



**Evidence Item:** 87

**CAEP Standard:** 5

**Component:** 5.4

**Location of the Evidence:** 5.4.10

**The Purpose for the Evidence:** Decisions for improvement have been made based on research, educational trends, state policies, or data. The EPP analyzes data trends over time, across multiple assessments, and through the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. The EPP has been utilizing data for quality assurance and informing decisions for continuous improvement for many years. The transition from NCATE to CAEP pushed the EPP to improve the validity, reliability, and overall quality of its assessment instruments. In the process, the EPP has increased its collaboration with other EPPs and its partner schools. Area stakeholders have contributed to developing instruments, provided pilot data and feedback, and been engaged in data-sharing sessions to offer ideas for continuous improvement. The EPP has used its data and stakeholder feedback to decide if assessment instruments, course content, field experiences, or the curriculum should be celebrated, require change for improvement, or remain the same for the time being.

**Valley City State University**  
**School of Education and Graduate Studies**  
**Changes and Data-Informed Decisions for Continuous Improvement**

### **VCSU Background**

Valley City State University (VCSU) has been known for teacher education preparation since the institution began in 1890. VCSU has been nationally accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE<sup>1</sup>) since 1954.

The VCSU School of Education and Graduate Studies (SEGS) received highly successful state program and NCATE reviews in 2016. Gathering, analyzing, sharing, and reflecting on data to inform decisions for growth and improvement – but VCSU faculty, teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and administrators partnering together with stakeholders makes the difference.

### **Changes for VCSU since fall of 2009**

- **Bush Grant initiatives** - VCSU has worked collaboratively with 14 institutions<sup>2</sup> as part of a Bush Grant initiative and the Network for Excellence in Teaching (NExT). VCSU has been a member of the Valley Partnership<sup>3</sup> and worked collaboratively with North Dakota State University (NDSU) and Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). The goal has been to improve teacher education preparation in ways that enhance student learning in K-12 classrooms.
- **Co-Teaching** – The decision was based on research and Bush Grant collaborative efforts
  - VCSU has worked with K-12 educators and teacher candidates to learn more about the potential of co-teaching

### **Data-informed decisions were made to improve VCSU teacher education preparation and curriculum in the following areas:**

- **Student Teaching Length** changed from 10 to 12-weeks in the fall of 2009
  - The decision was based on survey data and feedback from area K-12 educators, VCSU students, and faculty.
  - The decision was followed up with VCSU student teaching research.
  - In 2011, new InTASC standards were created. VCSU's 2011 student teaching final evaluation was aligned with the new standards. 20 area K-12 teachers worked with field experience representatives from VCSU, MSUM, and NDSU to develop a common final evaluation for student teachers from the three institutions.
- **GPA for admission to Teacher Education Program raised from 2.50 to 2.75** in 2011
  - Significant correlations existed between GPA and student teaching evaluations from cooperating teachers.
  - An appeal process was established to ensure teacher candidates with lower GPAs are being successful in their recent coursework and early field experiences. Teacher candidates with lower GPAs have either not continued in the program or appealed to be accepted to the program. Follow-up research on this decision has shown that a high percentage of teacher candidates who are accepted after an appeal has been committed to doing well in their student teaching.
- **Feedback gathered from stakeholders during the 2015 Data Sharing sessions** led to the establishment of Spring 2016 workgroups **uniting VCSU unit faculty and area P-12 educators** to improve teacher preparation in the following areas:
  - English Learners, Special Education/Differentiated Instruction, Gifted and Talented, Assessment

The combination of data, workgroup efforts, and stakeholder feedback over several years led to a Teacher Education Committee decision for the addition of one credit in the Educating Exceptional Children EDUC 240 course beginning in the fall of 2018. The additional credit opened the opportunity for teacher candidates to learn from additional field experience time and increased awareness of student mental health concerns.

- **Praxis Core and ACT+Writing Alternative Pathway Appeal in 2021**
  - Data were used extensively to study cohort Praxis Cores, ACT to Praxis Core correlations, and relationships between Praxis Core scores and Praxis II subject matter and PLT scores to inform discussions and ultimately decisions to establish an appeal process for admission to Teacher Education beginning in the Fall of 2021.
  - Follow-up data will be gathered for each teacher candidate who receives alternative pathway appeal acceptance into the Teacher Education program. The EPP will study the teacher candidates' performance on the Praxis II subject matter and PLT exams, TLC unit scores, and student teaching ratings from cooperating teachers to determine the success of the teacher candidates in comparison with the data from all teacher candidates completing the program.
- **Curriculum changes since the successful state ESPB and NCATE Legacy accreditation visit in 2015**

Data sharing discussions based on multiple assessments led to collaborative efforts between the Education Preparation Provider (EPP) and P-12 educators from partnering schools to improve the curriculum in the following areas: **formative assessment**, strategies for working with **English language learners**, **differentiated instruction**, and **technology**.

- Workgroups included area K-12 educators and VCSU faculty members who shared strategies and resources useful for working in K-12 classrooms. The outcome of the workgroup meetings was a **book of strategies** and resources useful to

- VCSU teacher candidates as they progress through their methods courses, student teaching experience, and enter the profession.
- **Assessment** curriculum change in EDUC 450 course
    - A workgroup of area K-12 educators and VCSU faculty members met in 2010 to discuss what teachers entering the profession needed to know and do with assessments and the use of data in schools to enhance student learning.
    - The workgroup also viewed multiple textbooks before deciding on *The Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning* by Jan Chappuis
    - The outcome of the feedback from the workgroup helped to shape the assessment course.
    - The second workgroup of area K-12 educators and VCSU faculty members met in 2016 to discuss updates and decisions for revisions.
  - **Classroom Management** curriculum changes
    - The EDUC 351 course on classroom management and additional practicum time was established to enhance classroom management learning opportunities for secondary majors
    - The EDUC 350 practicum course for elementary majors incorporated additional classroom management learning experiences
  - **EDUC 240 changed from a two-credit course to a three-credit course.**
    - Survey Data from Exit Surveys (data gathered from student teachers), Completer Surveys (from first-year teachers), and Supervisor Surveys (from employers of first-year teachers) identified many program strengths. The data also indicated the need to do more in the area of teacher preparation related to IEPs and 504 plans, as well as instruction for students who are English learners, gifted and talented learners, or those learners who may have mental health needs.
    - VCSU faculty members responded to the data by integrating more opportunities for learning about differentiated instruction across the curriculum, but the data have improved the ratings only slightly. The data indicated that student teachers and first-year teachers feel they could have benefited from more opportunities to learn about mental health and working with the diverse needs of their learners. The data-informed change to add one credit to EDUC 240 was a positive step for the program and the teacher candidates.
    - The decision for continuous improvement benefits teacher candidates in their preparation as educators and third credit benefits VCSU graduates in their pursuit of additional endorsements in the field of special education. The extra course time has allowed for an increase in Trauma Sensitive School (TSS) training to address mental health concerns and also allows for additional field experience time.
  - **MATH 277 and MATH 278 moved up in the NDSU Elementary Education curriculum.** While Core exam data indicated that NDSU collaborative elementary majors were doing as well or better than other VCSU on-campus or Wyoming elementary majors on the math section, some collaborative students were struggling with the math exam section. Offering MATH 277 and MATH 278 earlier in the curriculum enabled collaborative students in need to build or refresh their math skills to successfully pass the Core exam and gain admission to the Teacher Education program.
  - **MATH 277 and MATH 278 were changed to EDUC 277 and EDUC 278.** The decision was partly due to budgets and credit hour production but also gave the Education department even more freedom to coordinate the content with the specific needs of teacher candidates in Elementary Education.
  - **EDUC 278/MATH 278 and EDUC 323 were changed from 2 to 3 hour credit hours.** North Dakota changed the Elementary Education licensure from grades 1-6 to 1-8. The decision increases the potential for Elementary Education graduates to teach 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade content. VCSU responded by increasing the breadth and depth of curriculum for Elementary Education majors in mathematics and reading.
  - **Co-teaching and Substitute Teaching – improving classroom management preparation through additional Field Experience before student teaching**
    - VCSU expanded its field experience time for teacher candidates through opportunities for co-teaching and substitute teaching. The substitute teaching program enables pairs of teacher candidates to gain experience in classrooms while VCSU partners with area P-12 schools, so their faculty have time for professional development opportunities.
    - Feedback from teacher candidates has indicated that their substitute teaching experiences have been highly beneficial, especially in gaining classroom management experience. The data gathered from teacher candidates is indicating the value that experiences in substitute teaching are having for developing classroom management skills.
  - **Student teaching final evaluation forms**
    - In the fall of 2015, VCSU began its transition from NCATE to Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). VCSU representatives attended state CAEP sessions in 2015 and national training sessions in the summer of 2016. VCSU representatives worked collaboratively with North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NDACTE) representatives to create a new student teacher observation tool piloted and tested for reliability and

validity in the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017, before beginning implementation in the fall of 2017. The third round of reliability and validity analyses is scheduled for the summer of 2019. Student teachers began self-assessment in the fall of 2018.

- **Improvement of Pre-Student Teaching Field Experience Assessments**
  - The 2017-2018 VCSU Assessment Workgroup helped to develop new field experience forms for EDUC 250, EDUC 350, and EDUC 351. The rubrics have actionable descriptors. Pilot and focus group follow-up discussions in the spring of 2018 indicated highly favorable feedback from cooperating teachers. Follow-up focus group feedback provided to the SEGS liaison who communicates regularly with partnering schools was again highly favorable in 2018-2019.
- **Improvement of Disposition Assessment Process**
  - The EPP participated in a two-year process of developing a dispositional assessment instrument with improved performance indicators and descriptors. A VCSU representative worked with representatives from five other CAEP institutions to establish and valid instrument for assessing dispositions. The Lawshe Method was used to gain feedback from 83 stakeholders who were considered subject matter experts based on their work with student teachers: university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and PK-12 administrators. The stakeholders helped narrow down a potential list of 43 InTASC dispositional items to the 22 most essential items.
  - The instrument was piloted in the Fall of 2018 and improved. The revised version was piloted in the spring of 2019 and viewed more favorably. The instrument was implemented in the Fall of 2019. The results from the first semester were informative and the data will be observed over multiple semesters before decisions are made based on the data.
  - The unit kept its disposition referral process in place but made changes to its disposition assessment instrument to help identify teacher candidates' growth of professional dispositions as they progress through the program.
- **Continuation of the NExT Common Metrics efforts (designed in collaboration with 14 institutions) extended beyond the grant expectations. VCSU is sustaining its administration of these valid and reliable assessments:**
  - Entry Survey (Intro to Education teacher candidates) – instrument revised for fall of 2018
  - Exit Survey (Student teachers complete in the final weeks before graduation)
  - Transition to Teaching (also called a Completer Survey or a 1<sup>st</sup>-year teacher/Alumni survey)
  - Supervisor Survey (Employer/Administrator survey) – instrument revised for spring of 2019
  - VCSU and NDSU helped to integrate these common assessments throughout the NDACTE EPPs.
- **K-12 educators collaborated with VCSU faculty to develop a Teaching for Learning Capstone (TLC) Unit**
  - VCSU representatives attended Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA, now called edTPA) workshops and then engaged area P-12 educators in discussions with VCSU faculty to develop a **Teaching for Learning Capstone (TLC) Unit** for VCSU teacher candidates to complete during their student teaching experience.
  - The TLC unit adds rigor and consistency to the expectations of student teachers in areas of planning, implementing, evaluating, and reflecting on a unit of teaching and student learning. The TLC unit provides a way for teacher candidates to thoroughly reflect on their teaching and measure their impact on student learning.
  - Updates were made to the TLC unit rubric in 2017-2018 to increase validity and rater reliability. The Lawshe Method was used to validate the rubric criteria and make the wording more teacher candidate friendly. The improvements to the TLC rubrics are being assessed on an annual basis and the data are shared in efforts to improve teacher preparation and rater reliability. Rater agreement among faculty members improved between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 as the new rubrics were integrated. Rater agreement ratings continue to improve as of the summer of 2021.

### **VCSU Unit and Program Data Sharing**

All faculty members who teach methods or professional education sequence courses are part of the unit.

- **Unit faculty members receive access to updated unit data every August.**
  - Unit data reports include the final evaluation data for all VCSU student teachers, Praxis exam data, pre-student teaching field experience data, TLC unit, and disposition data as well as completer and employer data. Unit faculty members can see the program's strengths and areas that can be improved. Faculty often comment about changes they make in their teaching to not only address an area that was not rated high but to make sure the area receives greater emphasis, and the teacher candidates gain additional practice opportunities.
  - Data are shared annually with P-12 stakeholders, the Teacher Education Committee, and each semester with student teachers. The stakeholders can share their personal experiences working with teacher candidates along with seeing data from multiple assessments to gain perspectives from student teachers, cooperating teachers, first-year teachers, and employers of first-year teachers.
- **Program data are shared in September and February.**
  - Program reports disaggregate data by academic area, so faculty (shared through the methods teachers) can see GPA, licensure tests, and student teaching final evaluation data for their content area.

- The data shared with each program In February 2020 included three years of specific data that helped write state reports. Each program was approved by the state content experts.
- The EPP has also disaggregated data by delivery method or location as well as race/ethnicity to search for potential disparities. The data have not indicated the need for significant changes.

Often the data indicate areas of strength in which VCSU teacher candidates and graduates have performed well. The data-sharing sessions intend to provide awareness and useful information in the decision-making process for improvement. Unit faculty members are involved in the preparation and assessment of the EPP’s teacher candidates. VCSU provides release time for an assessment coordinator and has four staff personnel who work with data and teacher candidate progression through the program.

**VCSU submitted state reports to the Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) for each program in the 2020-2021 academic year.** As of April 1, 2021, all the VCSU programs were approved by state content experts. Any potential areas of weakness required a rejoinder for clarification or additional information to provide evidence of meeting the state standards. VCSU can communicate with CAEP that all the teacher education programs leading to teacher licensure were approved and none of the programs had an area of weakness that needs to be addressed. **VCSU’s CAEP visit will be in October of 2022.**

VCSU has a Central Assessment System and regular calendar for gathering data on teacher candidates for admission to the program, GPA, Praxis tests for licensure, field experiences (student teaching the most), dispositions, portfolios, and surveys at the entry and exit level while at VCSU, and then gather data as they transition to becoming first-year teachers (alumni) and their supervisors (administrators/employers).

---

<sup>1</sup> NCATE has merged with another organization and transformed into the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

<sup>2</sup> The 14 member institutions of the NExT initiative include the Valley Partnership (VCSU, NDSU, MSU-Moorhead), University of South Dakota, St. Cloud State, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, Winona State, Minnesota State Mankato, and a consortium of six private universities in the Twin Cities (Augsburg, Bethel, Concordia St. Paul, St. Catherine’s, Hamline, and St. Thomas).

<sup>3</sup> Valley City State University, North Dakota State University, and Minnesota State University Moorhead are teamed together in the Bush Grant to form the Valley Partnership.