



# TEACHER PREPARATION

at Jacksonville State University

BY KELLY W. RYAN AND KIM H. TOWNSEL

The mission of the College of Education and Professional Studies (CEPS) at Jacksonville State University (JSU) located in Jacksonville, Alabama, is to prepare students for successful careers in a variety of professions, including career and technical education (CTE) teacher preparation. The college's uniqueness is reflected by its diversity of programs and services. CEPS programs enable graduates to be creative decision makers who effectively solve problems using concepts and practices appropriate for each discipline.

The CEPS programs maintain rigor and relevance through outreach and partnership activities with schools and

businesses related to its programs within and surrounding the university's service area. We believe that strong affiliations with constituency groups such as superintendents, principals and teachers benefit our teacher candidates through supervision of practical experiences, and as members of college advisory committees dealing with program development. The ultimate goal of the CEPS is to assure that its graduates are effective, highly performing employees.

## CTE Certifications

The Alabama State Department of Education offers five distinct certifications in the area of CTE. The programs are agriscience education, business/market-

ing education, family and consumer science education, technical education, and career technologies. Graduates from each program must be able to demonstrate a knowledge of the history, philosophy, principles, objectives, trends, patterns and issues of CTE programs; the organization, management and methods of assessment of CTE programs; the Alabama Course of Study: career and technical education; and teaching techniques, including evidenced-based strategies, project-based learning, and authentic assessments applied to CTE programs. The CTE program Pre-service Teachers complete the general requirements of the JSU teacher education program. In addition, due to the unique demands of the

CTE program, pre-service teachers have an opportunity to experience the varied responsibilities of a CTE teacher.

## Clinical Experience Key to Learning

Immersing students in schools during their clinical experience is one of the primary ways that CEPS ensures that CTE teacher candidates learn the skills necessary to be effective teachers. The clinical experience portion of the teacher education program is divided into four levels:

### LEVEL I

In their professional studies classes and in method classes, teacher candidates engage in micro-teaching, project and unit development, subject matter portfolios, group research, presentations, and other activities.

### LEVEL II

Activities for Level II experiences are provided at the Teacher Learning Center and the Child Development Center. These experiences provide teacher candidates with opportunities for one-to-one tutoring and interaction with local children. Candidates work with university instructors to diagnose learning needs and develop and implement learning activities.

### LEVEL III

These experiences are provided in collaboration with local schools and provide gradual exposure to the classroom. Pre-service teachers conduct observations, teach classes and participate in school activities. College professors, along with classroom teachers—called cooperating teachers—monitor JSU students' performances.

### LEVEL IV

Intern teachers spend approximately 15 weeks in this level and work with carefully selected mentors. Intern teachers have a cooperating teacher in the classroom setting and a university supervisor. This

level provides continuous, closely monitored experiences that involve observations, participation in teaching, extensive continual teaching, and other duties of the classroom teacher.

## CTE Practicum at JSU (Levels I, II and III)

JSU requires all pre-service teachers to complete a total of 201 practicum hours before admission to internship. JSU requirements far exceed the minimum number of hours required by the state. Approximately 30 of these hours are earned through micro-teaching projects and individual lessons. Family and consumer science education majors may earn additional hours by participating in our

experience in developing lesson plans when their cooperating teachers are required to submit lesson plans. During the practicum, CTE pre-service teachers write and teach five lesson plans which they then reflect upon, make changes to, and submit to the university supervisor. These lesson plans are finally incorporated with an Integrated Academics plan (an 18-week planner) and a final course exam into a Content Pedagogy Project. In addition, JSU CTE pre-service teachers are encouraged to complete their practicum hours with CTE programs that maintain an active Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO).

Research skills are exercised during CTE 460, but only to the extent to find

Immersing students in schools during their clinical experience is one of the primary ways that CEPS ensures that CTE teacher candidates learn the skills necessary to be

# EFFECTIVE TEACHERS.

child development lab. Remaining hours are completed in the course CTE 460 Practicum Plus.

While not required, we prefer that CTE 460 Practicum Plus students conduct their hours in a CTE program that is Business and Industry Certified (BIC). For Alabama's CTE programs to receive Carl Perkins funding, they must pass a strenuous business and industry certification process, which requires accountability on numerous issues. We try to place our pre-service teachers with cooperating teachers who have three years of teaching experience in their field of study and have earned either a master's or National Board Certification.

Our pre-service teachers gain better

appropriate articles to share with the class. Practicum students don't write a paper; they learn how to keep up with best practices from peer-reviewed publications. That's what a working teacher will have time to actually complete. Writing papers works toward a degree or a grade or tenure; reading articles, meanwhile, improves a working teacher's toolbox. This research project, along with the Content Pedagogy Project, lesson plans, unit plans, and a Classroom Management Plan are uploaded into a LiveText electronic portfolio, which university supervisors assess using rubrics.

CTE 461 is the methods course which is offered online for our undergraduates. Those who have already earned a



non-education degree may take CTE 461 to help fulfill coursework for their alternative certification. All students in CTE 461 develop a unit on careers for a semester course which they will be certified to teach. The students upload and share their Careers Units via BlackBoard, so students increase their repertoire of resources for teaching careers. CTE 461 students also create and share a project-

Intern teachers are eventually responsible for 20 days of teaching and lesson plans. During the internship, CTE interns also take ED 496, Reflective Practices, for which they complete a resume, write reflections, comment on two personal videotaped lessons, and conduct professional observations of four employed and certified educators. All of these assignments are uploaded into the LiveText electronic

that course, two lesson plans from that unit, and the unit assessment. The final exam/assessment for the semester course must also be included, both in English and Spanish.

During CTE 462, intern teachers also begin a CTSO binder or file. Many interns fill this with photos, fundraising, and “fun-raising” activities that they accumulate from their own participation during their high school days and/or from being involved with the cooperating schools’ club while they completed practicum and intern hours. They also create a BIC binder for which they download current state standard check sheets and create corresponding sections. Interns create an Integrated Academics plan, a syllabus for at least one course they are likely to teach, and a safety test for a related course. During CTE 462, they prepare a professional development file for which they use the Alabama State Department of Education’s teacher evaluation documents.

The textbook used in CTE 462 covers the history of CTE, as well as federal funding and legislation. Interns make two major presentations, one from the textbook and one on diversity. Two minor presentations on academic concepts and teaching/learning strategies are also given. Presentations account for about 26 percent of the course grade. Textbook discussion and quizzes account for about 15 percent. The remaining points for CTE 462 come from projects that intern teachers can use once a teaching job is found.

**Job Placement**

CTE 462 interns create an application with Alabama’s online application system (which every school district can use to post jobs) where they can receive and review applications. We use our extensive networking and the state’s listserve to link our graduates to job openings. The state department of education collects data on first-year teachers, and generates summative data to the universities so that

portfolio, which are assessed using rubrics by university supervisors.

CTE intern teachers also take CTE 462, during which they refine planning skills for units and lessons. By this time we know what the interns’ passions for content are, and their final assignment for CTE 462 is to complete a Core Course Project for content matter that they are likely to teach, but for which they may not have exhibited a passion or expertise. This gives interns experience in developing lessons and assessments for all of the state standards and courses. The Core Course Project includes an 18-week planner with all of the state content standards for a semester course, a unit plan from

based lesson plan. In addition, each student completes a Teaching Style Analysis to assess his or her use of more than 50 teaching and learning strategies. To satisfy a professional observation assignment in the course, students visit three different CTE programs, one of which must be a secondary school and the other one a middle or junior high school. For this professional observation assignment, CTE 461 students also observe a lab class and interview a CTE educator.

**CTE Internship**

During the CTE 495 Internship, intern teachers are mentored by a cooperating teacher the entire school day for 15 weeks.



PHOTO BY ISTOCK.COM

**Pre-service teachers need hands-on experience with activities and assignments that are closely related to job duties that “real” teachers have. Having pre-service teachers take tests and write papers might provide graduates with a degree, but does it prepare them for teaching in the “real world?”**

we may measure outcomes and refine programs if needed.

**Student input**

We have a short anonymous survey to gather feedback from our five most recent students who have graduated and are currently employed as teachers. With a 100 percent response rate, the most useful assignments identified from the practicum have been lesson plan development (80 percent), practicum hours in schools (60 percent), and professional observations and the career portfolio (both at 60 percent). The most useful assignments identified from the internship have been lesson plan development (100 percent) and internship hours in schools (60 percent), with each of the following at 40 percent: evaluations from cooperating teachers and university supervisors, the student organization binder, and the BIC Binder.

Currently employed teachers who were trained through JSU’s CTE program recommended assignments that focus on real-world application in the classroom. One stated, “I gained more knowledge with the assignments (career portfolio, CTSO binder, BIC Binder, lesson and

unit plan creation) that Ms. Townsel gave us during practicum than I learned during any of my other classes in college. It is the above mentioned items that I still refer back to during my first year as a teacher.” Another student recommended “the opportunity to have more experiences in the classroom and exposure to the professional world through workshops and networking with current teachers and professionals at the state level.”

**Conclusion**

Pre-service teachers need hands-on experience with activities and assignments that are closely related to job duties that “real” teachers have. Having pre-service teachers take tests and write papers might provide graduates with a degree, but does it prepare them for teaching in the “real world?” We believe JSU students

are better prepared by leading learning during presentations and educational sessions, as well as by preparing for professional duties. Just as our CTE students in the middle and secondary schools prefer assignments that have rigor and relevance—hands-on learning with a purpose—so do our pre-service teachers. ■

**Kelly W. Ryan**

is the director of Teacher Education Services at Jacksonville State University, Alabama. He can be contacted at [krayan@jsu.edu](mailto:krayan@jsu.edu).

**Kim Holdbrooks Townsel**

is the CTE instructor at Jacksonville State University. She can be contacted at [ktownsel@jsu.edu](mailto:ktownsel@jsu.edu).

**ACTE** Interested in exploring this topic further? Discuss it with your colleagues on the ACTE forums at [www.acteonline.org/forum.aspx](http://www.acteonline.org/forum.aspx).