

INTERNSHIP ACADEMY

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION & EVALUATION

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BACKGROUND

Educators, policy makers, and researchers have repeatedly asked what factor in schools is most important in regards to student learning. Time and time again, research has shown that teachers have remarkable impact on student success. Teachers are responsible for designing the learning environment and structuring learning activities, which directly affect student achievement (Harford, 2010; Chong, 2014). It has been said, “The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, 19). There is no mistaking the importance of having quality teachers in every classroom to ensure success for all students.

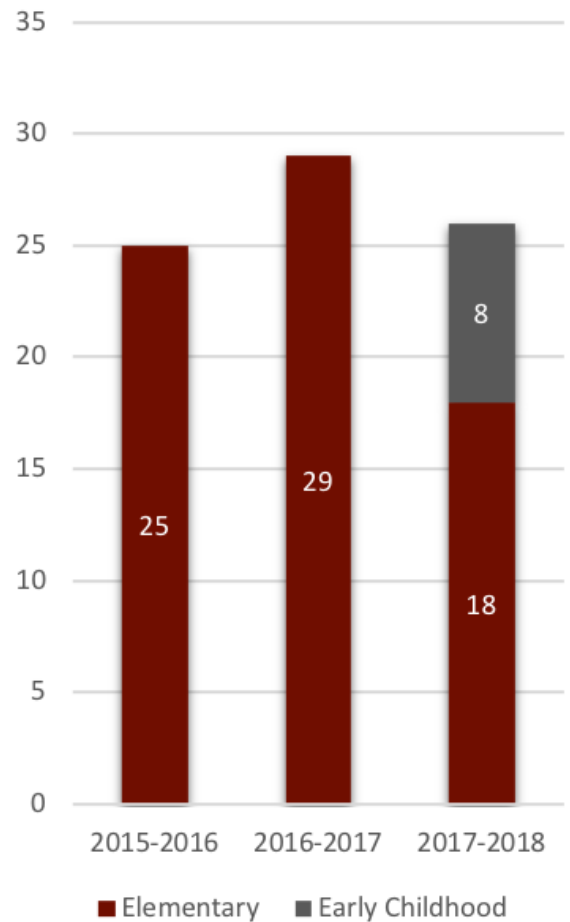
Research has indicated students taught by effective teachers consistently show better educational gains than those taught by less effective teachers (Shannag, Tairab, Dodeen, & Abdel-Fattah, 2013). Research conducted in Tennessee and Texas has shown student academic gains can be greatly impacted by the quality of the teacher to whom the child is assigned. Both studies followed students for three years. The difference between the students assigned effective versus ineffective teachers was 49-50 percentile points (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). In a report published by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), it was stated that student performance in reading varies more among teachers in the same building than across different schools (PISA, 2012). It is critical for students’ success they be placed in classes with consistently effective teachers. Improving the quality of teacher preparation is vital to improve an education system. The demand for high-quality teachers must be met with high-quality teacher education (Chong, 2014).

The Need

The MSU elementary education program faculty reviewed data from national studies and reports calling for an overhaul of the traditional student teaching approach to preparing teachers. Specifically, faculty found that 12 weeks was not a sufficient amount of time (Spooner, Flowers, Lambert, & Algozzine, 2010) and that cooperating teachers were often unwilling (Koerner, 1992; NCTQ, 2011) or under-qualified to partner with Educator Preparation Programs to provide adequate pre-service classroom experiences (NCTQ, 2011; Selwyn, 2007). Moreover, our review of literature indicates that too often student teachers were placed in schools that were not conducive to high quality teaching experiences (Ronfeldt, 2015; Selwyn, 2007).

In addition to the national cry to improve clinical and field experiences, program faculty reviewed first-year teacher survey data from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that indicated their program completers felt ill-prepared to begin school in the fall, to work effectively with parents, to develop curriculum, and to manage classrooms (DESE, 2011, 2012, 2013).

Number of Internship Academy Participants



Program Description

As a result of this research and data, in 2015-2016 Missouri State University partnered with intentionally chosen, high-achieving, area school districts to implement an innovative teacher preparation approach, the Internship Academy (IA). As first outlined by MSU faculty in 2014 in "Creating a Professional Internship for Future Educators," teacher preparation students at MSU were placed in elementary classrooms with experienced, highly effective teachers for a yearlong clinical placement. The first year, MSU partnered with the Logan-Rogersville School District, the Nixa School District, and the Republic School District. The following year, a partnership with Springfield Public Schools was established. Faculty from each school district, termed Teachers in Residence or TiRs, were identified to facilitate communication among the districts and university. The goal was to improve teacher preparation by providing students with real learning experiences, connecting theoretical learning with real world application.

True partnership is the foundation of the Internship Academy and is specifically defined as such in the mission and vision statements. The mission and vision statements for the Internship Academy were developed with input from partner school stakeholders as well as Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education faculty from Missouri State University.

PARTNER



MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Missouri State University Internship Academy is to prepare teacher candidates to be highly effective educators focused on continuous improvement through a clinical placement founded on strong collaboration with PK-12 and university partners resulting in benefits to the entire learning community.

VISION

Our vision for the Missouri State University Internship Academy is to increase opportunities for students to participate in diverse placements, strengthen the partnership between university and PK-12 institutions, and prepare teacher candidates to be "learner ready day one."



SHIP

PARTNERSHIP

The Internship Academy has many participants who are critical to the success of the partnership. Interns are students in the final two semesters of their Elementary or Early Childhood Education program who have gone through an extensive application and placement process. Interns spend an entire school year co-teaching in a classroom with a specially selected Master Teacher.

Master Teachers are similar to traditional cooperating teachers as they have students placed in their classrooms. Master Teachers support interns as they co-teach together for the school year. Master Teachers each have a single intern to mentor and guide throughout the clinical placement.

Teachers in Residence are partner school district teachers who also serve as per course faculty for the university. TiRs wear a metaphorical MSU hat and partner school hat as they represent both institutions. These individuals are key in connecting the university with the partner school. The Teachers in Residence must understand the university course competencies that must be addressed, be involved in integration of coursework into the partner school placement, observe the interns teaching throughout the year, and provide necessary coaching for interns as needed. Each school or district identifies a TiR.

MSU directors work closely with Teachers in Residence to observe the interns teaching throughout the year and maintain records of intern progress. The program coordinators are key in facilitating strong lines of communication between the partner schools and MSU. Program coordinators also deliver coursework to the interns. For the entirety of the year, an intern is placed in a classroom with a Master Teacher who mentors and coaches the intern as they co-teach together daily.

Communication

Effective two-way communication is critical to the Internship Academy partnership. Stakeholder meetings including the Teachers in Residence, MSU faculty, and partner school principals began in the summer of 2015 and continue to occur monthly. At least one representative of each partner school (usually the TiR) and MSU faculty (usually program coordinators) attend each meeting where decisions guiding the program are made. These meetings allow for true collaboration as all voices are valued and heard. Stakeholders support each other and respect the input of others at the table. The decision making process is reflective, collaborative, and effective.

Collaboration

Another key aspect of the partnership between the PK-12 schools and Missouri State University is the collaborative placement process. The goal of this process is to make a good match with each intern and Master Teacher. Citing research, stakeholders established a priority to ensure high quality placements were made. It is important that the placement be the “right fit” for both individuals. Feedback from stakeholders and interns indicate that the success of the placement and ultimately the entire Internship Academy year is dependent on making the right placement. It is critical that students are not placed with a random Master Teacher but rather are placed with the right Master Teacher.

3 Stage Collaborative Placement Process

1

APPLICATION

Interested students submit an application to the program coordinators, and MSU faculty provide information about strengths and needs of applicants.

2

INTERVIEW

Program coordinators interview each applicant individually. Coordinators then compile information collected from the application and interview and distribute this information to partner schools. Principals and Teachers in Residence review this information to help familiarize themselves with the strengths and needs of interns prior to the third stage of the process.

3

ROUNDTABLE PLACEMENT EVENT

Feedback indicates the third stage of the process is the most critical stage. At the Roundtable Placement Event, principals and Teachers in Residence from all partner schools interview each applicant in a group setting. The goal continues to be to identify the strengths and needs of each intern and to identify the right Master Teacher for each applicant. Principals and Teachers in Residence provide information to program coordinators regarding which interns for whom they have strong placements. Coordinators then take this information and begin matching interns with placements. Including input from all partner schools and MSU faculty allow program coordinators to make placement decisions that are well-informed. Feedback from stakeholders and interns indicate that this process increases the success of our placements and ultimately the quality of the Internship Academy year.



EXPANSION

As school districts around the state heard about the Internship Academy at Missouri State University, faculty at the university received requests to be a part of the program. Many school districts, urban and rural, large and small, recognized the impact the program is having on teacher preparation and also the benefit of the program in the partner school classrooms.

As the university received many requests, priorities were established and maintained as expansion decisions were made. First, it was determined the schools must be highly successful and strong instructional environments for interns. In addition to this, stakeholders established a priority of increasing diverse placements for interns. Also, the needs of interns were also a high priority.

Early Childhood Education majors indicated interest in the IA, so early childhood placements were added in 2017-2018.

Students also voiced interest in having Internship Academy opportunities in the St. Louis area. Considering the established priorities, Missouri State University faculty evaluated several districts in the St. Louis area, met with multiple districts, and ultimately chose the Clayton School District and the Webster Groves School District for expansion in the 2018-2019 school year.

Additionally, the number of students in the Springfield area increased to a point that additional schools were needed in southwest Missouri. University faculty considered requests from several area districts and chose the Willard School District for expansion in the 2018-2019 school year.



EVALUATION

At the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year, the third year of the IA, research was conducted to measure Principals' and TiRs' perceptions on the effectiveness of the Internship Academy. Fourteen out of fifteen principals and TiRs responded to the survey, which asked the participants to evaluate twenty-three statements in the following categories: Partnership, Placement Process, Intern Preparation, and Professional Growth.

Principals and TiRs were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with each of the statements on a likert scale of 0 - 4. A response of 0 indicated the respondent did not know. A response of 1 indicated the respondent agreed with the statement not at all. A response of 2 indicated the respondent agreed with the statement somewhat. A response of 3 indicated the respondent agreed with the statement adequately. A response of 4 indicated the respondent agreed with the the statement extensively. The statements evaluated and distribution of responses are on the following 3 pages.

In all areas, at least 93% of respondents indicated they adequately or extensively agreed with the statements. This information indicates the systems in place for maintaining and strengthening the partnership between Missouri State University and the IA partner schools are perceived as effective by principals and TiRs. Participants feel they have an active voice in the Internship Academy and the placement process of their interns. Stakeholders value Teachers in Residence as an integral part of the program, and feel regular Stakeholder Meetings are an effective venue for two-way communication.

Principals and TiRs feel the intense, three stage collaborative application and placement process results in better placement decisions and a more cohesive relationship between Master Teachers and interns than the process for traditional student teachers. Participants value having input in these decisions and feel it is important to continue with this process.

IMPLICATIONS

Throughout the first three years of the IA, the voices of all stakeholders have been instrumental in guiding our decisions. With a strong partnership as our priority, the IA has grown and seen success. As the stakeholders built into our vision statement, we will continue to work to strengthen the partnership between PK-12 schools and Missouri State University as we seek to increase diverse placements for interns.

In addition to this, we will seek to gather data regarding the effectiveness of our graduates once they enter their careers. We will look for opportunities to measure our graduates against graduates from other programs in Missouri to further gauge our effectiveness and areas for growth.

Survey Questions

Category: Partnership

1. A representative of my school/district has an active voice in the decision-making process for the Internship Academy.
2. The Internship Academy values my input.
3. The Internship Academy has strengthened the partnership between my school/district and Missouri State University.
4. The IA Stakeholder meetings are an important part of the partnership between my school/district and Missouri State University.
5. The IA Stakeholder meetings are an important venue for two-way communication between my school/district and Missouri State University.
6. The IA Stakeholder meetings should continue to be a part of the Internship Academy.
7. The Teacher in Residence plays an important role in the partnership between my school/district and Missouri State University.
8. The Teacher in Residence is critical to the success of the Internship Academy.
9. The Teacher in Residence engages in critical two-way communication with my school/district and Missouri State University.
10. The Teacher in Residence should continue to be a part of the Internship Academy.

Category: Placement Process

11. A representative of my school/district has an active voice in the IA placement process.
12. My input is valued in the IA placement process.
13. The IA placement process results in a more cohesive relationship between Master Teachers and interns than the traditional placement method for student teachers.
14. The Roundtable Placement Event results in better placement decisions than the traditional placement method for student teachers.
15. The Roundtable Placement Event provides me with the opportunity to provide relevant input into the placements in my building.
16. The Roundtable Placement Event should continue to be a part of the IA placement process.

Category: Intern Preparation

17. The Internship Academy prepares interns to be reflective practitioners.
18. The Internship Academy provides interns the opportunity to take risks while being scaffolded.
19. The Internship Academy provides opportunities for interns to assess student growth.
20. The Internship Academy provides opportunities for interns to analyze and use data to inform instruction.
21. The co-teaching model is a necessary component for the Internship Academy.

Category: Professional Growth

22. Involvement with the Internship Academy has resulted in professional growth of the TiR in my building.
23. Involvement with the Internship Academy has resulted in professional growth of the Master Teachers in my building.

Distribution of Survey Responses

n=14

TiRs and Principals					
To what extent do you agree with these statements?					
Category: Partnership					
	4 Extensively	3 Adequately	2 Somewhat	1 Not at All	0 I don't know
A representative of my school/district has an active voice in the decision-making process for the Internship Academy.	12	1	1	0	0
The Internship Academy values my input.	14	0	0	0	0
The Internship Academy has strengthened the partnership between my school/district and Missouri State University.	13	1	0	0	0
The IA Stakeholder meetings are an important part of the partnership between my school/district and Missouri State University.	12	1	0	0	1
The IA Stakeholder meetings are an important venue for two-way communication between my school/district and Missouri State University.	12	1	0	0	1
The IA Stakeholder meetings should continue to be a part of the Internship Academy.	12	1	0	0	1
The Teacher in Residence plays an important role in the partnership between my school/district and Missouri State University.	14	0	0	0	0
The Teacher in Residence is critical to the success of the Internship Academy.	14	0	0	0	0
The Teacher in Residence engages in critical two-way communication with my school/district and Missouri State University.	13	0	1	0	0
The Teacher in Residence should continue to be a part of the Internship Academy.	14	0	0	0	0
Category: Placement Process					
A representative of my school/district has an active voice in the IA placement process.	13	1	0	0	0

My input is valued in the IA placement process.	13	1	0	0	0
The IA placement process results in a more cohesive relationship between Master Teachers and interns than the traditional placement method for student teachers.	14	0	0	0	0
The Roundtable Placement Event results in better placement decisions than the traditional placement method for student teachers.	14	0	0	0	0
The Roundtable Placement Event provides me with the opportunity to provide relevant input into the placements in my building.	14	0	0	0	0
Category: Intern Preparation					
The Internship Academy prepares interns to be reflective practitioners.	12	1	1	0	0
The Internship Academy provides interns the opportunity to take risks while being scaffolded.	13	1	0	0	0
The Internship Academy provides opportunities for interns to assess student growth.	13	1	0	0	0
The Internship Academy provides opportunities for interns to analyze and use data to inform instruction.	12	2	0	0	0
The co-teaching model is a necessary component for the Internship Academy.	12	1	1	0	0
Category: Professional Growth					
Involvement with the Internship Academy has resulted in professional growth of the TiR in my building.	11	2	1	0	0
Involvement with the Internship Academy has resulted in professional growth of the Master Teachers in my building.	11	2	1	0	0

Partnership Implications

Ensuring the partner schools have an active voice in the planning and decision-making process has been a top priority for the Internship Academy. While our research indicates a large majority of TiRs and principals extensively agree we have been effective in this area, there is still room for improvement. Regarding the importance of the stakeholder meetings for two-way communication, one participant indicated a lack of knowledge in this area. This was also the case when asked if these meetings should continue to be a part of the program. From this, we can conclude we must not only prioritize two-way communication at these meetings but must also better communicate the happenings of these meetings with stakeholders not present.

In addition to this, while the large majority of TiRs and principals agreed extensively, two times participants stated they agreed only somewhat regarding the effectiveness of our collaborative decision-making process. When evaluating the statements, "A representative of my school/district has an active voice in the decision-making process for the Internship Academy," and "The Teacher in Residence engages in critical two-way communication with my school/district and Missouri State University," one respondent each time indicated agreeing only somewhat. From this we can conclude we need to better communicate the importance of the input of TiRs and district partners and the importance of their role in our decision-making process. Although we internally valued their input throughout the process, we did not effectively communicate this to the individuals involved.

Our goal to develop a strong partnership between partner schools and MSU has been overwhelmingly successful but has not been perfect. We will continue to meet and communicate regularly with our partners. We will communicate the importance of their input as we make decisions. We will also be more intentional about our communication following our stakeholder meetings.



Placement Process Implications

Research regarding the intense placement process for the Internship Academy indicated our partnership approach to the process has been successful. All respondents indicated they extensively agreed that our process results in more cohesive relationships in placements than the method of placement for traditional student teachers. The process requires much of our district partners as they interview all candidates following an application and MSU interview. However, research indicated our principals and TiRs find this process valuable and worthwhile. We will continue the 3 Stage Collaborative Placement Process.

Intern Preparation Implications

Preparing interns to be highly effective educators is the reason the Internship Academy exists. However, our research indicated this is an area with more opportunity for improvement. When asked to evaluate the statement, "The Internship Academy prepares interns to be reflective practitioners," twelve respondents indicated they extensively agree. One respondent stated she adequately agreed, and another indicated she somewhat agreed. During the 2017-2018 school year, interns were guided through regular reflections by their TiRs and Master Teachers. During the fall semester, TiRs facilitated the reflection regularly as interns responded to questions designed to guide the interns to reflect on their teaching and experience in the classroom. During the spring semester, interns reflected weekly and received feedback from their Master Teachers and, in some cases, Teachers in Residence. Growth from this reflection and feedback was evident in evaluations throughout the year. However, this process must be evaluated to ensure it is as effective as possible. The stakeholder group will discuss this process before the 2018-2019 school year, and TiRs in each school will be able to structure the reflections to best meet the needs of their interns.

Another area for improvement indicated by research is providing opportunities for interns to analyze and use data to inform instruction. Twelve respondents indicated they extensively agree the IA provides interns with these opportunities. Two respondents indicated they somewhat agree. Although interns have indicated they regularly used formative assessment data from running records, exit slips, anecdotal notes, student goals, and data recording sheets to group students and inform instruction, this is an area about which we must be more intentional. This is a topic the stakeholder group will address to ensure we are preparing our interns extensively in this area.

Professional Growth Implications

The area indicated by our participants as having the greatest opportunity for improvement is professional growth of the TiRs. When asked to evaluate the statements, "Involvement with the Internship Academy has resulted in professional growth of the TiR in my building," and "Involvement with the Internship Academy has resulted in professional growth of the Master Teachers in my building," eleven respondents indicated they extensively agreed with the statements. Two respondents stated they adequately agreed, and one respondent indicated she only somewhat agreed. This is an area we have not emphasized during the Internship Academy. However, being a TiR or Master Teacher requires additional knowledge and skills when compared to being a classroom teacher. Not only does the individual need to know how to be a good teacher, but now he or she must know how to lead others to become a good teacher. TiRs also encounter situations when they need administrative skills as they lead interns through their first experience in the professional world. This is an area we would like to monitor to ensure we are supporting TiRs and Master Teachers in their growth as teacher educators. This will be another topic the stakeholder group will address during the 2018-2019 school year to ensure a plan established.

CONCLUSION

The first three years of the Internship Academy have brought many successes and challenges as we built a strong partnership with our PK-12 school district partners. As we continue to grow and expand, it is important to evaluate our practices to ensure continued and improved effectiveness not only in the Springfield area but also in our expansion areas. Through this process, the stakeholder group will continue to serve as our compass with a strong, active voice in our decision-making process.



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