# The Enhanced Planning Model:
## Responses to an Alternative Structure for Student Teaching

### Fred L. Hamel
*University of Puget Sound, U.S.A.*

This article explores stakeholder perceptions of an alternative model for pre-service student teaching – one that prioritizes instructional planning and reflective practice by reducing the amount of time student teachers are expected to teach directly. The research draws on 245 surveys, collected over a four-year period, from student teachers, mentor teachers, and early career teachers who used the model during student teaching. Findings focus on perceptions of the model's impact on quality planning and reflection, overall growth during student teaching, and sense of preparedness for the first years of teaching. The study also tracks candidates' consistency in using the model as designed, as well as tensions experienced by stakeholders in balancing perceived student teaching priorities. The study encourages teacher leaders to question assumed induction systems and practices, to seek ways to understand the unique needs of pre-service teachers during internships, and to shape conditions for optimal early career learning.

*Keywords:* Pre-service teachers, student teaching, instructional planning, reflection, induction

## Introduction & Background

*"Overall, while the Enhanced Planning Model results in the loss of some pieces of 'real' teaching, it also allows for some spaces to be more effective in teaching practices. I think the pros outweigh the cons and lead to a more beneficial student teaching experience."*

The above quotation captures a recurring sentiment among first- and second-year teachers who responded retrospectively to a survey about their experiences with an alternative structure for student teaching. This paper explores such responses, drawn from multiple stakeholders (student teachers, mentor teachers, and early career teachers[1]) as they reflect on their experiences with a model for student teaching that prioritized time for planning and reflection over taking on a full-time schedule. The purpose of this research is to explore both general trends and nuanced distinctions in stakeholder responses to this alternative model, referred to in our teacher education program as the Enhanced Planning Model (EPM). A larger goal of this study is to consider how internship structures and priorities impact early teacher learning, and to develop implications for teacher leadership.

Pre-service teacher education programs must accomplish multiple, high-stakes goals in a short time. The learning needs of beginning teachers are high, as teacher candidates must develop a robust identity as a teacher, skills for leading lessons, the ability to develop curriculum, and capacities for understanding the socio-cultural communities in which they are

---

[1] "Early career" teachers here refer primarily to first year teachers – program alumni who had graduated from our program approximately one year prior to being surveyed. In one year, we were able to survey second year teachers as well. Thus, some graphs below refer to "1st- and 2nd-year teachers." For this study, we did not disaggregate 1st- from 2nd-year teachers.

teaching. Such candidates must learn to observe and assess learners constructively, understand and enact equity, differentiate instruction, respond to social and emotional needs, develop systems for classroom management, and cultivate collegiality with peer educators and school administration. Programs are often compressed, with various state-level and subject area standards to meet, along with, in many states, high stakes performance examinations.

Within such contexts, programs must make hard choices in balancing goals and in determining the priorities to be centered. Like educators anywhere, teacher educators and education administrators are called to responsible decision-making, to perform the kind of "dilemma management" that Lampert (1985) famously argued is central to the work of good teaching.[2] In our relatively small teacher education program, such dilemma management became acute with the onset of the state-required teacher performance assessment (the edTPA) in our state in 2014. Concern for the overwhelming nature of student teaching had long been a point of discussion among faculty, yet only when this new performance assessment became a reality did we begin to question whether our usual model of student teaching was in fact sustainable.

In our 15 month, Masters of Arts in Teaching program[3], the "usual" model involved a full semester of part-time classroom observation during fall, followed by a 15-week spring semester, in which teacher candidates would begin taking over classroom instruction in February, moving fairly quickly into a full-time teaching role by the end of February or early March and teaching full time through the end of April. Typically, a minimum of six to eight weeks of full-time teaching was required, taking over all of the responsibilities of a full-time teacher. It was not unusual for candidates to experience significant overwhelm, and various forms of crisis management were not uncommon during our Tuesday evening seminars, designed to support the student teaching experience. Stress was especially high through February and March.

The edTPA added a new and significant factor to the spring term. Students now completed three high stakes tasks during student teaching: a "planning" task, an "instruction" task (which included video recording of classroom teaching & learning), and an "assessment" task, (which involved analyzing samples of student work). In our state, 18 rubrics were applied to this assessment, and approximately 32 writing prompts were required – often leading to some 25 pages of single-spaced commentary writing, not counting multiple pages of lesson plans and materials. While the edTPA, to its credit, is designed to replicate authentic practices of teaching (planning, instructing, assessing), and is intended to draw on existing practice rather than add a new load to teacher candidates, the impact of this high stakes performance assessment on candidates was not small. Even during the pilot years with this assessment, we could see that candidates struggled with a situation of "divided energies" (Hamel, 2012) – that is, being caught between a desire to focus on student needs in the classroom and, alternatively, to work on the multiple details of this assessment.

We thus developed an alternative model of student teaching during the spring (see Table 1), which essentially reduced the amount of time that candidates were expected to teach during student teaching. While maintaining a full-time internship – that is, keeping candidates in the

---

[2] Lampert refers to dilemma management as a process of selecting the most responsible (though still imperfect) option among many possible pathways within limiting circumstances.

[3] Our Masters in Teaching program is situated in a small independent liberal arts college in the Pacific Northwest and prepares between 30 and 40 candidates for teaching each year.

school full time for 15 weeks – we determined that students would teach no more than roughly half the day.  In elementary schools, candidates would take on one core subject (math or literacy) at a time.  In secondary schools, we asked that candidates teach no more than three periods in a typical 6-period high school schedule (adjusted for buildings with different structures like a four-period day).

We implemented this model for two reasons – to respond to the demands of the edTPA but also based on our lingering program concern that asking brand new teachers to take on the full load of a veteran teacher had never, in fact, matched the needs of novice teacher learning.

**Table 1.**
*Enhanced Planning Model for Student Teaching*

| January | **Orienting to Placement**<br>Observing, partial teaching responsibilities, planning | |
|---|---|---|
| Late January - March | **Enhanced Planning Model** | |
| | ELEMENTARY | SECONDARY |
| | *Teach 1 core area (math or literacy) and 1 other area (social studies, science, art…)*<br><br>*Co-teaching or classroom support for other areas*<br><br>*Candidates switch primary teaching responsibilities midway (e.g., from math & social studies to literacy & science or art)*<br><br>*edTPA planning time, to be arranged (at least 3 hrs./week)*<br><br>*Teach edTPA Learning Segment by March 20* | *Teach 1 or 2 subjects (preps) maximum*<br>*Teach 3 periods total\**<br><br>*1 planning period with mentor*<br>*1 observation/co-teaching period*<br>*1 edTPA planning period*<br><br>*Teach edTPA Learning Segment by March 20* |
| March 30 - April 10 | **edTPA Completion**<br><br>*Includes spring break plus one <u>half time</u> week at school (early release or late arrival) to allow for edTPA writing* | |
| April 13 – May 1 | **Full time Teaching & Closure**<br><br>2+ weeks of independent teaching – includes collecting evidence for summer master's projects | |

*Note:* Example model from 2015

For example, experienced teachers make decisions with an automaticity that is not possible for a beginner (Feldon, 2007). For the experienced teacher, lesson plans have been developed, tested and tried; relationships, status, and authority have been established over time; implicit decision-making occurs based on years of grounded practice. Our judgment was that novice teachers simply need *more time* to develop core skills – such as internalizing the curriculum, planning what they will do, thinking about who students are and what they will need, and reflecting on what happened on a daily basis. Indeed, novices are often actively *unlearning* basic assumptions about kids and the classroom, which takes intentional reflection. Our model thus sought to allow more time for gradual reflective practice to emerge, recognizing student teaching as a unique learning moment – and one that may not need to replicate the actual practice of full-time teaching.

It is important to recognize here that simply giving candidates more time, by itself, does not necessarily increase the quality of teacher reflection or instructional practice. Our program has long prioritized reflective practice (Ryken & Hamel, 2016; 2011); intentionality and guidance are required in supporting pre-service teachers in how to reflect, what to reflect upon, and how to avoid common pitfalls in teacher thinking (blaming students, deflecting difficulties, remaining blind to assumptions, etc.). In the words of Larrivee (2006), preservice teachers "often need to be explicitly prompted to think, respond, and act in new ways" (p. 20). In addition, we believe reflection should be grounded in the daily experiences of teaching, driven by exigent teacher concerns, involve question-posing, and ideally be collegial in nature – with teachers sharing dilemmas, wonderings, and/or surprises with other similarly-situated teachers to guide and enhance perspective-taking. However, our concern in this study turns toward the larger conditions that enable or hinder the practice of reflection in schools, especially for pre-service teachers. This study focuses on the "structure" of our student teaching model as a means of shaping the possibility of reflection – and stakeholder responses to this structure – rather than on our specific pedagogical practices of promoting reflection.

It is also important to name the complexity of how teachers "use time" in school buildings. Teacher practice is fluid, filled with spontaneous decision-making and unexpected needs. Time is compressed. Thus, while we referred to "edTPA planning time" or "edTPA planning period" (Table 1) to remind students to reserve some time for the edTPA, in reality this time was often not used clearly or distinctly for any single purpose. We knew from informal observation that students used the additional time for multiple purposes – some observing in classrooms longer, some using the time for planning or grading, some using it for the edTPA – and that these "uses" of time differed over the student teaching term. We hypothesized that the larger pool of time, however used in specific cases, would be beneficial to candidates' ability to manage all that was required of them. Such use of time became a point of inquiry for our survey.

We began to use the new EPM model with candidates in 2013, one year prior to the edTPA becoming required for state certification in our state in 2014. We offered orientations on the EPM both with student teachers and with mentor teachers to clarify the purposes and functioning of the model. We realized, however, that our theoretical intent for the model might differ from how students actually interacted with the EPM. In addition, some mentor teachers questioned the model, wondering if not having a full-time teaching experience was in fact beneficial for candidates, who, in the words of one mentor, "needed to learn the whole job." We thus recognized the need for a feedback loop to gather data. The goal of this study, thus, is to explore two practical questions about the functioning of the Enhanced Planning Model (EPM):

- Based on self-report survey, to what extent do pre-service candidates and program alums see themselves as having used the EPM as intended? In their perceptions, to what extent did the model function as intended in supporting additional reflection and planning?
- What perceptions exist, among stakeholders (pre-service teachers, mentor teachers, and early career teachers who have completed our program), regarding the EPM's role in helping to prepare candidates for the first years of teaching?

## Methods

Data collection for this study has focused on gaining stakeholder perspectives and perceptions on the Enhanced Planning Model via electronic surveys. The primary goal has been to collect retrospective views on the EPM from those who have experienced it directly – specifically as student teachers and mentors. In addition to surveying student teachers and mentors in the weeks directly after the full-time internship has concluded, we also surveyed graduates who had completed their first or second year of teaching, as certified educators, to see if the realities of teaching in the schools changed their perspective on the value or role of the EPM. University supervisors (who work as full-time faculty in our program) had shared generally positive perceptions of the EPM. The goal of this research approach was to get a window into other role perspectives over time. In this respect, it is important to note that mentor teachers had not used the EPM model themselves as student teachers.

Surveys were completed over the course of four years, from 2015 to 2018, and were sent to participants via electronic survey. Data from this study was thus collected before the COVID-19 pandemic and was not affected by onset of remote student teaching placements. Table 2 shows the number of surveys collected in total (245), as well as per year and by role. The table includes the cumulative return rate for each role. For example, student teachers accounted for 103 surveys across four years and returned the survey at a rate of 85.6%. The high rate of response is likely related to how closely we work with teacher candidates when they are enrolled in our program. Mentor teachers, accounting for 55 surveys, returned the survey at a rate of 60%. Due to time constraints, we were unable to send a survey to mentors in 2017 and thus have only three years of data for this role. Alumni accounted for 87 surveys and returned the survey at a rate of 53%. Alumni primarily comprise 1st year teachers who had completed one year of certified teaching and had graduated from the MAT program the previous year. However, in the first year of the study (2015), we sent surveys to graduates from the previous two years, as we had begun to use the EPM in 2013, so in 2015 we received survey responses from 1st and 2nd year teachers. We have thus received alumni data from five program years (2013-2017).

**Table 2**

*Collected survey numbers by survey year and role, plus return rate by role*

|  | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | Total by Role | 4-year return rate: cumulative |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student Teacher | 28 | 27 | 26 | 22 | 103 | 86.5% |
| Mentor | 27 | 12 | 0 | 16 | 55 | 60% |
| Alumni | 40 (2013 & 2014 grads) | 19 (2015 grads) | 16 (2016 grads) | 12 (2017 grads) | 87 | 53% |
| Total by year | 95 | 58 | 42 | 50 | 245 total surveys | |

All surveys were anonymous.  While the surveys differed slightly based on role and year, findings below are drawn from four primary questions areas, which remained consistent across each survey – specifically:

- the extent to which a student teacher "consistently made use of the additional time afforded by the EPM,"
- the extent to which the EPM, in the view of the respondent, enabled or "supported effective planning and reflection on a regular basis,"
- the extent to which a candidate, in their own perception, "benefited from the additional time afforded by the EPM in terms of overall growth" as a beginning teacher,
- the extent to which the EPM, in the respondent's view, "played a positive role in preparing a candidate for the first years of teaching."

For each question area, participants marked their response on a five-point Likert scale using these options:  Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.  Space for short answer explanations were offered with most questions.[4]

The second bulleted question above combined "planning and reflection" in one prompt. Although planning and reflection are differing teacher practices, they are also intimately connected and both were central to the aims of the EPM.  We kept these together, as our goal was less to parse planning from reflection and more to ascertain the extent to which student teachers felt either practice was being supported.  We used response comments to gain more detail with this item, and a future study might look at these separately.  The third prompt above

---

[4] Focus group data was collected from student teachers in 2015 surrounding the questions above; however, this data is not included in the current study, which aims toward larger survey response trends rather than detailed qualitative data.

used the term "overall growth" as a beginning teacher. This refers to a holistic sense of teacher learning that goes beyond planning and/or reflection specifically. Additional aspects of growth might include a strong sense of teacher identity, increasing confidence, relationship-building with children and youth, collegial communication, ability to take feedback, and professionalism. The last question above, on the EPM's role in "preparing a candidate for the first years of teaching," focused on the concern, expressed by some mentors, that not teaching full time during student teaching might leave candidates "not ready" for the full demands of teaching. We asked this question just to mentor teachers and alumni, as we felt preservice candidates would have little reference point for being "ready" and might struggle to distinguish this question from the "overall growth" question.

Data analysis for this study has included creating visual displays of data and looking at quantitative results within and across roles – as well as over time. Visual displays were made for each core question area for each role by year, and then this data was compared across years to look for longer four-year patterns – the latter of which (four-year patterns by role) are the main focus of this paper's findings. Analysis included looking at patterns unique to each year, and then for each role by year, to consider especially unique variations impacting the average trends across four years. Although formal triangulation of data was not attempted beyond one focus group (not reported on in this study), a kind of "positional" triangulation is offered by looking at multiple stakeholders. In other words, pre-service candidate perceptions of the EPM are compared with the perceptions of mentors, and with early career teachers – to provide a range of perspectives on the experience – by role and over time. In terms of survey comments, short answer responses were reviewed using grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Survey comments were recorded, grouped, and eventually labeled as patterns emerged. Thematic groupings were reviewed, and representative quotations were selected to provide examples of key patterns. Given that the EPM is a structure that faculty in our program created, it was important to monitor for bias – which involved searching for outlier responses, making visible patterns and insights within less dominant responses, and forwarding and interpreting patterns that were critical of the EPM. Initial survey results were also discussed and analyzed with program clinical supervisors, who worked closely with student teachers and mentors in each of the years reported. This provided for a cross fertilization of insights and allowed for checks on initial assumptions and biases.

One limitation of this study is the singular use of survey data, which provides self-reports from respondents. Without corresponding observational data or other measures to confirm perceptions, the study is unable to make claims about candidates' actual growth or discern the precise nature of teacher reflection. In this respect, it is important to clarify the goals of the study, which has been to gain a broad sense of the general viability and effect of the EPM model from the perspective of stakeholders. Another limitation involves the number of survey responses received, particular from program alumni. In receiving responses from 53% of alumni (early career teachers), we are basing findings on just over half those who might have responded; important perspectives may be unaccounted for. In addition, an attrition of alumni respondents, in particular, is noticeable from the first year of data collection to the 4th year. While reasons for this fall-off in responses are unclear, it does indicate that we may not be getting a full picture and that responses from the initial years of the study are carrying more weight than those from later years. Finally, in relation to participant comments, selected quotations were not matched with the results of particular graphs; thus, the study does not identify the precise relationship between specific participant comments and larger quantitative results.

## Findings

**Consistent Use of the EPM**

The first question area explored the extent to which candidates in fact used the additional time afforded by the EPM. This question emerged from the fact that teaching is a complex and compressed profession – and that educators often make nuanced decisions about how to use their time to meet the needs of students. Student teachers are known for struggling to "survive" the many expectations and pressures they may be facing. Given that most mentors were used to handing off their full load of classes to candidates, or had experienced "full time" student teaching themselves, we expected some tendencies to fall back on this usual pattern. We were interested thus in whether the model we set up operated as intended and, if not, what variations emerged.

As shown in Figure 1 below, a strong majority of candidates saw themselves as using the EPM consistently.[5] 75% of student teachers self-reported that they consistently made use of the additional time afforded by the EPM, while 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 10% were unsure.
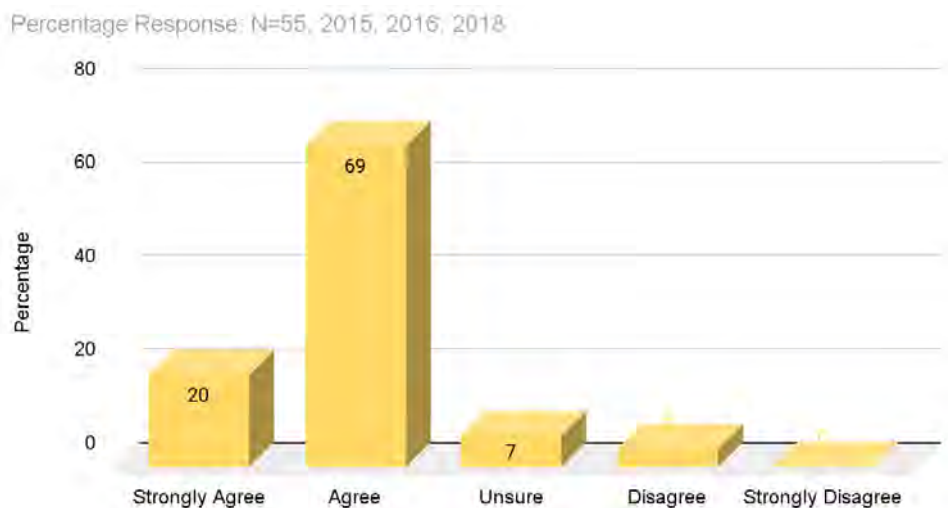
**Figure 1.**
*Consistent Use of the EPM: Student Teachers*
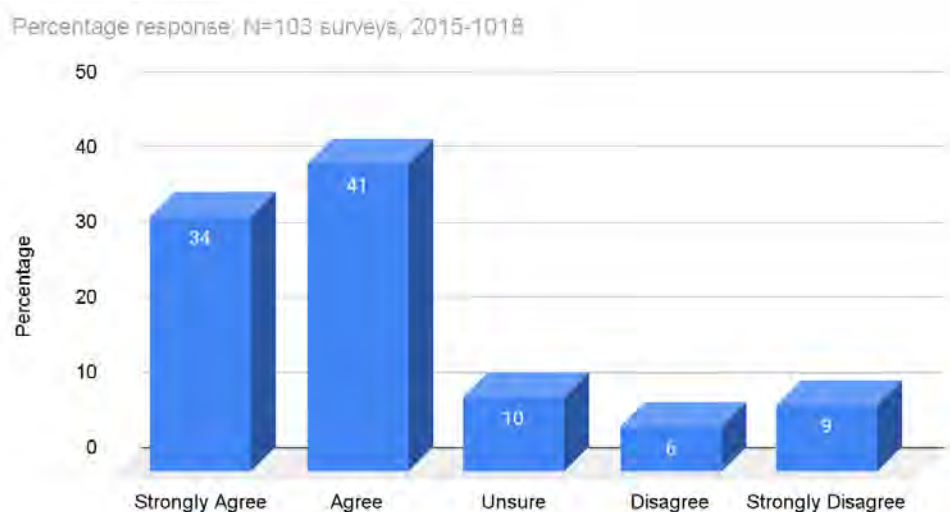


A similar but slightly different response was offered by mentor teachers over three years of collected data (Figure 2). 89% of mentors agreed or strongly agreed that student teachers used the EPM time, although fewer (20%) strongly agreed.

---

[5] Figures shared below are color coded for ease of reference. Blue is used for student teacher data, yellow is used for mentor data, and red is used for early career teacher data.

**Figure 2.**
*Consistent Use of the EPM: Mentors*



Early career teachers (Figure 3) also provided responses consistent with those above. 85% of alumni reported that they had used the EPM time consistently during student teaching.

**Figure 3.**
*Consistent Use of the edTPA: 1ˢᵗ- and 2ⁿᵈ-year Teachers*
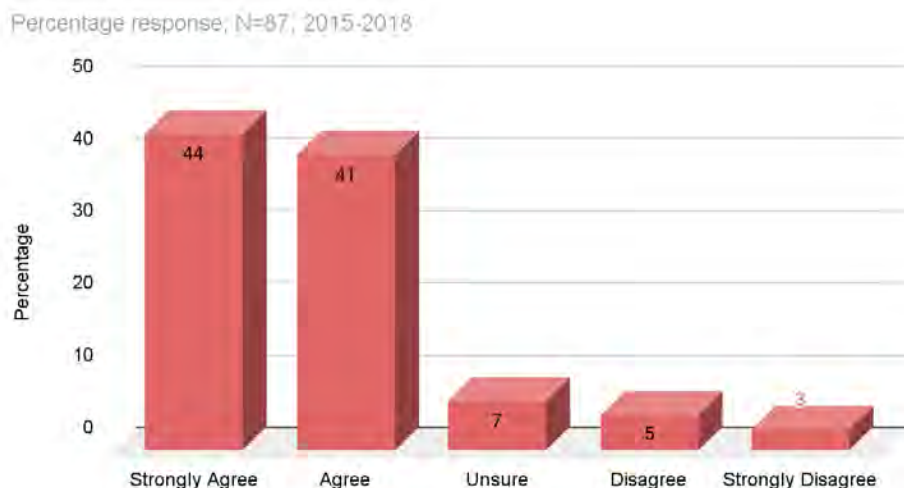


As to the responses expressing that they had not used the EPM as intended, or were unsure, a few patterns emerged through short answer responses. Some student teachers expressed difficulty in pulling away from the classroom, either due to their mentor's expectation or to their own desire to work with kids or observe their mentor teach. As one candidate wrote: "Though I was encouraged to take the extra time for my edTPA, I made the choice to stay within the classroom the extra period and observe how my mentor teacher taught the lesson." Another explained: "I tried to use some of the time set aside for edTPA for lesson planning, but I often just ended up helping out in the classroom instead." Many candidates thus, while not teaching

full time, still focused their time on *being in the classroom* – being present to children and/or to their mentor teacher – rather than focusing directly on "planning" on their own. Candidates thus felt a tension between pulling away from the classroom and staying close to the action of the classroom and being available – especially, spending time with students.

Other candidates, often based on mentor beliefs, took on a full load or close to a full load. As one wrote: "I did not feel that my mentor teacher was open to using the model. They wanted a student teaching model that allowed them to take a step back while I dove in." Another wrote: "I was pretty much teaching full time out the gate, so I'm not really sure I experienced the Enhanced Planning Model, so it is hard for me to really judge its effectiveness." While such comments reflect a minority of responses, they do suggest that some candidates found themselves caught between competing priorities – e.g., serving their mentors' beliefs and desires versus meeting the EPM expectations, or spending additional time with K-12 students versus working on a high stakes performance assessment.

In general, we were pleased to know that the vast majority of candidates and mentors "went with" the EPM and used it consistently, even given these variations. From a program perspective, it was also not necessarily a misuse of the EPM that candidates stayed in the classroom to help their mentor teacher or to work with kids rather than planning independently; we believe that this outcome reflects the unique needs of each classroom, giving candidates some autonomy in selecting how to use their time, while still providing some relief – in terms of the candidate not being fully responsible for running all aspects of the classroom. One inference from this data is that no matter how candidates used the EPM time, they were never at a loss for things to do, never with too little on their plate, given the additional time granted. In the words of one 1st year teacher, looking back on the EPM: "...without this time, I would have been completely overwhelmed." With time afforded by the EPM, many students had space to navigate their needs between planning, teaching, reflecting on practice, and meeting the demands of the edTPA in their own way.

**Effective Planning and Reflection**

A similar pattern of response is found with the second area of focus: the extent to which the EPM supported effective planning and/or reflection on a consistent basis during student teaching. Findings show that a strong majority of respondents, in each stakeholder role, felt that the EPM did support quality planning and reflection on teaching, with minority responses again expressing disagreement or concern. Looking across 103 surveys over four years, 80% of MAT candidates agreed or strongly agreed with this item, with 7% unsure and 13% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (see Figure 4).
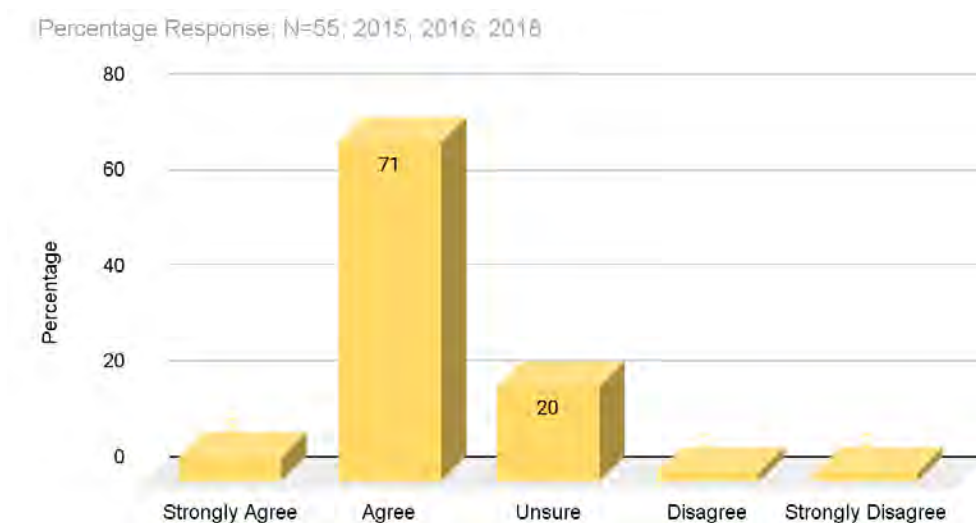
**Figure 4.**

*Effective Planning and Reflection – Student Teachers*
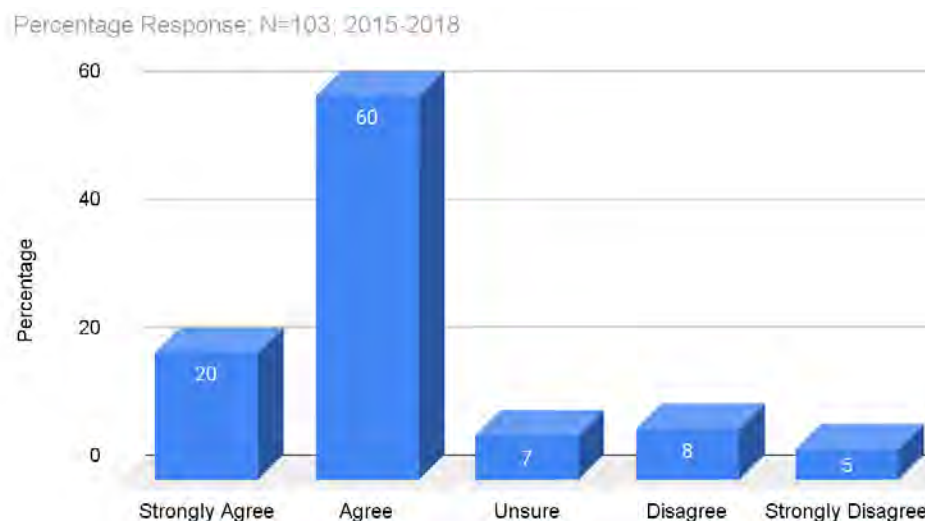


MAT candidates found several reasons to validate the time they received to reflect and plan during student teaching. One wrote: "I had time to write up a reflection for nearly every lesson I taught." Another wrote: "I really needed the time to effectively plan and get to know the curriculum." Another noted: "If the mentor-mentee relationship is strong, then this model is a great tool for facilitating discussion and reflection," a comment that suggests the importance of dialogic engagement with respect to planning and reflection. Another wrote, reflecting how we had envisioned the EPM functioning: "I was able to reflect and plan effectively on a consistent basis until March, when the edTPA consumed a lot of time."

Mentor teachers provided a similar set of responses (see Figure 5), with 76% responding agree or strongly agree to the prompt: "The Enhanced Planning Model supported effective planning and reflection on a regular basis for my student teacher." As one elementary school mentor wrote: "This plan enabled my student teacher to make detailed plans in 2 subjects at a time rather than being overwhelmed with teaching 4-5 subjects daily." However, mentors selected "strongly agree" far less often than student teachers (5% compared to 20%) and also showed a greater degree of uncertainty (20% compared to 7%). These results suggest general support from mentor teachers, with some hints of uncertainty and concern.

**Figure 5.**

*Effective Planning and Reflection – Mentors*



Early career teachers (alums) were more positive than either mentor or student teachers with respect to this item (see Figure 6). 91% of responding alumni who were early career teachers expressed agreement or strong agreement that the EPM had supported effective planning and reflection, with only 3% of responses disagreeing. Comments from alumni address the ways in which the EPM was a positive factor for them. An elementary teacher, completing the first year of full time teaching, wrote: "Being in the classroom is mentally fatiguing. Having time outside the classroom during the school day was necessary to effectively reflect on everything." One secondary teacher wrote: "This model allowed me to consider many relevant aspects of teaching."

**Figure 6.**

*Effective Planning and Reflection – 1st- and 2nd-year Teachers*
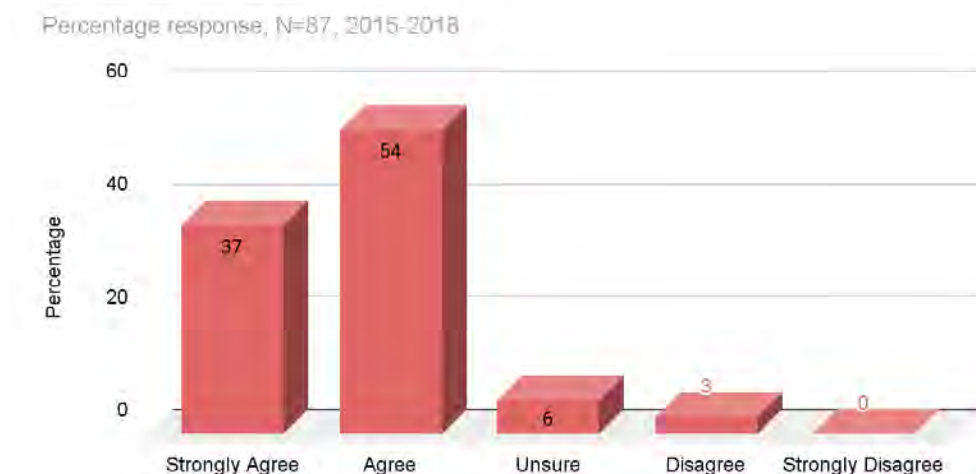
Concerns with this area reflected alternative priorities that crept into a teaching day, and reflected beliefs about how teachers learn. One MAT candidate simply asserted: "I did not use the model as intended." Such candidates, as noted above, often used the designated time to work in the classroom. Some did not use the EPM for planning & reflection but for other things, like, as one wrote, "grading, rest and the edTPA." One candidate noted that they learned best through just being thrown in – through actual teaching and practice – rather than through reflective time away from the classroom. Another wrote that the EPM time "didn't feel realistic." Again, these concerns seemed to dwindle with 1st and 2nd year teachers / alumni. However, the concerns raise important questions about the allocation of time during a student teaching internship – i.e., how much time is needed for intentional planning and reflection compared to time working with kids directly and simply being present in the classroom. On this question item, the majority of respondents affirmed the positive nature of additional time to their development – with some variation in whether students were able to use the model for meaningful reflection and planning.

## Overall Growth

The third area of inquiry focused on overall growth in student teaching, as perceived by stakeholders. The intent of this prompt was to give respondents an opportunity to share their perception of a holistic sense of student teacher growth (including things like confidence, instructional skill, professionalism, collegial relations, etc.) that went beyond planning and reflection. The specific prompt asked was: "In terms of overall growth during student teaching, I (or my teacher candidate) benefited from the additional planning time afforded by the Enhanced Planning Model." By focusing on "overall growth," the question invited participants to think holistically about their own teacher development as a preservice teacher (or a mentor's perception of this) and about the structural role of the EPM in this development. Responses below do not prove that pre-service teachers did grow in these areas – but give a general sense of what stakeholder self-perceptions were.

**Figure 7.**
*Overall Growth during Student Teaching – Student Teachers*
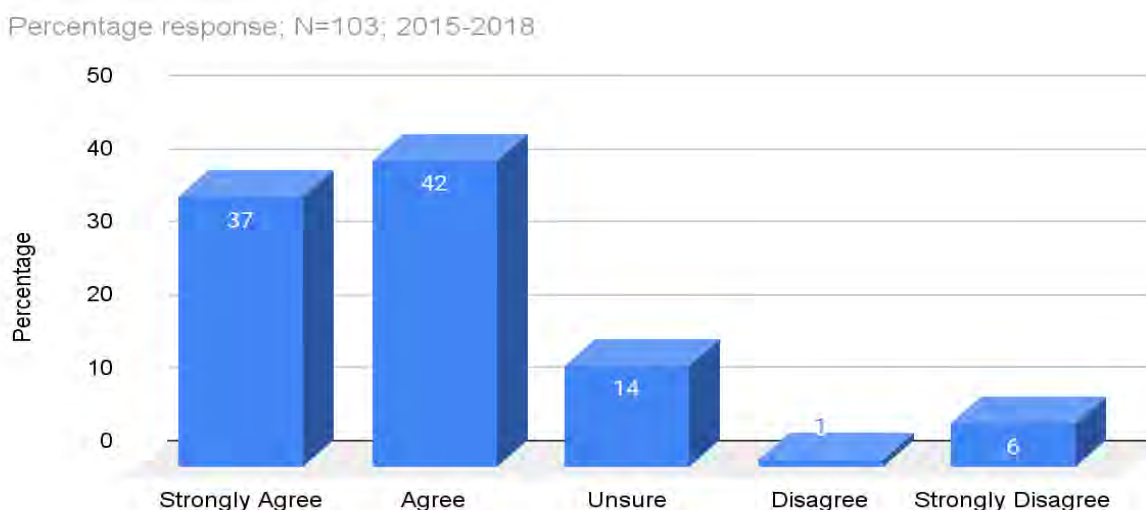
Student teacher responses to this item (see Figure 7) were again largely positive, similar to the items above.  Out of 103 surveys returned across four years, 79% of candidates agreed that the time afforded by the EPM benefited their overall growth, with 37% of candidates strongly agreeing.  14% were unsure, and 7% strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Mentor teacher responses, however, were noticeably more moderate on this item (see Figure 8).  63% of mentors expressed agreement that the EPM benefitted the "overall growth" of their student teachers - with 7% strongly agreeing.  While only a small percentage of mentors (8%) disagreed with this item, the number expressing uncertainty grew to nearly 30%.

**Figure 8.**
*Overall Growth during Student Teaching – Mentors*
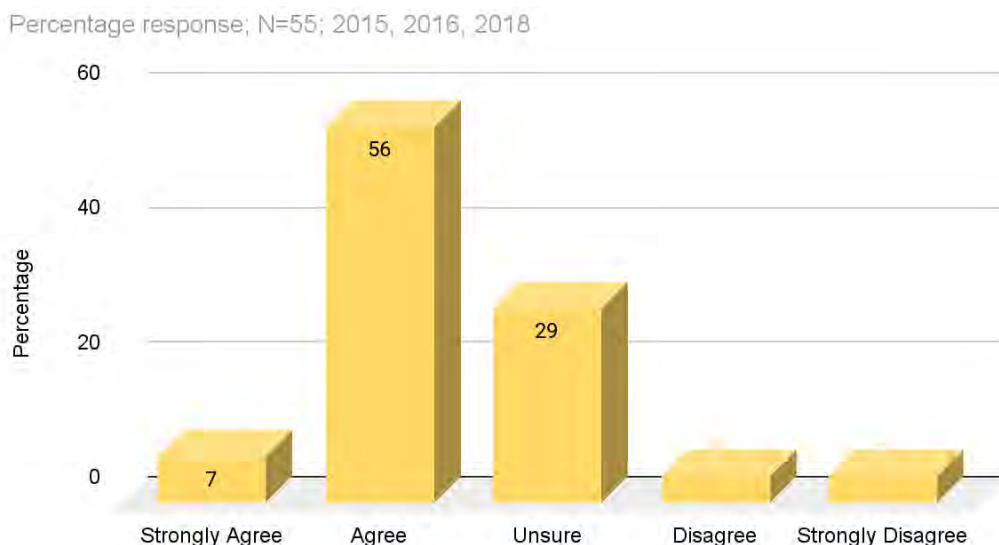


Positive mentor comments on this item focused on a less stressful experience and more time for mentor/candidate collaboration.  One mentor wrote:  "I felt she was less stressed than previous students about managing her time."  Another noted:  "It allowed extra time for myself and my student teacher to discuss, plan and reflect on his student teaching. It also allowed additional time for him to work on his TPA."  Another found the model clear and efficient:  "The model was easy to follow, and it allowed me to ensure that my student teacher completed her obligation in a timely manner."

Comments reflecting mentor uncertainty focused on concerns that student teachers need more time in front of students and need to have a "full" experience.  As one mentor wrote:  "I think that it allowed them to focus on completing their edTPA but didn't give them enough opportunity to be in front of the students."  Another mentor wrote:  "I feel like student teachers would benefit from having a full teaching load for a few weeks so they can get a sense of what it's actually like to plan and grade over a sustained period of time."

Other mentors elaborated on the concern that candidates were not experiencing what it is "actually like" to teach full time.  One wrote about candidates needing to experience the "rigors" of teaching in order to establish their practice:

> Although the EPM does allow for plenty of time to plan and reflect on high quality lessons, it does not afford student teachers time to experience the rigors of teaching or the time to establish classroom expectations or routines effectively.

Another mentor focused on the importance of learning to balance multiple responsibilities:

> My student teacher was completely unable to manage time within the model. Instead of a balance of edTPA work and Student Teaching responsibilities, the priorities were totally given to the edTPA…. It may be that [the EPM] needs refinement and more direction as to the amount of time spent on each responsibility.

This comment reflected the concern of many mentors in our state, over several years, that the edTPA was beginning to "take over" student teaching.[6] Other concerns included reduced "quality observational time" – and that reflection needed more direction and support. As one mentor said, "We need to teach our students how to reflect, otherwise the time is useless."

      Early career teachers (see Figure 9), interestingly, were more positive about their overall growth during student teaching than mentors. Their responses closely resembled those of student teachers – with 78% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the EPM benefited their holistic teacher development. 13% expressed uncertainty, and 9% disagreed. Comments from these early-career teachers often expressed gratitude in having had enough time during student teaching to reflect on their practices and to keep up with the many demands of learning to teach. One teacher wrote that their reflection practices were noticeable to the administrators they were now working with: "My admins are impressed on how much I reflect and change my practices to fit my students' needs." Another teacher wrote: "From the end of student teaching to the end of my first year of teaching I have felt a tremendous amount of growth due to the design of the EPM."

**Figure 9.**
*Overall Growth during Student Teaching – 1st- and 2nd-year Teachers*



Percentage response; N=87; 2015-2018

---
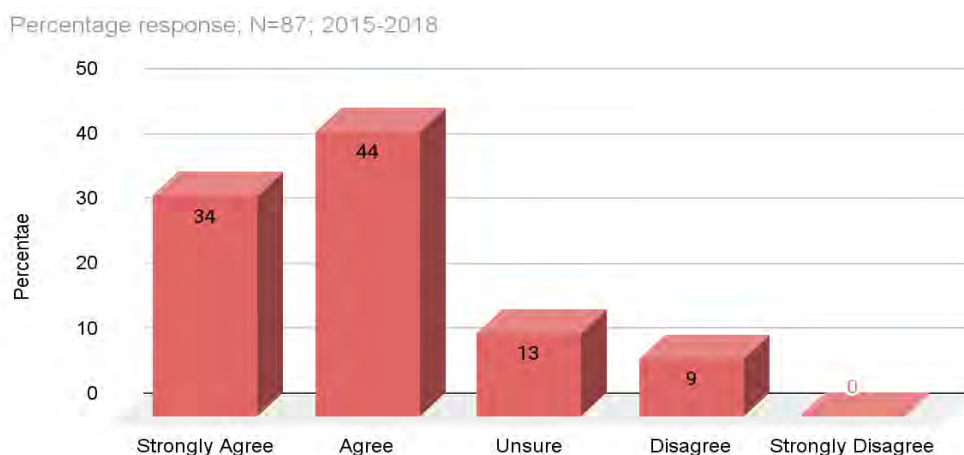
[6] Responding to these teacher concerns, the Washington State Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) in 2021 removed the edTPA as a state requirement for teacher certification. Programs may continue to use the assessment if they choose.

Several of these early career teachers also recognized a trade-off between taking on more teaching time versus preserving time for planning/reflection. In the words of one 1st year teacher:

> Overall, while the Enhanced Planning Model results in the loss of some pieces of 'real' teaching, it also allows for some spaces to be more effective in teaching practices. I think the pros outweigh the cons and lead to a more beneficial student teaching experience.

Here we see a recognition of pros and cons in the EPM, with a conclusion that emphasizing reflective practice was valuable. Yet, other candidates experienced this tension differently: "I needed that time, but at the same time it would have been great for me to take on a full load of classes," wrote one. Another indicated: "I wished I had been pushed to gain more stamina in the classroom as a full-time teacher." While a strong majority of practicing early career teachers saw mostly value from the EPM with respect to their "overall growth," a clear theme from a smaller subset was that they wished they had experienced some version of "full time" teaching.

One important distinction on this question showed up between the responses of elementary and secondary early career teachers. In general, elementary alumni scored this item lower than secondary alumni. For example, in 2015, only 8 of 15 (53%) of elementary teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the EPM benefited their overall growth, whereas 24 of 25 secondary teachers (96%) indicated agreement or strong agreement. This disaggregation of data suggests that elementary and secondary educators experience the overall student teaching semester differently. Elementary educators may tie their overall growth to experiencing the full constellation of components that make up a teaching day in an elementary school classroom, whereas secondary candidates, teaching specific subjects in 1-to-2-hour blocks, may be less likely to feel that they've "missed" something with the EPM (other than teaching the same classes more often).
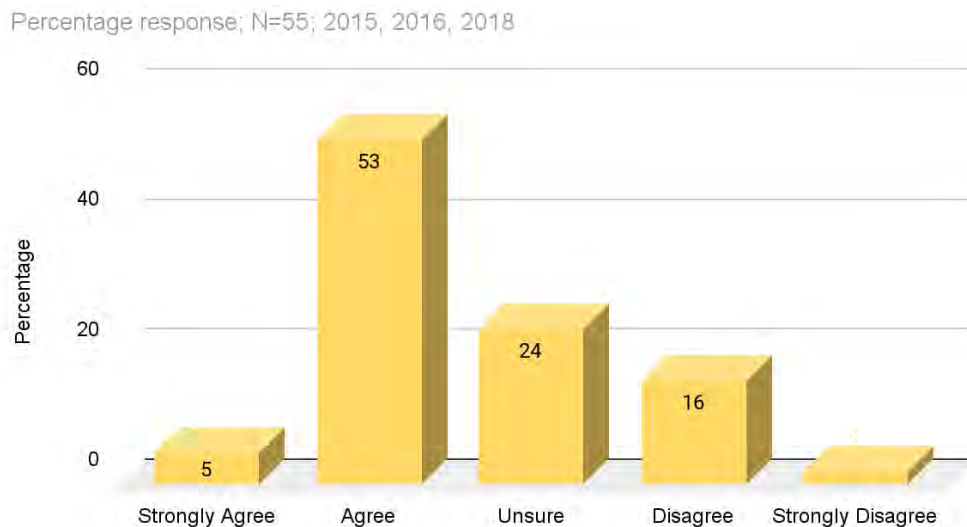
**Sense of Preparation for the First Years of Teaching**

The last area of inquiry focused on participants' sense of whether the EPM had played a positive role in helping to prepare them adequately for the first years of teaching. This prompt differed from the previous one in explicitly looking toward candidate readiness for independent teaching – rather than assessing how much a candidate had grown during student teaching. We surveyed just mentor teachers and early career year teachers on this question. Mentors responded to the prompt: "The Enhanced Planning Model played a positive role in preparing my student teacher for the profession." 1st and 2nd year teachers responded to the prompt: "The Enhanced Planning Model played a positive role in preparing me for my first year of teaching." These statements presumed the EPM as one component among a wider set of program experiences and supports designed to support teacher readiness.

Mentor responses (see Figure 10) parallel their responses regarding "overall growth" during student teaching. Responses remain generally positive but are muted, with noticeable uncertainty. A majority of mentors, 58%, agreed or strongly agreed that the EPM played a positive role in preparing their candidate for certified teaching. However, this is the lowest "agree" percentage of any of the four main question areas, and only 5% strongly agreed. 24% are unsure, and 18% disagree. It's important to clarify that these perceptions do not mean that mentors felt their candidates were "not ready" for their first year of teaching, as all of these mentors did approve candidates to be certified. Rather, mentor uncertainty focuses on the role of

the EPM in candidate readiness. The data can perhaps be read in various ways – for example, as positively reinforcing the EPM – in that "only" 18% of teachers "disagreed" and thus 82% are either in support or unsure (and thus potentially open to the impact of the EPM) – or alternatively, as more negative toward the EPM, in that 42% of mentors felt unable to claim that the EPM was a clear force in preparing candidates for the first year of teaching. Either way, the heightened ambivalence among mentor teachers is noticeable here.

**Figure 10.**
*Sense of Preparation for the 1st year – Mentors*



Early career teachers were somewhat more positive than mentor teachers but also displayed uncertainty with respect to the role of the EPM in preparing them for their first year (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11.**
*Sense of Preparation for the 1st year – 1st- and 2nd-year Teachers*
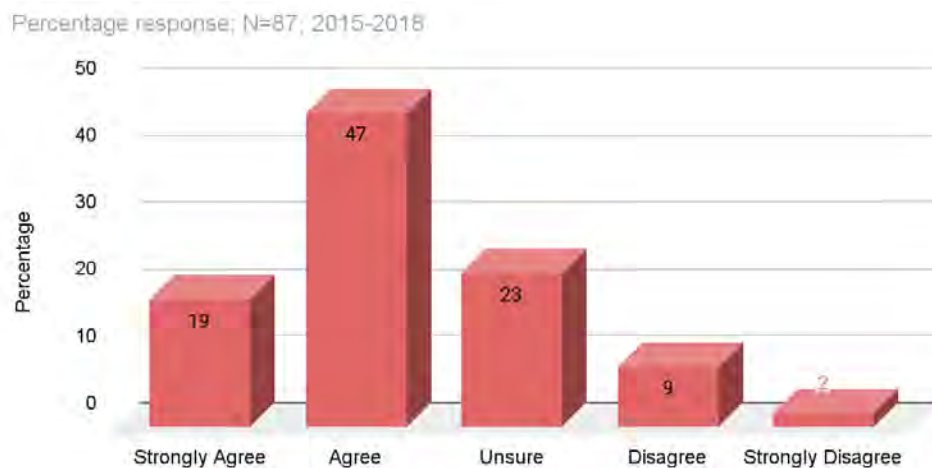
Two thirds, or 66%, of these alumni agreed or strongly agreed that the EPM played a positive role in preparing them for their first year of teaching.  A sizable number (23%) were unsure, and 11% disagreed or disagreed strongly.

Comments from early career teachers reflect their sense that the EPM played a positive role in their preparation for full time teaching.  A primary theme for those agreeing with this item was that the EPM supported the practice of teacher reflection, which allowed them to adapt and eventually succeed even if the first year of teaching was hard.  As one teacher wrote:

> I don't think anything will ever fully prepare you for your first year of teaching, however the planning and reflection time afforded me through the MAT program gave me a solid foundation to grow and develop in my first year. I was able to make necessary adjustments throughout the year because I had the tools and experience necessary to do so.

Another teacher wrote: "I felt unprepared at first but because of my MAT program I feel I was able to adjust in less time.  That is, I suspect every new teacher feels unprepared at first, but I had the toolkit needed to find my feet more quickly."  A third teacher echoed this theme: "The planning module had the effect of setting in place good teaching habits instead of simply 'getting through' all of the lessons. I really had time to experiment and implement new ideas."

In agreeing with the positive effect of the EPM on their preparation for teaching, a few made the point that student teaching and the 1st year of teaching are not comparable experiences. In other words, trying to replicate the intensity of a teacher's first year during student teaching is a misplaced goal.  As one wrote: "Teaching full time the whole time during student teaching would have been unnecessary, as student teaching is entirely different than having one's own classroom… There is no need to make things harder than they need to be when learning how to do something."  Another wrote:

> One might argue that the drawback to this model is that a student teacher, because of the reduced teaching time, doesn't get a realistic experience, that their 'stamina' is not well tested.  I disagree heartily with this argument.  Any first year of teaching is incredibly demanding, and the additional time spent reflecting on my practice and working on the edTPA during student teaching only better prepared me to handle the rigor of a full-time teaching position."

This comment suggests that creating structures and models that enable quality planning, reflection, and modifying lessons can be an important preparation for the challenges of the first year.  In this respect, some candidates spoke of feeling at least as prepared if not more prepared for teaching in relation to other first year teachers:  One wrote: "I felt fairly prepared, but have functionally found that I am more prepared than I felt I was, compared to teachers from other programs."  Another wrote:  "I felt some concern that I wouldn't know what it was really like to teach full-time (most of this concern was fueled by my mentor teacher), but in my first year I don't feel at a disadvantage because of this model in any way."

Early career teachers disagreeing that the EPM prepared them for the first years of teaching focused on feeling "sheltered" from the real experience of teaching full time. Representative comments include:

- "I think the EPM sheltered me from the real workload/responsibilities that occur for a first-year teacher."
- "It helped me in the planning and teaching areas but not for everything else that comes along with being a first-year teacher."
- "I did feel it placed a LOT more emphasis on lesson planning and unit planning, which is just not the reality of first year teaching, which I have found to be all about classroom management. If you don't have the management, your lesson plans don't matter much."
- "I felt prepared to thoughtfully prepare lessons and reflect on my teaching but not truly prepared for the amount of work, responsibilities and expectations that a teacher carries."
- "I feel that expecting to have an hour, even some days of the week, during the school day to plan/reflect is not an honest picture of reality as a first-year teacher. Although managing student teaching, class, and the TPA seemed like a lot, it was so much less stressful than the day to day demands of this year."

While less frequent, such comments nevertheless represent a clear pattern of strongly-felt views on the EPM – that some of the "reality" of the first year of teaching was lost in the model, and that some candidates had been a bit shocked by their experience as a first-year teacher.  These comments stood in contrast to those who expressed positive sentiments around having developed strong habits of practice or who otherwise found the model appropriate to the learning needs of preservice teachers.

## Discussion

"Practice shock" is a name given to the "overwhelm" that novice or early career professionals can feel when thrust into positions demanding high levels of responsibility, organization, work-load, and decision-making.  Left unaddressed, practice shock in learning to teach can lead to unhealthy stress, drop out, and attrition from the profession (Stokking et al, 2003).  The EPM was designed to strengthen the gradual release of responsibility for student teachers as they enter the profession – not to shelter them from the realities of teaching but specifically to reduce practice shock and to build up candidates' habits of planning and reflection so as to meet the rigors of teaching more effectively.  Using survey responses from three stakeholder groups – student teachers, mentor teachers, and early career teachers – we have sought to understand educators' perceptions of the EPM, especially in relation to planning and reflection, overall growth, and readiness for the profession.  Focusing on these areas, how did stakeholders respond to the structural changes we made during student teaching?

Data from our 245 surveys suggest that the EPM has been generally well-received by consistent majorities among student teachers, mentors, and beginning teachers looking back retrospectively on student teaching.  Student teachers and mentors report that candidates sought to use the model as designed and in general report that it achieved its primary aims – to enhance quality planning and reflection during student teaching and to create a more manageable learning experience.  Results also indicate that stakeholders generally felt that the model contributed to candidates' "overall growth" and prepared them for their first year(s) in the profession, although by smaller majorities on these questions.  Such overall results suggest that as an experimental internship model, the EPM may be a viable and relevant alternative to a traditional full-time model of student teaching, and that additional studies of such models are needed.  Teacher

educators and teacher leaders should be experimenting with internship structures and approaches, in ways that reduce stress for teacher candidates and that cultivate long term teacher growth.

Importantly, a reduction in full time teaching for student teachers was not perceived as deleterious to teaching practice by a strong majority of teachers during their first years of teaching.  Only 11% of such early career teachers indicated "disagree" (9%) or "strongly disagree" (2%) on the question of whether the EPM had played a positive role in preparing them for the first year of teaching.  In some ways, these responses surprised us, as we had anticipated sentiments similar to mentor teachers – specifically, that the EPM had not prepared these early career teachers for the "realities" of the profession.  But in fact, early career teacher responses continued to reflect the generally positive views of our student teacher candidates – and tempered some of the more negative mentor responses we did receive.  That is, while some mentors were concerned that a reduction in full time student teaching would possibly harm a candidate's readiness, the responses of most early career teachers working in schools dispelled or challenged this notion.  Early career teachers often saw value and positive carry-over into their first years from the habits of planning they had developed during student teaching, with the EPM as a relevant factor.  Some also commented on the distinct nature of student teaching – i.e. that a first year will always be hard and that student teaching does not necessarily need to replicate a full time teacher's experience.

Such responses beg larger questions, such as: What does it mean to be "prepared" for teaching?  What kinds of internship experiences can lead not just to a surface readiness on the "first day" – but to long term growth and adaptation over time – to the ability to "learn in and from practice" (Kennedy, 1999) as one moves forward.  The data here suggests that many of our teacher candidates, mentors, and alums – perhaps more than we even expected – understand that readiness for teaching does not simply mean mimicking the behaviors of a full-time teacher but involves deeper forms of preparation and reflection – and that time is required for such learning.

What might account for the generally positive nature of stakeholder responses?  We believe that most student teachers genuinely appreciate a model that recognizes how much they are trying to do – that gives them time/opportunity to step back from being "on" for too long – and that acknowledges their need to process and plan for instruction.  In other words, reflection is given an actual space during their apprenticeship, rather than just being a "concept" that is encouraged.  For mentors, while there is more reservation about the model, appreciation is given for the additional time candidates take to collaborate and plan meaningfully – to develop well designed lessons – and for the time allowed to both process their teaching and observe their mentor more consistently.  We also see more evidence of co-teaching – since mentors must continue to take responsibility for teaching part of the day – which often enhances mentor/candidate communication about instructional practice.  In relation to early career teachers (alums), the positive nature of responses has surprised us, but may be attributable to candidates having developed the core driving practices for strong teaching (reflective practice, strong planning skills, collegial interaction) in a deepened, less surface way.

Still, it is important to recognize the variation in responses received – that not all candidates experienced the EPM as beneficial, that some mentors noticed areas where candidates were not learning, and that both mentors and early career year teachers expressed increased ambivalence toward the model when it came to feeling "prepared" for the profession. These responses are consistent enough to prompt further reflection among teacher educators.  It may be especially important for teacher educators, internship coordinators, and field directors to make sure that candidates have enough high intensity experiences – where candidates are being

stretched by their workload and have a "feel" for the overall work they will eventually encounter. This may play out in situated fashion. For example, listening to our elementary candidates and mentor teachers, in particular, we are convinced that elementary candidates have a higher need to teach for entire days – for at least some length of time during student teaching – due to the unique role of an elementary teacher and the need to learn all of the components of how an elementary teaching day flows. This differs from the experience of a secondary candidate teaching discrete periods. As another example, with the removal of the edTPA as a requirement for certification in our state, we have begun to tweak the EPM model to allow for a bit more teaching and responsibility – for example, having secondary candidates choose as many as four periods of teaching over time, rather than three periods (assuming a traditional six period secondary school day), while still not having candidates teach a full schedule. The larger point is that, as we continue to support a model that emphasizes planning and reflection, and that recognizes the distinct learning needs of pre-service teachers, we must remain adaptable and responsive to contextual factors, adjusting for individual candidate situations, and continuing to listen and gather data from stakeholders.

What implications exist for teacher leaders, especially during an unprecedented time of change and institutional disruption? In many ways, this study echoes the calls from many quarters that teachers as a whole are under tremendous stress in the profession, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Asking people to do the same thing in the same way – is increasingly recognized as unwise and inattentive to educators' and learners' needs, ultimately sapping teachers of their abilities to care for children and youth (Singer, 2020; Streeter, 2021). This study encourages teacher leaders to question traditional internship systems and practices, especially those that assume that beginners should quickly replicate the practice and workload of veteran educators. Data from this study suggests early career teachers may benefit from modified schedules that reduce the amount of full time teaching they are asked to do. We must push back, in the minimum, on tendencies to employ student teachers to fill holes in staffing, which has become increasingly prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic. More importantly, we must seek ways to understand the unique needs of pre-service teachers during internships, and to shape conditions for optimal early career learning – which may require reducing the time candidates are asked to teach directly, so as to support other aspects of teacher growth, including critical reflection, planning and revision of lessons/curriculum, and collegial conversation. Given the data from this study, and keeping in mind that no perfect model exists, we can do so knowing that such moves may enhance rather than detract from teacher readiness for the profession.

Indeed, the elimination of the edTPA in our state has not caused our program to return to a traditional full time student teaching model, but has instead encouraged us to continue to modify and tweak the Enhanced Planning Model in light of a new context and an increased awareness of teachers' needs, particularly in the pandemic. As we develop new program-based assessments to take the place of the edTPA, a next research step might study the ways in which student teachers allocate the additional time afforded by the EPM without the edTPA – that is, in a new assessment context. Larger scale studies could examine how teacher education programs design student teaching differentially – including how much full-time teaching candidates are asked to complete and the relative impact of different models.

This work likewise echoes recent work on social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools (CASEL, Durlack, et al, 2015; Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020), which emphasizes the importance of social and emotional skills and the overall mental health of adults in schools – as a foundation

for supporting children and youth in these areas.  As Markowitz and Bouffard (2015) argue, success in developing SEL competencies among students is "dependent in part on teachers' own social, emotional, and cultural competencies" (22).  This suggests the critical nature of creating work contexts and learning environments for adults that support both other-awareness and self-awareness – that can help teachers not only work hard, show stamina and persevere in a demanding job, but also understand one's limits, boundaries, and need for self-care.  Such issues bear on justice in the education system – which relates to how much society asks of teachers and how adults experience their work.  Teacher leaders must resist practices that inadvertently transfer inordinate stress to young professionals – stress that is counter-productive both to learning and to longevity in the system.  Teacher leaders might re-envision their work beyond mentoring new teacher candidates into the existing structures – to better anticipate and respond to the SEL needs of beginning teachers.  This may involve <u>reconfiguring time</u> for such teachers – prioritizing developmental needs for planning, reflecting, and making sense of what they are experiencing.

## Conclusion

One of our respondents, a 1st year teacher, wrote: "I suspect every new teacher feels unprepared at first…."  We often share a similar sentiment with our pre-service candidates:  e.g. "It's a big job, and it's normal not to feel all of the way ready."  That being said, decisions about teacher internship structures matter.  Teacher leaders must resist practices that do not allow pre-service teachers to adequately plan for and process the highly demanding work they are expected to do.  As another 1st teacher wrote: "There is no need to make things harder than they need to be when learning how to do something."  Because of the limitations of this study, broader research is needed; but the survey data reported here suggests that alternatives models to "traditional full time" student teaching are important, and that such models may be both valuable and appropriate for teacher candidates.  Granting additional time for reflection and planning, as well as for social and emotional health, may have important benefits as pre-service teachers grow into the profession and learn to find their feet.  A clear majority of our preservice candidates, mentors, and early career alumni reported strength and value in the EPM – noting contributions to teacher growth during the unique phase of pre-service learning, even as candidates and mentors used the model in varying ways, and even as some raised legitimate issues and concerns.  Such concerns lead us not to discard the model but to consider how we can continue to adapt and experiment with our internship structures – to creatively consider the needs of our teacher learners, keeping a range of stakeholder voices in mind.

## Acknowledgement

## References

CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning). https://casel.org.

Charmaz, K. (2006).  *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*.  Sage Publications.

Durlack, J.A. et al, Eds. (2015).  *Handbook of social and emotional learning:  Research and practice*.  The Guilford Press.

Feldon, D.F. (2007).  Cognitive load and classroom teaching: The double-edged sword of automaticity. *Educational Psychologist, 42* (3): 123-137.

Hamel, F. L. (July 2012).  Assuring quality or overwhelming teachers?  High quality performance assessment in American pre-service teacher education.  Invited Presentation at the Pacific Rim International Teacher Education Symposium, Naruto University of Education, Tokushima, Japan.

Kennedy, M.M. (1999). The role of preservice teacher education.  In Linda Darling-Hammond, Ed., *Teaching as the learning profession*. Jossey Bass.

Lampert, M. (1985).  How do teachers manage to teach?  Perspectives on problems in practice. *Harvard Educational Review*, *55* (2): 178-194.

Markowitz, N.L. & Bouffard, S.M. (2020).  *Teaching with a social, emotional, and cultural lens: A framework for educators and teacher educators*.  Harvard Education Press.

Ryken, A. E., & Hamel, F. L. (2016).  Looking again at "surface level" reflections:  Framing a competence view of early teacher thinking. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 43* (4), 31-53.

Ryken, A.E. & Hamel, F.L. (2011).  What matters is mutual investment and evidence-based dialogue:  Designing meaningful contexts for teacher learning. *Northwest Passage 9* (2): 95-103.

Singer, N. (2020). Teaching in the pandemic: This is not sustainable. *The New York Times*. Published Nov. 30.  https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/30/us/teachers-remote-learning-burnout.html

Stokking, K.M., Leenders, F.J., Stavenga-de Jong, J.A., Tartwijk, J.Van (2003).  From student to teacher, reducing practice shock and early dropout in the teaching profession. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 26* (3): https://doi.org/10.1080/0261976032000128175.

Streeter, L.G. (2021).  Why so many teachers are thinking of quitting:  Seven educators on how the pandemic drove them to finally say: Enough is enough. *The Washington Post Magazine*. Education Issue, Published Oct. 18. https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2021/10/18/teachers-resign-pandemic/