

2019 – 2020 UNCP Grant for Excellence in Teaching & Learning Award
“Praxis Core Boost Camp”
Final Report
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Background

The Grant for Excellence in Teaching and Learning was submitted to assist UNC Pembroke teacher education candidates gain confidence in skills to be more successful in taking Praxis Core. Praxis Core has been cited as a barrier to successful completion of the teacher education program. These standardized tests are designed to measure candidate’s skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Passing scores for Praxis Core are required for acceptance into the UNC Pembroke Teacher Education program.

The goal of the grant is timely as North Carolina, like many states, is facing an ever increasing shortage of licensed public school teachers. According to *Teachers*, a 2018 demographic overview of North Carolina teachers, (retrieved from: https://www.ncforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Teachers_2018.pdf) this is due to a variety of reasons – including low salaries, fewer people choosing to enter the teaching profession, and many current teachers reaching eligibility for retirement. This document indicates that “schools in rural areas and high-poverty urban areas have had a particularly difficult time attracting and retaining teachers.” (p. 1). While the state is witnessing an increasing demand for licensed teachers, we are also witnessing a growth in school aged population. According to *Teachers*, it is estimated that 20,000 new students are expected per year.

While the need for teachers in the state is well documented, the report also outlines the decline in the number of students who pursue teacher education. For years 2010 – 2017, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke has experienced an enrollment decline of 28.75% in students pursuing education as their major. This is unfortunate as the UNC System’s Colleges of Education produce “over a third of all North Carolina teachers, and researchers have found that these teachers outperform those prepared through channels outside the UNC System.” (p. 3)

The primary goal of the UNCP Grant for Excellence in Teaching & Learning Award “Praxis Core Boost Camp” initiative was to assist a minimum of 20 participants to be successful on Praxis Core.

Grant Implementation

The grant was implemented through various stages. This included the implementation team (Dr. Zoe Locklear – Interim Dean of School of Education, Dr. Lisa Mitchell – Associate Dean of School of Education, Dr. Beth Holder – Dean of University College, Ashley Oxendine – Professional Advisor for First Year Education majors, and the three faculty presenters) meeting multiple times to discuss the goals and logistics of Praxis Boost Camp. These meetings also discussed available resources for Praxis Core – including free resources available online.

Assessment of Grant Impact

The success of the program was/will be measured by the following:

- a) The number of participants who participate in the workshops;
- b) The number of faculty who teach core courses in the School of Education taking Praxis Core;
- c) The number of participating students who take Praxis Core by February 1, 2020; and
- d) The number of participating students who pass Praxis Core.

The success of Praxis Core Boost Camp is still being measured in terms of the number of participating students who take Praxis Core by February 1, 2020 and the number of participating students who pass Praxis Core. However, the primary goal of the UNCP Grant for Excellence in Teaching & Learning Award "Praxis Core Boost Camp" initiative of assisting a minimum of 20 participants to be successful on Praxis Core was far surpassed.

Attendance (including duplicates) for the Praxis Core Boost Camp:

Reading: 30

Writing: 29

Math: 34

Test-taking: 14

For a total of 107

Participants by major:

Art Education 2

Birth-Kindergarten 10

Elementary Education 22

Health & Physical Education 4

Math Education 3

Music Education 2

Science Education 1

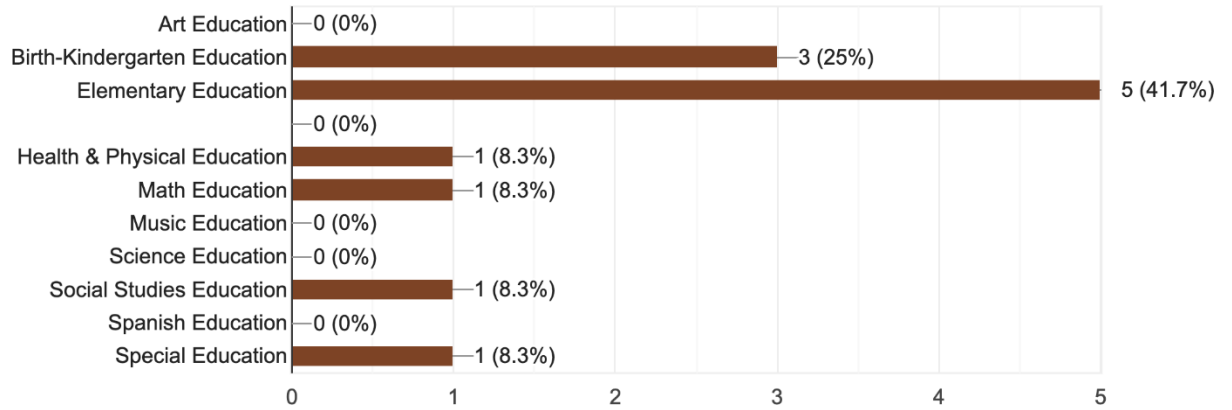
Social Studies Education 4

Special Education 7

Assessments:

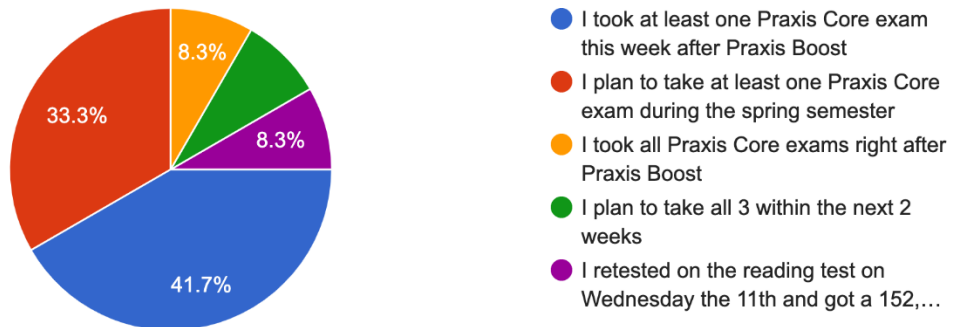
Major

12 responses



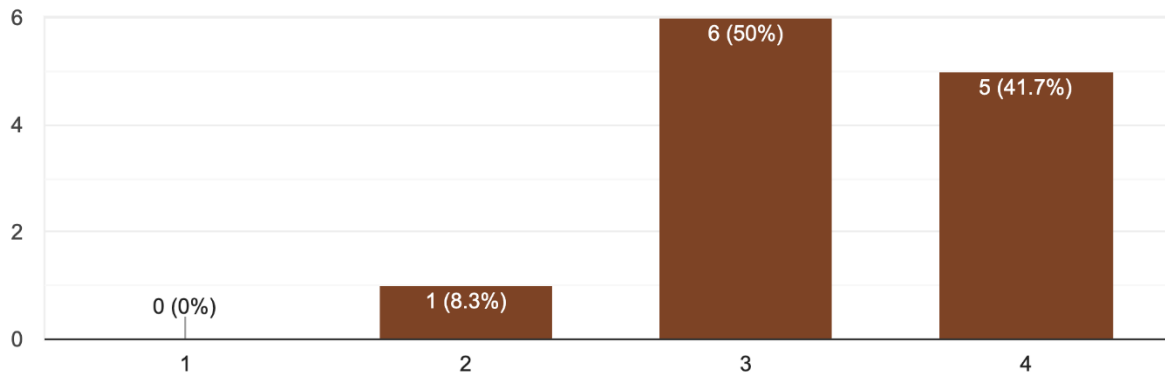
What are your plans for the Praxis Core exams?

12 responses



How do you feel about the Praxis Core exams after completing Praxis Boost?

12 responses



Feedback from faculty presenters was also very favorable. As one presenter reflected:

“A few thoughts regarding the test taking/mindfulness session. I was impressed with the students who came. These two days were intense but even at the end, students were engaged and willing to think about new strategies. Taking the Praxis Core provided me with a much better understanding of what students need to know before registering and then taking the exam. I enjoyed working with the students who were in my session and would provide this again in the spring. I think the survey below is a good resource for gauging stakeholder responses. I hope you will share the results when complete.

One student, who attended all of the Praxis Boost sessions, shared her Praxis success with Dr. Whittington the next day!”

A student participant shared the following: “Thank you so much for doing the Praxis Boost! I passed the math portion with a 198. I know I wouldn't have done that well without the course. I just want to send a quick email to say thanks!”

Reflecting on Our Growth as Teacher-Scholars

The Praxis Core Boost Camp was an outstanding opportunity to collaborate with multiple campus stakeholders to assist students – as well as benefit the students of UNC Pembroke, the faculty who teach education core courses, our North Carolina public schools, and – most of all – our students in our community.

Due to the success of the event, we hope to repeat this event during the spring semester and work to institutionalize the components that are successful – making this event one that repeats and is

routine. We feel this initiative can be replicated on our campus but also shared with other Teacher Education programs for further replication.

A very special thank you to members of the Center for Teaching and Learning Taskforce and Dr. Scott Hicks, Director of Teaching and Learning, for their generous support for this successful initiative.