, and certification-only programs. Four individuals reported they also worked with doctoral students. Program areas included elementary education, special education, dual licensure (elementary and special education), early childhood, multicultural education, secondary education, and arts. Figure 1 shows the percentages of programs represented.

Figure 1

Program Areas Represented**Results**

Analysis of survey responses reveal key findings related to each of the three questions. Findings are also presented for three themes that emerged in open-ended comments: health, instruction, and technology.

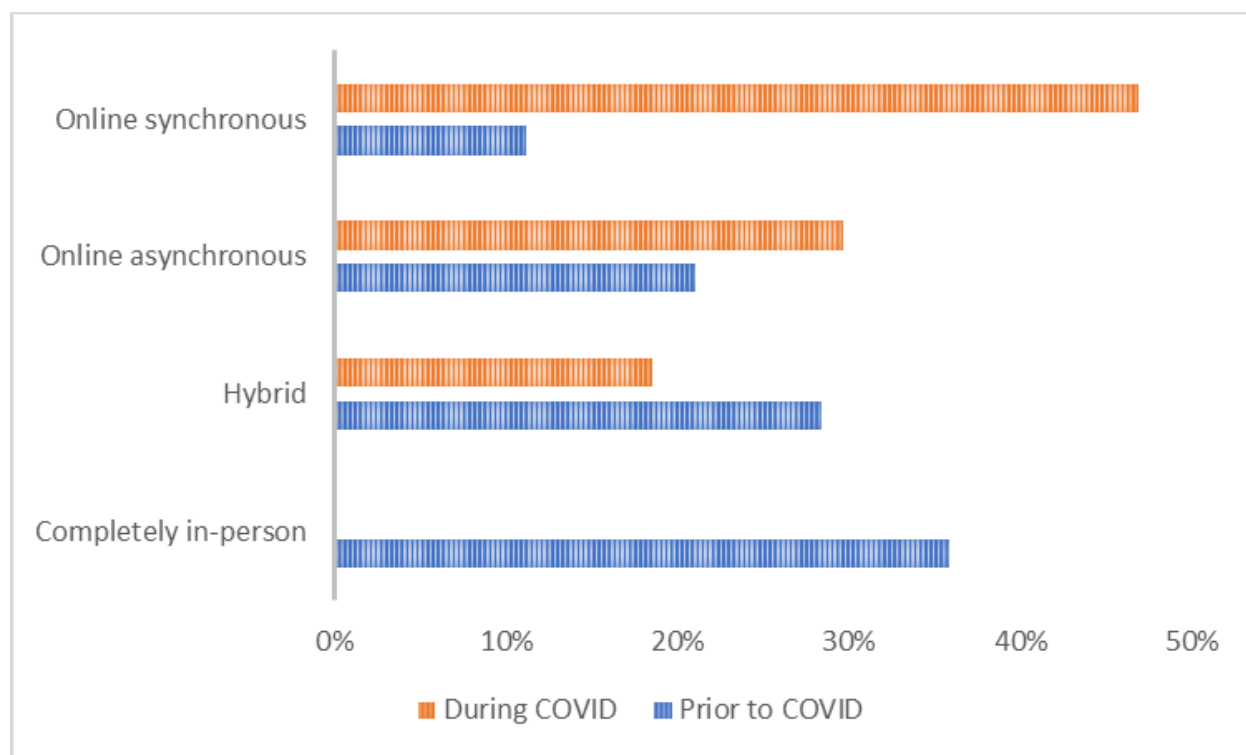
Question 1: In what ways did EPPs change program delivery during the COVID period March 2020-May 2021 and which program elements, activities, or tools assisted in the transition to online learning environments during this period?

Classes and program delivery changes. Figure 2 shows EPP instructional program delivery prior to and during COVID. Prior to the pandemic, most participants provided preparation to students through four primary approaches: completely in-person (36%), hybrid (described as reduced time in-person with online assignments; 28%), online asynchronous

(described as instruction that does not happen at the same time; 21%), and online synchronous in which instruction occurs online in real time (11%). Comparatively, using a timeline of approximately one year from when the Governor of Arizona declared a state of emergency on March 11, 2020 to May 2021 (end of semester), respondents were asked how EPP programs operated during this time frame. The responses represent dramatically different results from pre COVID. The largest change was the move to online synchronous instruction with 47% of respondents indicating this transition, an increase of 36%. Hybrid decreased to 19%. Online asynchronous instruction, already in place in one institution, increased slightly to 30%.

Figure 2.

EPP Program Delivery Prior to and During Covid



Comments from respondents referred to the extent to which college classes shifted.

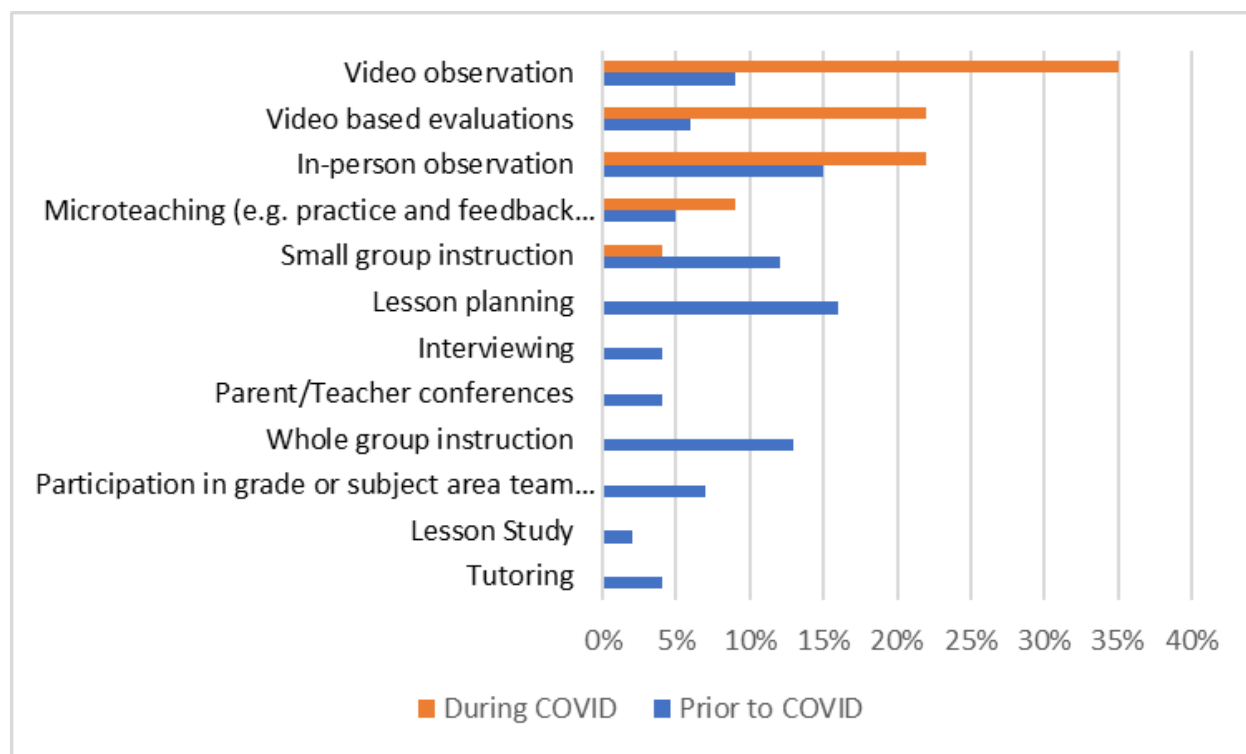
Opportunities for in-person instruction were nonexistent and in-person courses shifted to synchronous on-line sessions with instructors making modifications to include more

asynchronous independent online assignments. The structure of EPP programs dictated the ease with which modifications could occur. Two of these EPPs described their curriculum as having instructor flexibility on delivery and assignments, with college approved course descriptions, learning outcomes, and professional standards. One EPP had a coordinated curriculum with a common syllabus delivered across multiple sections and designated common assignments, but with instructor flexibility for delivery and other assignments.

For the EPP that delivered instruction asynchronously online, the curriculum was centralized; courses were developed in collaboration with instructional designers with little “real time” instructor flexibility. Prior to COVID, basic classroom instruction was asynchronous, with in-person field experiences and additional synchronous online webinars every semester. During COVID, field experience requirements shifted to virtual.

Shifts in instructional activities. When looking at how instructional practices changed, participants were asked to rank order a list of 15 practices that were most effective for teacher candidates. These results are displayed in Figure 3. Prior to COVID, the top two practices were lesson planning and in-person observations. During the pandemic, the top two choices were video-based evaluations and video-based observations. Comments from participants revealed the creative ways instructors tried to provide genuine instructional practices. For example, teacher candidates (TCs) without access to students were observed and evaluated by submitting videos of themselves teaching from home. One university sponsored an online charter school, and TCs were observed and evaluated while teaching selected online classes via *Zoom*. Participants also reported assigning TC observations of teaching by viewing ready-made videos, such as those provided by the ATLAS program.

Figure 3.

Instructional Practices Pre and During COVID

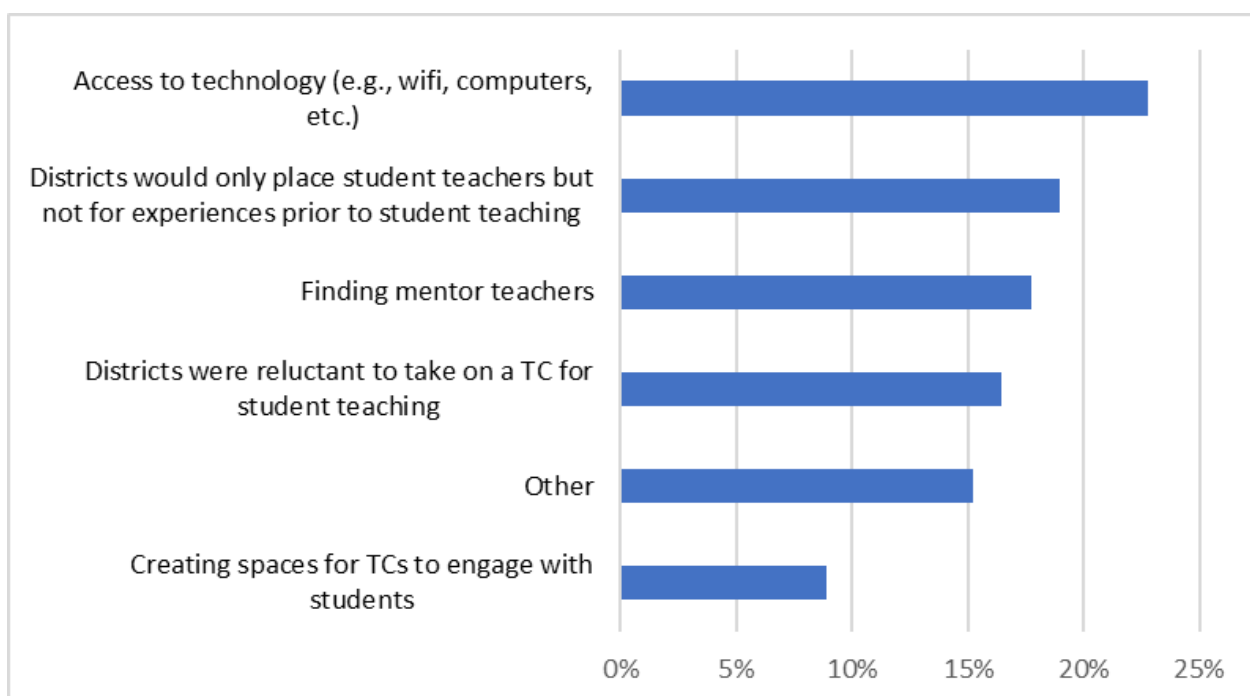
Technology. In the area of technology, respondents indicated a number of tools that assisted with the transition. These included those useful for asynchronous and synchronous modalities within a Learning Management System. Platforms such as *Zoom* and *Go React* created opportunities for virtual group and individual meetings, virtual supervision and video-based observations. Teacher candidates used various district platforms to conduct remote virtual teaching to meet practicum requirements. Platforms used across EPPs included *Go React*, *Microsoft Teams*, *Zoom*, various LMS platforms such as *Canvas* or *Blackboard*, various Google tools (docs, slides, spreadsheets surveys), *Web EX*, and other platforms or technology including *Face Time* pre/post conferencing for the assessment cycle and *Qualtrics* and *Poll Everywhere*.

Question 2: What barriers did EPP faculty encounter in the process of transitioning to online learning during the COVID period March 2020-May 2021?

Barriers experienced with placements. Participants were asked to check all that apply when responding to the question, “What barriers or challenges did your EPP program experience with the placement of TCs due to COVID19 restrictions?” As shown in Figure 4, the greatest barrier was access to the technology. But this was also followed by concerns over field-based placements. The participants reported difficulties getting field-based placements prior to student teaching and finding mentor teachers. In general, the districts had a reluctance to take on a teacher candidate.

Figure 4.

Barriers Experienced with Placement of Teacher Candidates



Barriers and challenges in maintaining high expectations. The survey asked open-ended questions regarding barriers and challenges to maintaining the same high expectations of teacher candidates during COVID restrictions. Their responses were categorized in two main areas – engagement and lack of relationship building.

Engagement. Attendance and active participation went down. Many TCs were stressed and emotional, were burnt out on *Zoom*, and would not show their faces. Respondents also reported difficulty establishing presence and immediacy with the TCs when conducting online observation and evaluation. One respondent stated that she tried to convey high expectations by explaining, “If you were in person, this is what it might look like.”

Lack of relationship building. Online interactions, simulations, videos, and video observations were no substitute for face-to-face contact and greatly influenced TCs’ PK-12 student engagement. EPP faculty reported diminished interactions with TCs and as a result intrinsic motivation was lessened. Further, mentor teachers were frequently asked to substitute or cover other classrooms due to teachers’ illnesses, and as a result, TCs did not have a typical field or student teaching experience.

EPP faculty responded to the barriers they faced in several ways. Respondents reported having more frequent individual meetings with TCs and conducted extra virtual office hours. Some also reported reducing group project assignments because of the difficulty TCs had trying to meet with their fellow TCs. EPP faculty adjusted course materials by creating simulations, uploaded course handouts to their LMS, searched for more affordable and online textbooks, and other apps or technology to help TCs with their PK-12 students.

Another response by faculty to barriers was increased flexibility with assignments. Whether it was in the form of providing TCs with additional resources, utilizing more engaging online learning tools, being flexible with assignment due dates, or creating alternative assignments, the data show that instructors made changes to assist TCs in being more successful in an online learning environment with limited access to PK-12 students. One instructor even included a change in the class schedule for mental health reasons. As one faculty member noted,

I “...Reduced the number of assignments in the class; Took mental health days where class was canceled; Reduced group projects to reduce coordination challenges; Revised assignments to address current events and times.”

Instructors also considered the context and instructional situation when evaluating TCs’ work and did not grade as stringently as they typically would. Class attendance was no longer counted in TCs’ grades. They were more flexible regarding assignment due dates, gave alternative assignments, and sometimes decreased assignments. In some cases, it was necessary to allow the TC to earn an “incomplete.”

Teaching with technology was new for many respondents. They reported teaching *Zoom* etiquette and learning how to conduct and manage *Zoom* breakout rooms. They explored using engaging quiz-type apps during class sessions, such as *Kahoot*, and learned how to conduct observations over *Zoom*. Respondents reported, in general, working with individual TCs to find the best alternatives for their situation. They also reported obtaining help from program staff in terms of advising, counseling, and finding solutions.

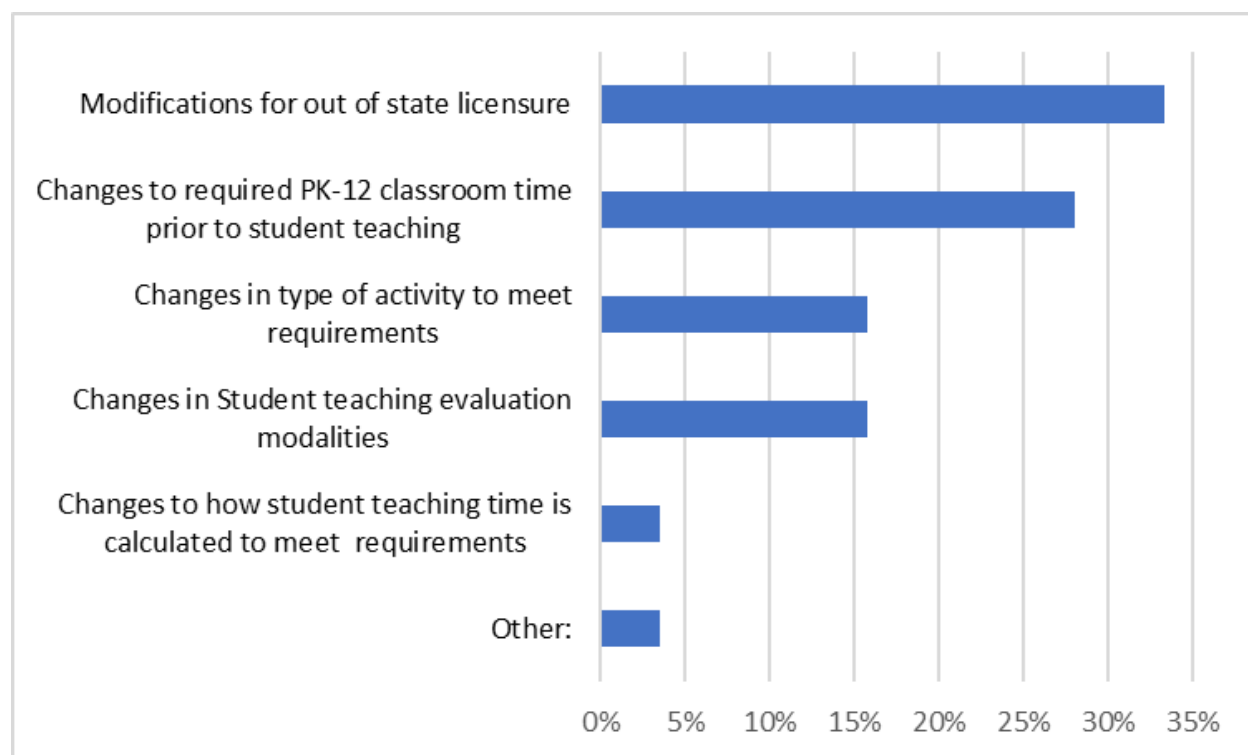
Question 3: Which virtual elements, activities, or tools did educators change and which did they want to continue using once PK-12 schools and EPPs returned to face-to-face experiences?

Figure 5 shows the changes made to program requirements during COVID restrictions. Modifications for out-of-state licensure topped the list of changes. Others included changes to required PK-12 classroom time prior to student teaching. As reported earlier, EPPs had difficulty finding placements for TCs, but this was especially true for TCs who needed time observing and learning to develop lesson plans in classrooms prior to student teaching. Most EPPs had to modify those requirements. Other changes were in the type of activity to meet requirements. For

example, one university developed an online tutoring program for TCs to practice lesson delivery. Other changes included the modalities used to evaluate student teaching; evaluations were conducted based on online lesson delivery and in most cases were recorded for viewing and scoring at a later time. Finally, some EPPs reported changes in calculating the required number of hours for student teaching, reflecting how most schools conducted classes on a reduced time schedule.

Figure 5

Changes in Program Requirements



Shifts and modifications likely to continue. The shift to fully online instruction necessitated that faculty reimagine how to effectively deliver their courses and ensure that TCs receive adequate practice learning opportunities to be prepared for their own classrooms. Although many courses were already online and/or hybrid, faculty of in-person courses and field experiences had to adapt quickly. Some of those adaptations revealed student strengths and

innovative ways to deliver instruction. In many ways, the pandemic leveled the field for students and provided faculty with an opportunity to better understand student needs in the areas of instruction, technology, and health. Given the proper support, faculty may choose to maintain these adaptations even after the return to campuses.

Instructors reported that some simple adjustments allowed them to more effectively deliver instruction after the switch to fully online courses, and that they planned to continue these practices if possible/allowed. For example, they thought that smaller class sizes were more beneficial to students and improved student engagement. They also reported that flexibility with assignment due dates and providing alternate assignments were relatively easy ways to support students. Engaging students in more meaningful discussion groups, breakout rooms, and practice learning communities are shifts that they plan to maintain. Finding more authentic learning opportunities through online platforms proved to be more challenging but is something they would like to continue exploring/developing post-pandemic in order to keep students more engaged. In addition, they would like to continue exposing teacher candidates to a variety of guest speakers.

Accessibility resources were promoted to ensure that classrooms, both in the digital and physical spaces, were accessible. This included being able to check a *Canvas Ally* score for file uploads, adding closed captioning to video and audio uploads, and understanding accessibility and inclusive services available.

Some instructors reported accessing online resources provided by Instructional Designers, such as menus of instructional strategies and pedagogical tools to assist with teaching online, using synchronous and asynchronous modalities. Others sought out individual consultations on course design and implementation.

As schools returned to in-person learning and in-person field experiences became more available, respondents reported other modifications that are most likely to be sustained and may or should continue, for example:

- Our TCs, as opposed to those prior to COVID, enter the field of teaching with a much more complete picture of technology and its resources.
- Learning management platforms were sustained and have become prominent systems for managing instruction.
- Some combination of in-person and virtual observations may stay in place.
- We may provide training in online learning
- The use of video conferencing tools to meet with students is here to stay.
- Quality Plan B versus quantity. Maybe we focus more on the quality of what and how the TCs are completing things, rather than asking for them to "collect" hours for the semester.
- The use of technology for classroom observations will continue. The use of technology for synchronous class sessions for hybrid courses will continue.

Skills needed to sustain practices. After considering the shifts most likely to be sustained, respondents were asked what skills and training they and other faculty members need to move forward. They responded overwhelmingly that in order to implement and continue with changes to instructional delivery, faculty need support, particularly in the area of technology. To maintain some of the practices started during the pandemic, they need “leadership that inspires and motivates innovations” and access to asynchronous online demonstrations of good teaching, as they reported having difficulty locating teaching videos that could be used in place of in-person observations.

Instructors were forced to quickly learn various online platforms, such as *Zoom*, *Google Classroom*, *GoReact*, and *Vosaic*. Overall, respondents indicated that they are willing to continue using these tools so long as they receive proper training and support from their college technology teams. For example, one institution trained and promoted the use of slack channels for collaboration between various groups, including faculty, staff, students, peers, organizations, etc. Technology support was available 24/7, 365 days a year through an experience center; faculty, staff and students could request a variety of support services including installation of apps, classroom technology, LMS support, *Zoom* training, etc. Additionally, they reported the need for training in platforms used by PK-12 schools (e.g., *Class Dojo* and parent portals) and learning more aspects of *Zoom* (e.g., recording) to enhance virtual learning environments.

Other skills and training needs included:

- Communication and shared resources.
- More training on instructional design and ways to creatively use technology for virtual learning experiences.
- Connect what's used in PK-12 classrooms to university courses
- Continued support and funding for external programs.
- Designing weekly online modules that are clear and contain all the necessary information for students to be successful working independently.
- How to use *Zoom* cameras in the classroom
- Learning all the capabilities of *Zoom* to enhance virtual learning environments.
- More ideas on how to engage our TCs on *Zoom* sessions.

And finally....

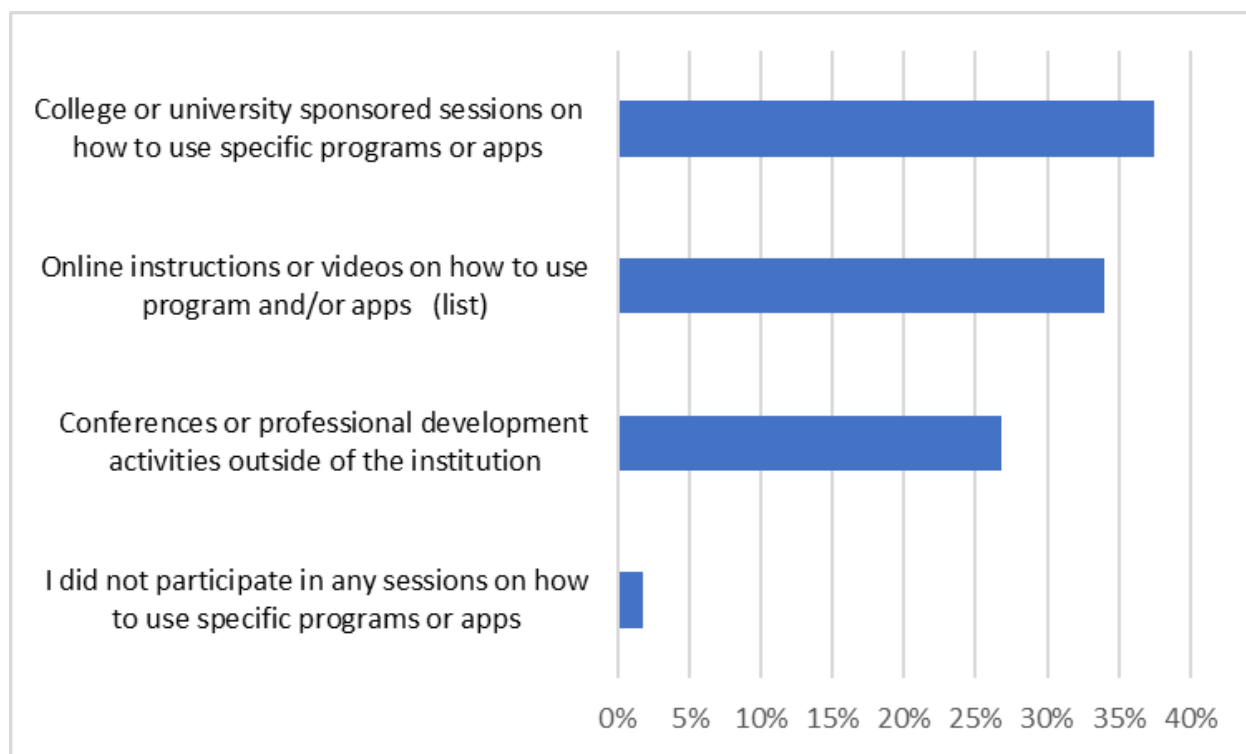
- A need for the state department to have a teaching certificate specifically for online teaching and/or an online teaching endorsement.

Gaps in teacher training. Respondents were asked, "What discoveries did COVID restrictions reveal that raised awareness of gaps in teacher training that your program plans to address?" They responded that they need more technology training, especially integrating all types of technology into the classroom, both face-to-face and in-person. They need more emphasis on student engagement and motivation in virtual environments, and more training for teachers for online modalities. The pandemic revealed a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety in TCs, students and their parents, indicating the need for better referral systems for mental health, and the use of growth plans early on for struggling students.

The pandemic also highlighted a greater level of inequity, especially the need for high-speed internet access to all Arizona communities. And finally, the following sentiment is similar to that of several other respondents: "There is no reasonable way to teach special education students virtually. They are not engaged, need support from parents, and there is little feedback on their growth to ensure IEP goals are met."

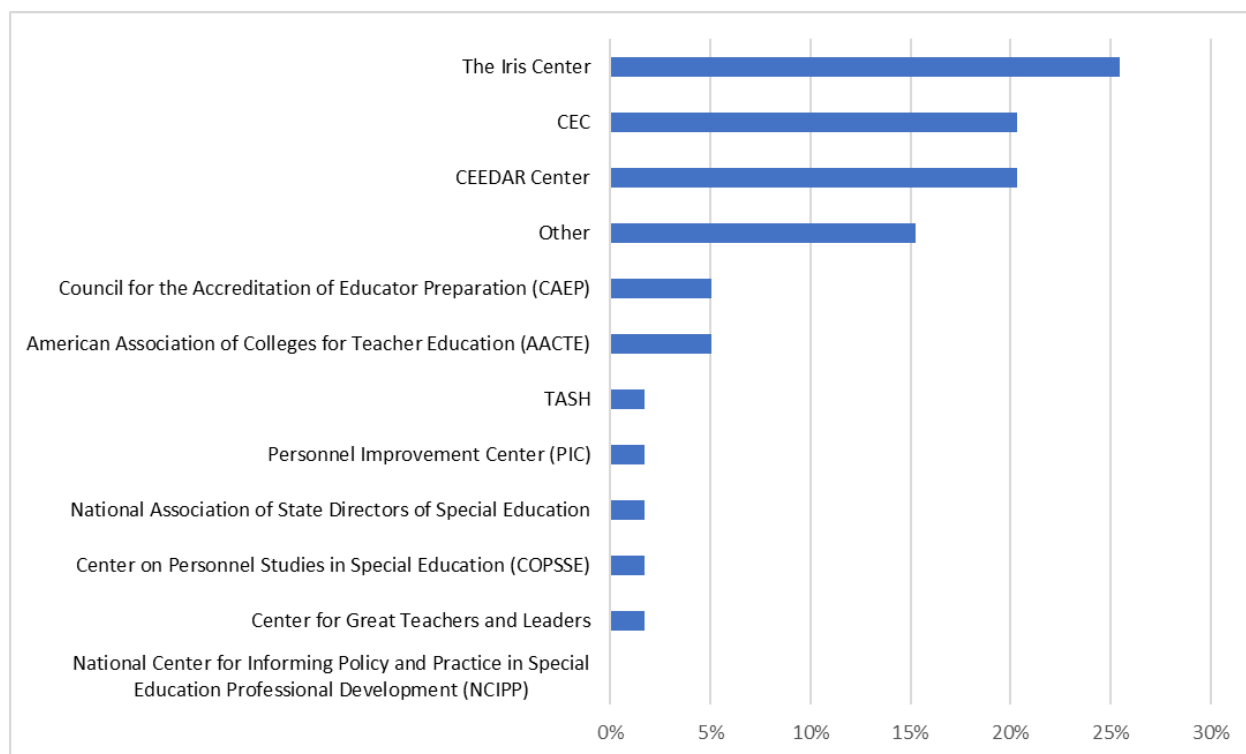
Participants were asked what skills and training they took advantage of during the shift to remote learning in courses or field experiences. Figure 6 displays their responses. A listing of online instructions or videos on how to use programs or apps included *GoReact Lesson Evaluation*, *Zoom*, asynchronous training, technology training for platforms like *padlet* and LMS training. Additionally, they reported that small groups met to help support each other with technology.

Figure 6.

Skills or Training During the Shift to Remote Learning

Resources and centers used to support faculty and TCs during the pandemic are listed in Figure 7. Respondents made most use of resources from the IRIS Center, CEC, and the CEEDAR Center.

Figure 7.

Resources/Centers Used to Support Faculty and Teacher Candidates**Themes: Health, Instruction, and Technology**

Three themes were identified across survey responses: the need for greater attention and awareness of mental and physical health needs of TCs, more flexibility in instruction, and more and sustained technology and design support for classes and programs.

Mental and physical health. Instructors were not surprised that their students' mental and physical health was affected by transitioning to an online learning environment during COVID. The key descriptive words that respondents used were depressed, isolated, burnt-out, stressed, and exhausted when describing some of the health barriers that TCs faced. One instructor explained, "TC's were under immense stress and many were struggling from mental health issues that impacted their work. It was difficult to hold students to participation requirements and assignment deadlines. Students' intrinsic motivation was lessened." Another

instructor considered TCs' stress and emotional well-being when scoring their work, stating, "...I had to take that into account when evaluating any work." Mental health issues were a significant concern among the participants and not being able to see all of their students during *Zoom* meetings was identified as a barrier for them. "TCs were feeling very down and out. They would not turn on their cameras for courses and I was not able to SEE if they were with us, if they were OK, if they looked lost, etc." As this comment indicated, when joining online classes/lectures, many would leave their cameras off or be visibly distracted by things in the home environment. Though frustrating, many instructors shifted their understanding of this seeming lack of engagement to view it instead as an indication of students' mental health status at the time. As a result, faculty were able to provide students with more flexibility when needed, which is a practice some plan to continue.

Instruction. For some faculty it was, at times, challenging to find creative ways to keep students engaged during online instruction, and not all programs could shift to fully asynchronous instruction. For example, within one institution, faculty were advised to provide accommodations to students who were unable to attend class due to COVID 19 or other illnesses. This meant providing access to recorded lectures, participating via *Zoom*, and/or providing alternative materials or assignments.

Respondents reported that providing appropriate field experiences had additional challenges. TCs did not like having their field experience course online. Field experience gives TCs the opportunity to learn from a mentor teacher and be in the classroom to work with children. Unfortunately, this was not possible during COVID and TCs had to learn about lesson planning and classroom management through videos of teachers modeling their lessons.

Another challenge was the quick shift to virtual experiences, with one respondent noting that “Taking the current course content, syllabus and assignments, but modifying it for the school shutdowns. We HAD to recognize that students were not able to have their regular experiences in the field, therefore things had to change with the pace of the course.” The instructors agreed that learning on *Zoom* is not the same as being immersed in the classroom setting, and this instructor confirms that, “Lack of experience with students in the classroom: behavior management, community building, assessments, and grade level co-planning, data analysis, and PLC work.”

Other respondents echoed this sentiment and shared that TCs had a “Lack of relationship building due to not being able to be in person for observations, coaching, course meetings, and lesson planning.” and “TCs often did not have students to observe or teach in virtual settings. TCs shared they felt they were missing out on learning opportunities because they could not be in-person with students in the field.” TCs had to implement their lessons online with only a few PK-12 learners on *Zoom* and respondents noted that “TCs were unable to practice teaching their designed lesson. When they were virtual, some of them were able to teach on *Zoom*, but usually they were only with a few students.” A majority of the instructors had a similar experience when working with the TCs online. They noted that attendance was low, they were not engaged, and most left their cameras off. As one instructor noted, “*Zoom*, not the same as in person. Easy to turn off video and mute. Often necessary if several people in- house were on *Zoom* classes. Sense of disconnect.” That sense of disconnect was felt by several instructors.

Technology. Internet access to take advantage of LMS platforms required some creativity in rural, underserved, and tribal environments. For example, two EPPs created WIFI hotspot hubs for rural or reservation access. Despite the inconvenience of having to drive to the hubs, these efforts created access for TCs residing in those areas and created opportunities to be

engaged. Nevertheless, disparities still existed in access. There were bandwidth issues when hotspots were accessed by multiple people, time zone changes across reservations in northern AZ, and the challenges brought about due to the need for COVID isolation: transportation, fuel, and child care mushroomed in ways that faculty were not initially aware of.

Conclusion

Challenges occurred with the sudden shift away from in-person instruction during the COVID pandemic, but positive attributes were the ability to continue to offer EPP programs through an online approach. However, not all COVID-related adjustments were simple. Faculty reported that shifting to online courses revealed gaps in their preparation programs. Supporting PK-12 shifts to fully online learning proved challenging as faculty had to quickly adjust their own instructional delivery to model practices that TCs could turn around and quickly use with their own students or share with their field experience practitioners. Whether it was in the form of providing TCs with additional resources, utilizing more engaging on-line learning tools, being flexible with assignment due dates, or creating alternative assignments, instructors made changes to assist the TCs in being more successful in an online learning environment with limited interaction to PK-12 students. Finally, the program changes made during this time period revealed a number of practices that are likely to be sustained and lead to program improvements.

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