3.2 Moving Toward Target Level

Describe areas of the standard at which the unit is currently performing at the target level for each element of the standard.

3a: Collaboration Between Unit and School Partners

In examining our practices in preparing accomplished educators, we, as a unit, have identified several areas in which we are currently performing at target level. One of those areas is seen in the strong alignment of our assessment instruments with the unit’s Conceptual Framework; “Preparing Professional Educators to Be Effective Communicators Who Integrate and Care”. Scaffolded throughout the program are opportunities for teacher candidates to build the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of an accomplished teacher. Our partner school faculties work closely with us to observe and evaluate the level to which our candidates are exhibiting the traits in our conceptual framework. Our evaluation instruments for Directed Student Teaching are designed specifically to measure our candidates’ success in meeting the criteria of communicating effectively in writing and verbally as well as integrating curricular areas and technology with a caring and compassionate demeanor. Specifically, in the Student Intern Evaluation which cooperating teachers complete three times during each eight week assignment, the unit has built in “additional areas” for each domain that correlate with our framework. In Domain A of this intern evaluation, the additional requirements include “demonstrating care in planning and organizing”. In Domain C, interns are evaluated on effective oral and written communication skills, effective voice level, and technology integration. This document can be viewed in Exhibit 3.3.f.

Another area in which we are at target level is collaborating with and sharing expertise with our partner schools. Due to the size of our community, the close proximity to partner schools and the strong, positive relationships that faculties have built with area teachers, the unit and partner schools have developed a shared vision for the level of accomplishment that we expect from our teacher candidates. We, as a unit, truly invest our time and energies into the professional growth of our partner school faculties. We share expertise through collaborative activities such as the Algebra I Common Core State Standards Initiative which is explained in detail in the “Collaboration with Partner Schools” narrative in the Exhibits for 3.3.a. This grant-funded professional development was undertaken to assist our partner schools with the transition to CCSS. The Northeast Arkansas Educational Cooperative administers a needs assessment survey to area teachers to determine the types of professional development teachers need. Through collaboration with cooperative staff, faculty members developed technology workshops that specifically address the needs survey results and these were presented to partner school faculties at the cooperative. In addition, faculty members have developed web-based resources to assist partner schools in integrating technology into their classrooms. Partner schools, in return, are willing to invest in our candidates. In an effort to support our candidates’ success, partner school Superintendents provide mock interview experiences during DST seminar in which all interns participate.
3b: Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Field Experiences and Clinical Practice

Through this process of self-examination, the unit has determined that the P-4 program Field Experiences are an area in which we are currently performing at the target level. As evidenced on the WBC Field Experience Requirement website, our P-4 program majors have a wide variety of opportunities to apply and reflect upon their teaching practice, content knowledge, and professional dispositions. Best practices are modeled and taught extensively and then students observe effective teachers in the classroom and reflect upon those experiences. Early in the program, students have face-to-face teaching time in an actual classroom setting and then evaluate and critique their own practice and that of their peers. These teaching experiences begin with tasks such as read-alouds and progress to standards-based substantive lessons in which teacher candidates videotape themselves and participate in peer evaluation and collaboration. Students in this program prepare two Field Experience portfolios in which they build a wealth of resources such as photos, classroom management ideas, exemplary lessons, and assessment resources. Exit interviews with candidates in this program indicate that these teacher candidates agree that field experience in this program is exemplary.

An additional area in which the unit is performing at target level involves the implementation of the Directed Student Teaching Digital Portfolio. During clinical practice, candidates in all programs design and create a digital portfolio which affords much opportunity for reflection. Through the portfolio, candidates are required to show evidence of family involvement and collaboration with school faculty or community organizations. For example, in the sample portfolio linked above, the teacher candidate collaborated with the local prosecuting attorney to set up a mock trial for her 4th grade students during a unit of study on the branches of government. This type of collaboration develops our candidates in the area of effective communication which is one aspect of our conceptual framework. Each candidate also provides two pieces of digital evidence for involving families in each DST assignment. An additional requirement on the digital portfolio is the teacher work sample which is focused on student outcomes. In this aspect of the portfolio, candidates must develop a pre and post assessment for one standards-based lesson, compile and analyze the data, and finally show how the data will be used to drive instruction. The evidence that interns provide within the online portfolio allows our interns to apply and reflect upon their content knowledge, teaching practice, professional dispositions, and student achievement to fully understand the teaching profession.

3c: Candidates’ Development and Demonstration of Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Dispositions to Help All Students Learn

One area in this element of Standard 3 in which we are at target is the multiple assessment strategies used to evaluate DST internship. The assessment pieces in place for DST are varied and together, are designed to help the teacher candidate move toward accomplished teaching and reflective practice. These include a Student Intern Evaluation completed by the cooperating teacher three times per DST assignment for candidates with two assignments and four times for candidates with one DST assignment. Candidates are also evaluated both formally and informally by the faculty supervisor with a post-observation interview that allows for the candidate to obtain valuable and substantive feedback. Candidates also complete an in-depth self-evaluation rating scale in each assignment which helps them move toward reflective-action
teaching practices. The final assessment strategy is the design and implementation of the digital portfolio which provides evidence of content knowledge, pedagogical skills, best practices, technology integration and finally family involvement and community and school collaboration.

**Summarize activities and their impact on candidate performance and program quality that have led to target level performance.**

One practice that positively impacts candidate performance is the level of technology integration experience that we have built into the program. Beginning in the Introduction to Teaching course, education majors design a digital portfolio on which they place their developing philosophy of teaching, their observation reflections, a link to the SPA standards for their program, and other required projects. Education majors work collaboratively to build a website of brain-based teaching strategy resources in the Field Experience II course. Then, in the Education Technology course, students independently design their first website of teaching resources that contains web-based resources for all content areas, professional development, technology integration, exemplary teacher websites, and a wealth of teacher tech tools. Candidates also develop interactive whiteboard lessons that are standards-based in the Ed Tech course. Candidates gain experience with and pedagogical skill with tech equipment such as video equipment, document cameras, SMART boards, and SMART Notebook software, digital storytelling tools, website development, etc. The faculty members model the use of these tools in true integration rather than just in basic, entry-level tech use. In addition to these courses, candidates build a website of Science teaching resources in the Science for Teachers courses in both the P-4 and Middle Level programs. Finally, candidates in the block course Study of the School: Tech Integration evaluate Web 2.0 tools for their effectiveness in their own degree areas and compile a website of resources in collaboration with their peers. This website contains reviews of the tools, examples of products created using each tool, and ideas for integrating that tool in content-based ways. The impact on candidate performance has been extremely evident. Cooperating teachers and administrators from partner schools have given much positive feedback about our candidates’ ability to integrate technology. Many of our candidates end up teaching the cooperating teacher how to effectively use equipment that has been purchased for classroom use without training for the teachers. Candidates also indicate regularly in exit interviews that this is an area in which they feel particularly well prepared.

Several specific activities have led to target level performance in collaborating with and sharing expertise with our partner schools. One activity is the grant writing to benefit partner schools. These are explained fully in a narrative in Exhibit 3.3.a “Collaboration with Partner Schools and the Community”. Grants that have been written by WBC math faculty have provided Interwrite tablets, iPads and other technologies to area teachers along with lesson plans and PD for those items. Teachers have even received a stipend for participation in most grant PD. Another activity that has led to target level is the free training for technology integration that has been provided by WBC faculty through the NEA Cooperative. Web resources designed for these trainings are used frequently by area teachers. Examples include SMART Notebook training, Multiple Intelligences training, Wiki Design training. Through planning and implementing PD that is specifically needed by our partner teachers, the unit faculty build rapport that positively impacts our program quality. The partner school teachers view the
supervisors as peers and colleagues and thus feel comfortable sharing information, ideas, and informal observations to improve the overall quality of our program.

Discuss plans and timelines for attaining and/or sustaining target level performance as articulated in this standard.

The WTEP council met in February, 2013 to determine how we would achieve target levels for Standard 3. Many ideas were discussed and these are the specific changes that were decided upon: addition of a service learning component for each program, new methods of gathering feedback from partner school administrators, addition of field experience in the block courses so that every program is involved, additional field experiences in the Secondary Methods courses, and partnership with a local homeschool association.

Service Learning Projects
As we considered the field experiences and clinical practice of our program, several realizations were reached. For one, we began to see that our secondary programs are lacking the in-depth field experiences that we are so pleased with in our P-4 program. In part, this is due to the emphasis on content knowledge for secondary teachers. Although we realize that content knowledge is important, we do not want to limit our secondary candidates nor put them at a disadvantage. Two specific changes are planned to help us move to target in this element of standard 3.

One change is the addition of a service learning project for every program. The implementation plan for this will begin with each program developing a project that is grounded in service for their particular degree area and that is done in a school setting with P-12 students. It was decided that each program should have their project designed and an assessment instrument developed by the 2013 fall semester. To further implement this improvement, the service learning project will be embedded into the ED 4113 A Study of the School course which is a block course taken the semester prior to internship. This will enable candidates from all programs to be fully immersed in the learning environment at their level as well as to reflect upon their own content knowledge and pedagogy. The timeline for the actual implementation of the service learning projects is for the spring semester of 2014. Another area that WTEP faculty agreed to explore is including more field experience hours in the Secondary Methods courses. We will look further at new methods of getting our secondary candidates into the schools to give them opportunities to see best practices in pedagogy and classroom management.

Field Experience and Data-Driven Instruction
With the focus on implementation and assessment of Common Core Standards in our state and nation, we realize that our candidates need many opportunities to use assessment data to guide instructional planning. Currently our candidates do this during DST but we realize this could be expanded. For this reason, the unit has decided to develop and implement by the fall semester of 2013 a data-driven instruction focused assignment which will be embedded into the curriculum for the ED 4133 Measurement & Evaluation block course. All teacher candidates across programs enroll in this course the semester prior to internship. As part of this project, candidates will develop and implement a pre-assessment, teaching component, and post assessment of K-12 learners. This will be content specific for the respective education program and will require a minimum of three classroom sessions in a school-based setting. The focus will be on analyzing
the data to determine the extent to which student achievement goals were met. The data will then be used to positively impact further instruction. The unit knows that our candidates need to fully understand the purpose for and use of both formative and summative assessment data and we believe that this addition to our program will improve overall candidate performance.

**Formal Administrative Feedback Instrument**
As a unit, we are collaborating with our partner schools and teachers in some very effective ways. Due to the excellent rapport our DST supervisors have built with partner school teachers, we have many opportunities for informal feedback from teachers. This feedback is always considered and has been the impetus for important growth in our program. We also realized that we have overlooked the important feedback about our program that administrators could offer. To address that, it was decided by the unit that we will implement a formal feedback instrument for administrators of partner schools by the fall 2014 semester. Administrators have a unique perspective on our program because they work closely with the DST supervisors, cooperating teachers, and interns. It was decided that we would develop a brief survey with built-in opportunities for comments. We hope to gather information about candidate preparedness, supervisor support, cooperating teacher participation and training, and other aspects that influence the overall effectiveness of our program.

**Homeschool Partnership**
Another area that we plan to explore is capitalizing on the proximity of many homeschooled students to our campus. We have several faculty members that live on campus whose children are involved in homeschooling. This affords us an opportunity for our candidates to work with P-12 students without traveling off campus. The planned change involves the possibility of collaborating with the homeschool association to bring those students onto our campus to enable our candidates to teach model lessons to them rather than to their adult peers. As a unit, we believe this could be very beneficial to both the P-12 students and our teacher candidates. This addition to our program is in the preliminary planning phase and thus does not have a planned timeline for implementation. Some ideas that have been discussed include Ed Tech model lessons that integrate technology, Science for Teachers classes for P-4 and Middle Level programs providing lab activities for those students, art classes providing a variety of hands-on art activities, and other content specific learning opportunities.

As a unit, we will continue to examine our program with a reflective-action approach and make additions that will have a positive impact on our program quality. This will enable us to meet our goal of developing candidates that are teacher leaders rather than just good teachers.