

**James Madison University
Survey of Completers (13-14)**

Executive Summary

In Fall 2016, 169 graduates from 2013-14 were contacted to complete the survey. Of those contacted, 10 emails were returned, resulting in 159 usable emails. Of these, 32 responded (20% response rate). The VDoE list provided in June 2015 was used as the basis of the contact list.

Areas of weakness

The areas in which JMU graduates felt least prepared, as indicated by less than half of the respondents indicating agreement, were teaching students with disabilities effectively (~47% felt prepared), participate on an IEP team (28% felt prepared), and teaching students with limited English Proficiency (~43% felt prepared).

Areas of Strength

Graduates of JMU teacher education programs felt most prepared to: provide instruction to students from low-income families (>80% felt prepared to do so), teach in urban schools (~56%), and teach in rural schools (~78%).

As a new teacher, JMU graduates felt prepared to demonstrate professionalism, and have a positive impact on student learning through effective teaching. These competencies align with Virginia's Teacher Performance Standards; on which they are evaluated in service.

Survey of Completers 13-14

Aligns with CAEP Standard 4: 4.4

1. Your feedback is valuable and needed in order for us to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. We would like to get in touch with you during the first three years following program completion to meet the requirements of the Virginia Department of Education and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). It would be very valuable if you could provide us with reliable contact information so that we may communicate with you through email or traditional mail.

31 responses

To preserve the privacy of our respondents, contact information has been omitted for this report.

2. As a result of my JMU preparation in professional education, as a teacher I was prepared to...

Question	Strongly Disagree %	n	Disagree %	n	Neither Agree nor Disagree %	n	Agree %	n	Strongly Agree %	n	Don't Know/ Not Applicable %	n	Total
... teach students with disabilities effectively.	6.3%	2	34.4%	11	12.5%	4	40.6%	13	6.3%	2	0%	0	32
... participate as a member of individualized education program (IEP) teams.	6.3%	2	46.9%	15	18.8%	6	25.0%	8	3.1%	1	0%	0	32
... effectively teach students who are limited in English proficiency.	3.1%	1	34.4%	11	9.4%	3	34.4%	11	9.4%	3	9.4%	3	32
... provide instruction to students from low-income families.	0%	0	6.3%	2	12.5%	4	53.1%	17	28.1%	9	0%	0	32
... effectively teach in urban schools.	3.1%	1	12.5%	4	12.5%	4	43.8%	14	12.5%	4	15.6%	5	32
... effectively teach in rural schools.	0%	0	3.1%	1	12.5%	4	37.5%	12	40.6%	13	6.3%	2	32

3. Please use this space to elaborate on any of your above answers, if you wish. (Responses have been grouped by topic)

IEPs:

[...] I did not feel my experience prepared me for IEPs and students with disabilities.

I only knew what IEPs were but had zero practical experience in meetings and how to implement those plans in a classroom.

I didn't have any classes on dealing with students with IEPs [...]

Special Education:

I wish there was more training/exposure to students with learning disabilities or special needs.

I work at a magnet school for gifted students [...] many of my twice-exceptional learners have some form of autism, which I do believe JMU helped to prepare me to teach.

Since I was not a special education major, I did not feel as if my education courses focused that much around how to appropriately include students with special needs in an inclusive general education classroom setting.

JMU education program was effective in teaching me effective ways in which to differentiate my instructional strategies, especially in regards to disabilities.

I believe a broad course on the many types of disabilities and how to accommodate them should be a mandatory part of the course list for educators. There were optional courses, but none of those fit into my schedule.

Urban schools:

The experiences I had through classes and practicums adequately prepared me to teach in rural schools. However I now teach in a low-income urban school and did not feel as though my training prepared me for that.

JMU education program was effective in teaching me effective ways in which to differentiate my instructional strategies, especially in regards to disabilities.

Limited English Proficiency:

I work at a magnet school for gifted students, so I have not had any students so far with limited English proficiency [...]

I didn't have any classes on dealing with [...] students with limited English proficiency.

Other:

There are not required, specific courses at JMU that address these topics.

However, the program in no way prepared me for some of the defiant behaviors in kids. JMU was overconfident in its strategies, to the point that there was no Plan B available when a student was not responding.

[...] the program in no way prepared me for some of the defiant behaviors in kids. JMU was overconfident in its strategies, to the point that there was no Plan B available when a student was not responding.

As a student in the elementary program in field placements like mine, I didn't get much exposure to students with disabilities or ELL students. Part of that is because of where JMU is located, but looking back, I wish I would have had some sort of introductory course on how teaching changes with IEPs and ELL students in mind. The urban school environment wasn't very available because of where JMU is too. That's nothing against the program, but it's not a type of teaching JMU can really expose their COE students to, because they're not close to an urban system like Richmond City. I do think I left with a lot of experience in teaching and relating to low-income families, which I continue to teach now at a Title 1 school in Loudoun County, but I also have a high rate of ELL learners and SWD.

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4. As a new teacher, to what extent were you prepared to do the following? (Note: These questions align with the 7 Virginia Teacher Performance Standards.)

Question	Never / Rarely %	n	Sometimes %	n	Often / Always %	n	Total
Provide relevant learning experiences for your students	0%	0	18.8%	6	81.3%	26	32
Develop instructional planning to meet the needs of all students	3.1%	1	37.5%	12	59.4%	19	32
Use a variety of instructional strategies to meet individual learning needs	0%	0	18.8%	6	81.3%	26	32
Utilize relevant student data to measure student progress and guide instruction	3.1%	1	34.4%	11	62.5%	20	32
Provide a positive student-centered environment that is conducive to learning	0%	0	15.6%	5	84.4%	27	32
Demonstrate professionalism	0%	0	3.1%	1	96.9%	31	32
Have a positive impact on student learning through effective teaching	0%	0	9.4%	3	90.6%	29	32

5. Please use this space to elaborate on any of your above answers, if you wish.

Differentiation was also not in depth enough at JMU to provide me with what I see in the regular classroom.

My first year I really struggled with behavior, which impacted a lot of my teaching and my environment. I was not prepared for the population of students in my urban setting. I also had not had enough effective training on classroom management.

JMU did not paint an accurate picture of what it is like to teach in a public school. It focused entirely too much on data and hardly touched on one-on-one teacher-to-student interactions. At JMU I was taught that if I do Strategy A, then Result B will happen every time. JMU saw kids as statistics, so when something did not match with the spread sheet there was no Strategy B.

More instruction on how to take data would be valuable.

I do feel like I was prepared to be a knowledgeable and influential teacher. I also think that the school I work in has pushed me to be a data driven teacher. I just wasn't as prepared to meet the needs of ELL learners, Newcomers, or SWD. Now that I'm in my third year, I do think I can meet the needs of any students who steps foot in my classroom.

6. As a new teacher, to what extent were you prepared to do the following?

Question	Never / Rarely %	<i>n</i>	Sometimes %	<i>n</i>	Often %	<i>n</i>	Total
Integrate technology effectively into curricula and instruction	3.1%	1	37.5%	12	59.4%	19	32
Use technology effectively to collect data to improve teaching and learning	3.1%	1	31.3%	10	65.6%	21	32
Use technology effectively to manage data to improve teaching and learning	6.3%	2	25.0%	8	68.8%	22	32
Use technology effectively to analyze data to improve teaching and learning	3.1%	1	31.3%	10	65.6%	21	32

7. Please use this space to elaborate on any of your above answers, if you wish.

I am proficient in applications like Microsoft Word and Excel which is what I use to manage and collect data. However, I wish I had been given opportunities with Promethean boards so that I could have integrated that into my instruction sooner.

Data, data, data. Technology, technology, technology. That is all I ever heard at JMU. Only one or two professors I talked with at JMU ever discussed the importance of getting to know kids personally or having the fire in your gut to teach. Yeah, I guess JMU taught me how to crunch numbers, but for goodness sake is that everything that teaching has become?

I use technology in the classroom every day. Each year, our school gets more access to technology as well. I think that I can manage students using various programs, but I haven't quite gotten to feeling 100% confident when asked to analyze the data and reports.

I feel very competent with technology and able to use it effectively for instruction and record keeping.

The use of technology within the classroom was never really addressed through my program.

8. Is there anything that made it difficult to complete your teacher education program?

Answer	%	<i>n</i>
Yes	14.8%	4
No	85.2%	23
Total	100%	27

8a. If you answered YES to the above question, please explain:

I was provided with two cooperating teachers, my junior and senior year, who were very ineffective and met none of the standards for best practice. I was almost turned off of teaching as a result. Now that I am in education and have seen very effective teachers at work I feel as though I was almost cheated and missed out on two great opportunities to learn from experts.

The master's data project thing that I had to complete during student teaching. I understand that in order to get a master's there has to be some significant project, but it should not be during student teaching. That thing was so overwhelming and demanding that it negatively impacted my student teaching experience and the kids I taught suffered as a result.

To graduate from my program we had to take the comps. This was an evaluation of our knowledge through a given scenario in which we had to explain what we would do in said scenario. Two scenarios were given: a behavior scenario and an academic scenario. There was never a clear rubric as to what should be expected in our responses. Therefore, there was no clear indicator of what to study, and what notes we should have kept over the years of our program. All but one student in my cohort failed this comp.

9. If there is anything you'd like to tell us about the strengths and weaknesses of our programs, please do so in the space below.

Reading

Reading Instruction for future teachers is severely lacking in the JMU ELED program. For as much emphasis that is put on the Master's reading program at JMU, I would have expected more preparation in the 5-year program than I received.

I wish we had been provided on a variety of reading strategies and had more focus on how to teach reading in small group and whole group instruction. I felt that in the area of language arts, we were not as prepared for the classroom.

I felt overall, I was not prepared to teach reading effectively to my students. While I learned the stages of reading, I was not prepared to teach the skills and strategies effectively to my students.

I felt like the reading components of the program had a significant amount of unproductive overlap, possibly due to course drift over time and/or lack of coordination between the professors of the 3 reading and literacy courses I took. More attention to how to teach reading groups, choose guided reading texts, coordinate independent work, and writing needs to be integrated into the word study and reading phase centered program. Math, Science, and Social Studies were taught exceptionally well and demonstrated how to make cross-curricular connections.

Gifted

There could ALWAYS be more room for instruction about effectively teaching gifted students. Whether it is one week in the MAT Differentiation class, part of the diversity class, or an optional topic of study for Inquiry, this group of students is often overlooked. However, teachers in the general classroom setting are often asked to provide input as part of the identification process, so understanding characteristics of gifted learners and being able to differentiate for them effectively is a valuable skill.

IEPs

I didn't feel like I knew enough about IEPs when I started teaching, or writing goals.

There was also limited instruction on developing IEP's and creating a range of accommodations for SPED students.

Special Needs

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General exposure and preparedness was great. However, I really feel that with the lack of exposure and guidance on how to handle special needs students in an all inclusive classroom has impacted my ability to effectively teach them.

Overall

There are positives: differentiation, technology, data analysis. Am I glad I went to JMU? Absolutely, but I never felt like most of the professors had their heart in it. Most of them taught a few years, got their PhD, and are now professors, or have been out of the game so long that they have completely lost touch with what it is like to teach in a public school. You all see public schools as a venue to try out YOUR ideas, rather than a place to try something new, as well as learn from veteran teachers. The professors I had turned their noses up at teachers that have taught for a long time. Sure, there is a place for the new and cutting-edge, but it has come at the expense of the passion for teaching and deference to veteran teachers. 50% of new teachers quit in the first five years, and it is because colleges are not painting an accurate picture of the career, not outlining all the extra stuff that is expected of us, not discussing the behavior and social-economic problems found in many schools. No one ever told me the game plan for when a student decides to have a meltdown and I have to deal with that and at the same time ensure the safety of the other students. When Strategy A did not work, I was lost, but some veteran teachers sure helped me and I learned for the next time. You all are so confident in you strategies that you do not bother to ask the opinions of teachers who have given 20 or 30 years of their lives to teaching real public school students. You all are a good school, but your priorities are misguided. There is a problem when no one talks about the passion for teaching and the fire in your gut to want to improve and help children. If you have that, then all this data stuff will come, but without it you have 50% of new teachers quitting in the first five years.

Strengths: I had some very impactful professors. Now as a teacher, they're still in contact with me and [able to see] the learning that occurs in my classroom, thanks to social media. I also think that the cohort model made going through the classes together more enjoyable. I also really enjoyed my students teaching experiences and keep in touch with my cooperating teachers still. I also now value the research I did during graduate school and implement my findings daily. I also think that saving the student teaching for the master's year is SUCH a smart decision. I know that I had a much better work/school/life balance in grad school than I would have at the end of undergrad. Also, the pay increase is great too-- especially when you live & teach in Northern Virginia! Weaknesses: Being prepared to teach reading. I know that every county is different, but there were so many components of a literacy block that I was scared to do at the beginning of my career (running records, guided reading groups, word study). It's such a huge part of the elementary setting, and I felt like I had a lot to learn when I started. Thankfully, I had a reading specialist support me a lot to get through it!

Overall, I was well prepared. I think you need to make the lesson plan requirements at JMU a little bit more realistic. In my opinion, the lessons at JMU are over-involved. I think it would be helpful for students to actually teach all of the lessons that they write, so they can see how long activities, notes, and simulations / group work all take.

I got a job in a unique placement and teach elective courses across several grade levels. I was unprepared for 4+ preps, designing curricula, developing an efficient and effective assessment strategy for a project-based class, and understanding the practical side of student identification for a gifted program. I had a lot of theory and assessment of theoretically gifted students but would really have benefited from a practical placement experience in a couple gifted programs, just to see how they are different/same between different schools, grade levels, and school districts. I think the program effectively trains us for our target/ideal job but doesn't comprehensively prepare us for understanding and interacting with the other positions in a school: special education/resource, electives, teacher assistants, TDT, etc. It was also a bit of a shock to be writing 12-13 lesson plans a week (although I know that isn't the situation for most teachers) when my placements were all 6 sections of the same class so one lesson plan would suffice.

I was part of JMU's Art Education program, and the faculty was amazing. They were so knowledgeable, and gave me the confidence in my OWN knowledge of my content area. They provided so many teaching outlets, and emphasized the importance of differentiation - and giving MEANINGFUL feedback. I had such an amazing experience with the Art Ed department, I felt so prepared and am continuing to grow as an educator. They truly foster their students' love for teaching art, and being artists. I'm so glad to be doing the same for my kids.

I think JMU does a great job preparing students for teaching! Throughout the years I was in many different classrooms/settings and it enabled me to experience many different cultures, schools, and teaching styles!

Strengths: Practicums and hands on experiences Weaknesses: Certain professors' dedication to the program and funneling students into thinking that IDLS is the only program you can major in for undergrad. Would have loved to major in psychology.

I loved all that I learned at JMU through this program but would like to see more of an emphasis on classroom management and technology. I also hope that the screening process of cooperating teachers has improved because the two teachers that almost ruined my experience were teachers that students the semester before had complained about (I met the students who had my same cooperating teachers and they had them the semester before me and claimed they complained to JMU about their placement there). Finally, I hope that the reading instruction has been updated at JMU. I have not utilized any of the things I learned in the different reading classes because they do not pertain to the current trends of daily 5, Fountas and Pinnel, Jan Richardson, Being a Writer and other current best practices that my school is using.

There are 4 other JMU Secondary Education and Special Education grads in my department, and about 4-5 other teachers in the school who also graduated from JMU in multiple departments - so proud to be among JMU Ed alumni! (Rock Ridge High School, Ashburn, VA)

I felt there was not enough support when learning about interview techniques and the entire application process.

10. Would you be willing to host current JMU students for a visit, or to return to campus to share your experiences as an educator?

Answer	%	<i>n</i>
Yes	84.38%	27

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No	15.63%	5
Total	100%	32