

EMPLOYER INTERVIEW EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (June 2024)

During May and June of 2024, I completed four Zoom interviews with employers of graduates Special Education, Master of Education program at Keene State College. All four respondents are currently working in leadership positions in schools in New Hampshire. All respondents were open and honest in responding to questions and all responded to all questions. The de-identified transcripts of the interviews begin on page 2.

All employers were enthusiastic about KSC graduates and found them to be highly skilled professionals, fully prepared for the work in the field. Of special note is how the employees described the overall disposition of our students as confident, warm, friendly, student success focused, and positive, contributing members of their teams.

Strengths of the program:

- Use of data: All employers shared that employees had a high level of skill in creating assessments and using state/standardized data to create plans for children and changes to teaching.
- Use of research: All employers shared that employees were current in the field and knew where to find and how to implement best practices in the field.
- Professionalism: All employers were exceptionally satisfied with employees as team members in their schools. They described strong relationships with teachers and administration, skillful communication in developing and implementing intervention strategies with individual children and in classrooms, and overall positive attitudes.
- Work with families: All employers shared the excellent work graduates were doing in forming relationships with families. Each graduate had a different approach, but each approach was effective for the families in the school.
- IEP Development: While not mentioned by all employers, the ones who did mention it seemed a bit surprised at the high skill-level and were deeply grateful they could hit the ground running.
- Application of special education in classroom setting: While not mentioned by every employer, perhaps because it was not a model for the individual school, the employers that did discuss classroom applications were impressed by the interventions and the manner in which they were assessed.

Areas for improvement:

- Literacy: two of the employers stated that it would be helpful if graduates had more experience with literacy across the grades.
- Provide more grounding in social/emotional and trauma informed instruction
- All other areas seem to be employee specific: understanding the flow of the academic year and preparing in advance (1 comment), classroom management (1 comment)

Area for consideration:

- Research: It does not appear that the employees were engaging in research, but all were capable of using research to inform their work. Perhaps the focus of this question should be modified towards the use of research?

Other areas to explore:

- Is it possible to assist the local schools with a cohort model? It seems to have been very effective in one case, particularly for new professionals.