

# Creating Better Teachers: A Case Study on Belmont University



Earning teacher certification through the Masters of Education program at Belmont University is a challenge by any standard, but the challenge should lie in the fervent pursuit of self-improvement, not the functionality of the program itself.

At Belmont, graduate students pursuing teacher certification are required to teach four days a week for their clinical practice. Then, they must attend methods classes at the university on Fridays to cover content such as teaching strategies, assessment, and how to create objectives that align with the state standards. In addition to the professors who teach these courses, there are university supervisors who observe the students in clinical practice every two weeks.

These multiple players provide a wide variety of input and support for their teacher candidates; however, there was a challenge in finding time for all players to communicate about the progress and development of the teacher candidates. They wanted a better means which would provide more frequent communication between the University Supervisors and the Methods Instructors so that the coursework could cater to the needs of the teacher candidates.

## Merging the Classroom and the Real World

With an abundance of communication and so many players involved, Belmont needed more than an Excel spreadsheet to get everyone on the same page. With the help of BloomBoard, Belmont's program is now much smoother for instructors, supervisors and teacher candidates.

“This is so easy... this is the one go-to place. I don't have to just Google it—search and search and search. I can go to this specific place and find everything I need right here.”

**Kate McGowan**  
Director of Clinical Practices, Department of Education, Belmont University



## Participants in the program benefitted from:



**1. Consolidated information:** Professional resources, personal goals, and observation notes are all stored on BloomBoard so everyone involved in student growth can access them. Records are stored so that a number of people can check progress over time, and data is categorized so it can be reviewed in a variety of ways.

Dr. Lauren Lunsford, a methods instructor at Belmont, is now able to go in, look at her students' lessons, and see exactly what they're teaching. She can see exactly what the supervisor observed about teacher candidates' efficacy in clinical practice, which makes it easier to determine aggregate strengths as well as areas that need improvement.



**2. Seamless transitions:** When everyone is looking at the same information, it's much easier to create a system where teacher candidates transition smoothly between the roles of classroom teacher and candidate. When professors better understand what's happening in clinical practice, they can adjust their methods classes accordingly, catering class assignments and projects to what their students do in the classroom as teacher candidates.

With BloomBoard, instructors could see that many teacher candidates had consistently low scores in questioning (i.e., coming up with questions for students to get them thinking on a deeper level). Once they analyzed the data and found this pattern, instructors knew to implement more lessons on questioning in their university coursework.



**3. Better performance ratings:** Some aspects of teaching can't be measured in data points. It's often hard for teacher candidates to understand exactly how supervisors think they're doing overall. Feedback can feel subjective and vague, and professional growth is hard to proactively demonstrate over time.

BloomBoard allows instructors to tag specific evidence of implementation through clinical practice. This helps teacher candidates see how skills explained in their courses feel when they're in action. They can review where pacing was off, where they provided problem-solving, or where they asked deeper-level questions. Teacher candidates can learn from feedback, even before the real scoring starts, so that summative scoring more accurately reflects improvement.



**4. Additional resources:** With the BloomBoard Resource Library, teacher candidates no longer have to waste time sifting through multiple websites. Instead, a quick search brings up relevant resources that are designed just for teachers.

In one seminar class, students create a professional development plan based on supervisor feedback. They create two learning goals and have to find at least two resources within BloomBoard that will help them reach that goal.

Instructors can also suggest resources to teacher candidates. One of the biggest hurdles for new teachers is often classroom management, so at the beginning of the year, university supervisors recommend classroom management videos and articles, which automatically appear in each candidate's account. The students in each candidate's placement teaching classroom benefit immediately.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

*Any good teacher knows that inspiring students to learn and grow as individuals takes more than explaining new concepts. There's a spark that exists in successful teachers that is remembered long after students leave their classrooms. Belmont University is striving to ignite that spark through its teacher preparation program. When teachers experience a positive and inspiring process of learning, they carry that excitement into their classrooms and inspire their own students. BloomBoard is making that goal a reality by enhancing the experience of teacher candidates and faculty alike.*