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Moving Through: Supporting Preservice Teachers' Transition through College to the Profession using Homerooms

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Preservice Teacher Panel:
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Alexis Durman, and Madison Adamson

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Preservice Teachers at Pitt State undergo a significant transition from student to professional. Faculty in the College of Education created a weekly Homeroom to support this shift, covering topics like goal setting, power dynamics, generational differences, self-care, identity charts, and time management. Preservice Teachers' experiences will be shared.

Background: Homeroom

Findings and recommendations from Wiley's (2024) white paper on college students' mental health:

- "*nearly a third* of students noting that class discussions positively impacted their mental health, the findings suggest that **building a sense of community and engagement** can be beneficial" (p. 14).

- "*nearly half* of students cite that **getting extra support from their instructors resulted in a positive impact** on their mental and emotional health" (p. 14).

- "*over 80%* of students turning to family and friends to help them cope with their mental health…**creating more opportunities for students to interact with each other and connect with peers** they can relate to can help elevate some of their emotional struggles" (p. 14).

Cohort Model

- Dinsmore & Wenger (2006)
  - Value of cohort model in collaboration, social support, completion.
- Bradley & Fogelsong (2021).
  - Pandemic – cohorts became important to support students in a time of national / global crisis.

- As a way of addressing "hidden curriculum" of the program and supporting student social, emotional, and professional development – proposed to include "Homeroom" time dedicated to needs of the cohorts.

Homeroom Faculty:
Dr. Marcus Daczewitz, Block 1
Dr. Mark Diacopoulos, Block 1
Dr. Bridgette Fincher, Block 2
Dr. David Wolff, Block 2
Dr. Donna Zerr, Block 3
Dr. Carissa Gober, Block 3
Dr. Ashley Shaw, Block 3

Topics

Professional Semester Block 1	Professional Semester Block 2	Professional Semester Block 3
Who am I as a Teacher Candidate?	**How do I transition from college student to a professional?**	**How to I connect my college learning to my professional practice?**
Block 1 Field Experiences	Block 2 Field Experiences	Block 3 Field Experiences: Internship
Goal Setting	Eisenhower Matrix	
Time Management	Raven's Power Structures	Organization of On Campus and Field Work
Using AI / Academic Integrity	Communicating across generations	Licensing: Praxis Assessments
Professional Communication	Classmates to Colleagues: Code Switching	SEL Support – Cheerleading & Venting
Resolving conflict		Preparing for Student Teaching
Self-Care		

Meet our PSU Preservice Teacher Panel

Alexis Monks,

Alexis Durman,

Madison Adamson, and

Kim Ballew

Describe 'Homeroom' in your own words.

Question 1

*Kim: "Homeroom is a place where we gather weekly to discuss how our placements are going, the good things that have happened, concerns we have, or just anything we want to talk about. Homeroom is also a place where the professors help us to grow as students, as future educators, and as people. We are able to reflect on our time in the classroom and we are given tips to help us be successful. We are also given upcoming important dates, such as when our teacher ed applications are due, or what we will need to do for those applications, like getting TB tests or background checks. It really helps us to stay up to date, and keep organized."

Alexis M: "*Homeroom is a time spent with our cohort and professors that takes place 30 minutes once a week*. During this time, we have reflected, asked questions, made goals, shared self-care techniques, come up with time management strategies, expressed struggles, and much more. *It has also allowed me to foster a closer relationship with my professors and peers because we can spend time talking about our aligned interests and goals*."

Alexis D: "Homeroom is a time in which our cohort meets and discusses our course work, things we need from each other, and it's when we learn how to transition from being a teacher candidate/student to a professional teacher. Our professors check in

with us about our internship and classes."

Madison: "Homeroom is an opportunity to grow professionally. Homeroom is a time when we can share our experiences with our peers, ask any questions, or share any concerns with our peers and professors. It's a time when we can build a community with one another. It's helpful because we can get all of our questions answered, about our block or about our future, future dates that we are unsure about."

How is Homeroom different from other education courses?

Question 2

Kim: "Homeroom is different from other education courses because it prepares us in different ways from regular courses. Instead of learning how to teach, or about the content and standards we will teach, we are taught how to begin transitioning from a student to an educator, how to work with different staff members and parents, how to emerge into the communities of the schools we will teach at, and how to handle certain situations, such as shootings, natural disasters, and death. We also aren't graded on anything in homeroom, it is more of an expectation for us and established on accountability. Because of this, there isn't any added stress, only added benefits."

Alexis M.: "It is a time dedicated specifically to our well-being and professional development. We do not work on classwork; we focus on navigating the courses and talking about teaching. Unlike our education courses, we do not do assignments for grades but rather discuss the other vast topics regarding work-life balance, education, internship, student teaching, and much more."

Alexis D: "Homeroom is very different from other education courses. I wouldn't really consider it a course either because we don't receive a credit hour for it. Homeroom is more for us as teacher candidates to grow professionally."

Madison: "Homeroom emphasizes the importance of getting to know ourselves as well as our colleagues. Homeroom is a time when it focuses more on personal and professional development than just academics."

How have you benefited from Homeroom?

Question 3

Kim: "As a nontraditional student, one of the major benefits of homeroom was helping me transition into being a student, and now transitioning out of being a student. I took online courses until what we call "Block One". I wasn't fully prepared for a full, in-person class load. Homeroom made the transition easier for me because I was better able to stay on top of all my assignments and what was expected of me. Now that we are seniors, it is helping me to recognize my age and previous work knowledge as a benefit, where I will fit into school cultures as a 30-year-old new teacher, and how to handle the changes as we move along."

*Alexis M.: "Homeroom has allowed me to connect with my cohort on a deeper level. During this time, we can talk about concerns and be vulnerable with each other. This has allowed us to become a close group and support each other through the complexities of this program and career path. *Another benefit from homeroom has been learning from our professor's expertise. We have gained many tips and tricks from them that will benefit us throughout our careers*."

Alexis D: "I have benefited immensely from Homeroom! As a result of Homeroom, I have been able to meet my needs as a student and as a soon-to-be professional. Some activities that we do at the beginning of the semester in Homeroom include

discovering our personality color. This allowed us to become familiar with one another, and it allowed us to connect this to our professional development in the work environment."

Madison: "I have built amazing and trusting relationships with my peers and professors through homeroom. It reinforces the saying "You're not in this alone:, with the action of were here for you."

How has time spent in Homeroom met your needs?

Question 4

Kim: "Time in homeroom has met my need for structure, more in-depth knowledge, and socialization. The main purpose of homeroom is not being social, but I believe it has helped grow our peer relationships and aided in us becoming close as a cohort, but also growing deeper, more meaningful relationships with our professors. We talk about upcoming assignments during homeroom which helps us stay organized and on track. To add, I have ADHD, so the structure of homeroom and the help we receive from professors has been greatly beneficial for my success."

Alexis M.: "Homeroom has helped me navigate my course work easier. We can ask our professors any questions about our courses and clarify anything we may need help with. We also have learned how to better manage our time, set goals, and self-care strategies. This has been helpful to me because I have learned more about the layers of my future profession and made sure I still have personal time to myself."

Alexis D.: "Time spent in Homeroom has met my needs academically and professionally. During this time, we discuss our online Internship course with our professor, Dr. Zerr, and we become aware of what we need to do for the course and other courses."

*Madison: "It has helped me calm my worries and anxiety about going into my placements, and important due dates for the College of Ed."

How have your thoughts/feelings toward the time spent in Homeroom changed over time?

Question 5

Kim: "When I first found out about homeroom, I was not excited, to be honest. It felt redundant and like a high school class to have. However, over time I have grown to see how it benefits us as a whole. It is only thirty minutes a week, and the benefits far outweigh the time spent."

Alexis M.: "At first, I was hesitant, but I have grown to appreciate it. When I first heard that we must spend 30 min once a week in class but not working on coursework, I was apprehensive and a little confused. After understanding more that this time is spent trying to develop us as professionals, I have more appreciation for it." "an acquired taste"

Alexis D.: "My initial thought about Homeroom was that I wasn't excited about it, and none of us knew what was going to happen. I viewed it as a "class" that was going to require more work and it was going to take up 30 minutes of my free time and break between classes. I felt that it seemed kid-ish being called Homeroom, as it's something that I think makes it feel like we're in high school again. After three semesters of having Homeroom, my thoughts and feelings have changed towards it. I find it very beneficial, and I feel that it ensures that I'm staying on track in my courses and internship."

Madison: "At first, I was not happy about homeroom, I was just the type of person to want to get in and off of campus. But over time after a couple of meetings, I realized what a great community I have. It helped me hear my peer's perspectives, and realize that we are all in this together. Homeroom has helped ease my anxiety and worries."

How has Homeroom prepared you for student teaching/Internship?

Question 6

*Kim: "Homeroom has prepared me for student teaching and internship by teaching us about what is expected of us as we transition from students to working educators. I think I speak for the class when I say that this semester is a very hard semester not only because of the course work being amped, but also because it is an awkward transition period for us. Homeroom helps guide us as we move forward, teaching us how to communicate with other generations of teachers, and how to act as we leave behind our role as students ourselves and jump into a more professional role of being teachers to other students."

Alexis M.: "Professors have shared their experiences and expertise in education. They have shared stories, tips, and tricks that have been invaluable to me as a future educator. This semester we are focusing on our internship. We share stories and talk about potential strategies for working with various types of learners and navigating behaviors."

Alexis D.: "Homeroom has played a large role in preparing me for my internship and student teaching. Homeroom has allowed me to see what the requirements are for me to move forward, including the applications for the internship and professional semesters."

Madison: "It has prepared me by answering all the questions I have about my placement. It has eased my mind about what is expected of me and my future opportunities. It has helped me understand what is expected of me during my internship and my student teaching."

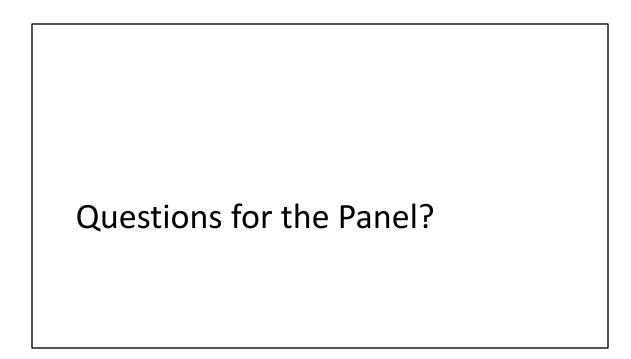# What can faculty do to improve the Homeroom experience moving forward?

Question 7

Kim: "One way that the faculty can improve our homeroom experience is to help us with the beginning of the job search. What should go on resumes and what isn't as important, how to tell if you will fit in with the school's culture and climate, what kinds of interview questions will be asked, and what questions we should ask those interviewing us. These are important parts of the hiring process and now that we are in our final semester before student teaching, they are crucial to our future success." How to apply for grants for your classroom, for your master's program, etc. Applying to be a sub, applying for a GA, etc.

Alexis M.: "A thought that I had to improve homeroom would be to change the name. My initial reaction to the name "Homeroom" was that I was going back to high school. I believe if the name was "Professional Development" it would change the tone to more career focused. Other than that, I think it is great and extremely beneficial!"

*Alexis D.: "To improve the Homeroom experience moving forward, faculty should include teaching teacher candidates about teaching benefits (insurance, etc.), retirement, and things to specifically include on our resume. *I think that since Homeroom is mandated, we should receive a credit hour for. This would make it*

concreted into our schedules as well. Additionally, faculty should also consider when Homeroom is. This semester, it is at the end of the day after our classes on Thursday, and it lasts 30 minutes. Those of us who are not an EEU (Elementary Education— Unified) major have an, approximately, two-hour break between classes on Tuesdays. It would have been nicer if the 50 minute EEU course during that two-hour period could have been moved so Homeroom could have taken place during that time, that way those of us who aren't an EEU major didn't have to sit around on campus for an extra couple of hours."

Madison: "Nothing.It is perfect to me I like that it is once a week and for 30 min I think perfect time."

Questions for the Panel?

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