College of Education

Fall 2025 Case Study Reports:
Impact on Student Learning

Executive Summary

This case study examines eight recent graduates from Auburn University at Montgomery's (AUM) College of Education to evaluate their impact on student learning and assess the effectiveness of their preparation. The graduates are now in teaching positions that represent diverse teaching contexts including elementary (grades K-3), middle school (grades 6-8), high school (grades 9-12), and physical education settings across Alabama. Through semi-structured interviews conducted between October and November 2025, this study provides evidence of pedagogical practices, assessment strategies, data-driven instruction, and professional growth among program completers.

Key Findings:

- All participants demonstrate sophisticated use of formative and summative assessments to track and improve student learning
- Graduates consistently employ data-driven instructional decision-making, using multiple assessment systems to identify learning gaps and differentiate instruction
- Evidence of significant student growth is documented across all grade levels and content areas
- AUM preparation, particularly in assessment literacy, lesson planning, and educational theory, directly influences classroom effectiveness
- Specific faculty members were repeatedly cited for exceptional preparation

- Graduates identify classroom management and continued professional development as areas for ongoing support.

Introduction

Methodology

The following two-pronged case study methodology is completed for each of the case study subjects. The two layers of the case study include the following: (a) an initial and individual interview with each participant; and (b) response to a post-interview follow-up survey link to select one of three methods for providing evidence of responses.

Individual online or phone interviews are scheduled and conducted by the Assistant Dean of Assessment and Accreditation at the convenience of the respondent. Interviews last approximately 25 minutes each and follow the same interview protocol, approved and revised by the members of the Assessment Committee in Fall 2025, covering topics of impact on student learning and AUM preparation and continued support.

As follow-up to the interviews, participants are asked to provide any of the following options as evidence: (a) student data samples, (b) teaching effectiveness evaluation at school site, or (c) AUM faculty-provided observation.

Once interviews are completed, transcripts are generated via artificial intelligence, usually MS Teams, and archived to do a content analysis of key questions in the report. The follow-up survey responses and evidence are also saved, archived, and included, when possible, in the Appendix of the report.

Use of AI (Anthropic): Unlike the Spring 2025 case study report, the initial drafting of text for this report was generated by Claude/Anthropic AI (claude.ai). Notable changes included a shift from seeking themes per question to a broader organization by overarching themes that emerged across questions. The initial AI-generated report was reformatted for consistency and revised to align with the objectives of CAEP Standard 4.

Citation: Anthropic. (2024). Claude (Draft retrieved on December 1, 2025 version) [Large language model]. https://claude.ai

Analysis: Transcripts were analyzed using thematic coding to identify patterns in assessment practices, instructional decision-making, evidence of student impact, and program preparation effectiveness.

Participants: Each semester 8 program completers participate in the case study interviews. Eight AUM graduates currently teaching in Alabama public and private schools in Fall 2025 were interviewed. Selection criteria ensured representation across areas per each three semesters of interviews:

- Degrees: 6 B.S. (63%) and 2 M.A.Ed. (37%)
- Program Concentrations: 2 Elementary (25%); 2 Early Childhood (25%); 3 Secondary: Social Sciences and English Language Arts (37.5%); 1 Physical Education (12.5%)
- Current Teaching Assignments: 6 public school systems and 2 private schools in Alabama
- Program Completion Semesters: Fall 2022 n =1; Spring 2023 n=1; Spring 2024 n=3; Fall 2024 n=1; Spring 2024 n=2

Findings and Themes

Theme 1: Sophisticated Assessment Practices

Use of Formative Assessment Implementation: All participants demonstrated comprehensive understanding and implementation of both formative and summative assessment strategies, directly attributable to their AUM preparation.

- **Early Childhood and Elementary Level:** Elementary teachers employed continuous, low-stakes assessment to guide daily instruction: The first-grade teacher described her approach as relying heavily on formative assessments because instruction and growth moves quickly in first grade, providing quick snapshots during whole group time, center time, and independent work through pencil-to-paper reviews and quizzes; The second-grade teacher described her student-centered formative strategy: She constantly asks students for feedback on a scale of one (completely lost) to five (able to teach the class), sometimes allowing students who indicate mastery to demonstrate at the board and teach their peers; The Kindergarten teacher integrated formative assessment into daily routines: After a lesson or week covering a

standard, she provides exit slips to analyze effectiveness, and if assessment shows the lesson wasn't effective, she reflects on what went wrong and plans to improve instruction for better student understanding.

- **Secondary Level:** Secondary teachers demonstrated equally sophisticated formative practices adapted to content-specific demands. The 8th grade English teacher employed the gradual release model: She uses "I do, we do, you do" for grammar instruction, modeling punctuation use, then working together with students, followed by a five-question independent practice document to check understanding before deciding whether to re-teach or move forward. The high school history teacher adapted his assessment approach based on student needs: After discovering students struggled with reading comprehension despite performing well on content questions, he implemented daily bell ringers focused on history-based reading comprehension to slowly exercise that skill. The middle school history teacher creatively addressed vocabulary retention: He uses "visual vocabulary" with three index cards per word, where students work in groups to create the definition, draw a representative picture, and list three facts or characteristics without using the vocabulary word itself, turning the cards into clues that groups pass around to guess words.

Summative Assessment Design: Teachers demonstrated thoughtful summative assessment design aligned with learning objectives. Examples are as follows:

- The secondary English Language Arts teacher explained her comprehensive approach: Her grammar tests include multiple formats: multiple-choice questions, right-or-wrong items, and items where students must write answers themselves to demonstrate various levels of understanding.
- The secondary social science teacher, though constrained by administrative requirements, articulated his ideal approach: He uses multiple-choice tests covering broad content with short answer questions as directed by administration, but personally prefers fewer multiple-choice questions and more short answer responses, including "mini essays" or quick writes where students respond to prompts in about three paragraphs.
- The third-grade teacher navigated complex literacy accountability requirements: Her school uses Open Court with weekly story assessments matching third-grade reading standards and grammar usage, followed by unit assessments every few stories featuring cold reads where students independently read a passage, answer questions, and complete grammar assessments on all standards covered.

Theme 2: Data-Driven Instructional Decision Making

Establishing Baseline Data: A defining characteristic of these AUM graduates is their systematic use of data to inform instructional adjustments, demonstrating the program's emphasis on evidence-based practice. Teachers employed multiple strategies to establish starting points for measuring growth. Examples include the following:

- The kindergarten teacher described her screening process as follows: Her school uses Edmentum and Forefront for math assessments at the beginning of the year, which are online and given within the first two weeks while students are still fresh with routines, providing baseline data to set goals and create reading groups.
- One of the elementary teachers explained her multi-faceted approach demonstrated thorough diagnostic practice: In the first week, she administered practice tests to see how students performed independently, examined handwriting samples throughout the week, had students read to her, talked to parents about their perceptions of student abilities, and asked previous teachers for feedback.
- A secondary history teacher candidly addressed challenges in Title I settings: Teaching in a Title I school where students are very far behind, he initially tried giving diagnostic assessments but found the bigger issue wasn't specific content gaps like amendment knowledge, but fundamental skills in logic, reading comprehension, critical thinking, and proper note-taking practices.

Pattern Recognition and Analysis: Participants demonstrated sophisticated data analysis skills as follows:

- An elementary teacher explained her color-coding system: She structures math tests so each skill is grouped in one section, then grades using a different colored pen for each section, allowing her to see across all assessments which students missed which content and identify who needs more work where, helping her divide students into targeted small groups.
- The secondary English teacher described comprehensive data monitoring: She watches IXL "like a hawk," noting when students complete assignments much faster than the estimated time, which indicates they're clicking through rather than engaging, allowing her to require them to redo the work properly and identify who needs motivation versus who is genuinely struggling.

- Another elementary teacher utilized longitudinal analysis: Considering data from *95% Core Phonics* for three years, she observed that her first-year students really struggled with encoding and decoding, second-year students who had the program in second grade were more familiar, and this year's students who had it in first, second, and third grade easily split syllables and know patterns, making the progression clear.

Data-Informed Instructional Adjustments: Teachers consistently modified instruction based on data analysis with examples as follows:

- An elementary teacher provided a compelling example of homework restructuring: Originally requiring reading logs and spelling practice in spiral notebooks checked weekly, she changed to one-sheet-per-week formats for both reading logs and spelling, which led one ESL student to improve from making 60s on reading tests to 85, then 88, and finally scoring her first 100 on a spelling test after starting with a 33 on her first practice test.
- A secondary history teacher made a bell ringer adaptation and demonstrated responsive teaching: After a common assessment revealed students performed well on content questions but poorly on reading comprehension sections, he implemented daily history-based reading comprehension bell ringers to prime for upcoming lessons, review previous content, or touch on material they didn't have time to cover deeply.
- An elementary teacher illustrated standards-based adjustment: After analyzing lesson effectiveness through exit slips, if results show the lesson wasn't effective, she reflects on what she did wrong and considers what she can do better next time to help students grasp the lesson.

Collaborative Data Analysis

Several participants described structured collaborative data practices. For instance, one of the secondary history teachers praised his school's approach: They conduct learning rounds twice monthly with curriculum specialists from the board, where the principal compiles test scores into PowerPoint presentations breaking down student levels, allowing teachers to enter classrooms already knowing where students are based on meetings with curriculum specialists, fellow teachers, and the principal. The secondary English teacher described data-driven grouping: At the end of lessons, she asks students to self-assess as expert, novice, or beginner, then assigns targeted work through Google Classroom, Study Sync, and IXL to

beginners, organizes small groups during grammar instruction days, and hosts tutoring tables during Eagle Time with sticky notes indicating which standards are addressed at each table.

Theme 3: Evidence of Student Learning Impact

Participants provided compelling evidence of positive impact on student learning, ranging from anecdotal observations to quantifiable data.

Dramatic Individual Growth Stories from Single Examples

- One of the elementary teachers shared a transformative literacy example: After modifying homework structure to single-sheet weekly formats for reading and spelling, an ESL student who initially made 60-something on reading tests improved to 85, then 88, and recently made her first 100 on a spelling test, having started with a 33 on her first practice spelling test.
- Another elementary teacher described supporting a struggling student: One student who tested at first-grade fifth-month reading level and kindergarten math level was told directly that they would work hard together but the teacher wouldn't let her quit, and though the student cried through her first difficult reading test, she refused to give up and ultimately made a B.
- A secondary history teacher celebrated vocabulary success: When doing vocabulary quizzes after using the visual vocabulary strategy, students looked back on different activities they did with words, making it easier for vocabulary terms to stick.

Measurable Academic Growth

- One of the elementary teachers described comprehensive growth monitoring. She looked at standards-based report cards that showed students receiving scores of 1-4 (below to exceeding expectations) throughout the school year. She would then demonstrate how demonstrate to parents and administrators how she covered critical standards with appropriate rigor, and combining this with I-Ready and STAR data showing beginning-to-end-of-year progress, provided strong visual evidence of student learning.

- Another elementary teacher provided concrete pre-post data: Over three years of 95% Core Phonics implementation, she observed clear progression from first-year students who really struggled with encoding, decoding, and syllable splitting, to second-year students more familiar with the program, to current students who easily know syllable types, patterns, and how to split syllables.
- The secondary English teacher explained her data chat approach: At the beginning of each nine-week period, she reviews students' previous report cards, discussing whether grades like 89 could be improved and identifying struggling standards, then revisits the same document at the end of nine weeks to show improvement, such as 83 becoming 89 or 74 becoming 82.

Assessment of Learning Beyond Content-Area Academics

- The physical education teacher articulated performance-based evidence that he applied to his coaching role: The best evidence his small football team is learning is their ability to move around and play different positions because he taught them entire concepts and schemes rather than single routes, in order to demonstrate that players can understand the plays when stepping into roles due to injuries or absences.
- The elementary teacher described metacognitive development: During calendar time, when figuring out factors for numbers like 30 or 40, second graders used division concepts without realizing it, and when she explained they had just performed long division, she had to fight back tears because they had no idea how advanced their thinking was.
- A secondary social science teacher valued critical thinking: Beyond formal assessments, he gauges learning through student conversations and questions, seeing them make connections and ask why events happened rather than just what happened, with his open-ended questions sometimes verging on philosophical or ethical topics that students can relate to their own lives.

Theme 4: Effective AUM Program Components

Participants consistently identified specific courses, faculty members, and program elements that directly contributed to classroom effectiveness.

- **Highly Valued Faculty:** Six faculty members in the Department of Curriculum Instruction and Technology were noted by name, repeatedly, for their effective practices during educational preparation. Specific praise centered around the following themes: modeling of instructional practices, meticulous preparation for classes, support during edTPA assessment process, maintaining high expectations, strong literacy development among students, organizational skills, practical transfer of skills and overview of curricula used in the schools, internship support inclusive of emphasis of work-life balance advice, and practical application of knowledge and skills.
- **Valued Program Components:** The following components of an AUM education were noted by various case study participants: Lesson Planning Skills; Educational Theory Application (For instance, the secondary English teacher explained theory's relevance. She discussed Maslow's hierarchy of needs with another teacher, recognizing that even in her relatively well-off community, some students don't have their needs met, which affects their performance); Internship Experience; Structure of the Alternative Master's (M.A.Ed.) program (For example, the program flexibility and pace, as well as the patience of faculty in meeting needs was considered "exceptional.")

Conclusions

This case study provides substantial evidence that recent AUM College of Education graduates effectively impact student learning across diverse contexts, grade levels, and content areas. Key conclusions include:

1. **Demonstrated Student Learning Impact:** All participants provided credible evidence of positive student learning outcomes, ranging from standardized assessment gains to qualitative development of critical thinking, confidence, and engagement. The consistency of this evidence across contexts suggests systematic rather than isolated effectiveness.
2. **Assessment Competence:** Graduates demonstrate sophisticated assessment literacy, employing multiple assessment types strategically, analyzing data systematically, and adjusting instruction responsively. This competence directly correlates with specific program preparation, particularly coursework emphasizing assessment design and data-driven decision making.

3. **Theory-to-Practice Transfer:** Participants spontaneously referenced applying educational theory to understand and address student learning needs, suggesting deep learning rather than surface memorization. This transfer is particularly evident in discussions of student motivation, cognitive development, and differentiation.
4. **Faculty Impact:** Specific faculty members significantly influenced graduate preparation through modeling effective pedagogy, maintaining high expectations, providing individualized support, and connecting theory to practice.
5. **Program Flexibility:** The alternative master's pathway effectively serves career-changers and working professionals, though it may require additional classroom management support given compressed timelines.
6. **Preparation Gaps:** Classroom management preparation, particularly for high-needs contexts; literacy policy and science integration; and field experience quality control represent areas requiring enhancement.

Final Reflections

The eight educators interviewed for this case study represent AUM's College of Education at its best: thoughtful, reflective, student-centered professionals who consistently ask "How do I know students are learning?" and adjust their practice accordingly. Their voices throughout this report—describing specific strategies, naming influential faculty, sharing student success stories, offering constructive suggestions—demonstrate both competence and humility.

Several themes resonate across interviews:

- **Love of Teaching:** Despite long hours, challenging students, resource limitations, and administrative constraints, every participant conveyed genuine passion for teaching and commitment to student learning. This disposition, while perhaps not solely attributable to AUM preparation, suggests the program successfully attracts and sustains individuals with strong teaching orientations.
- **Problem-Solving Mindset:** When faced with challenges—students unable to read fluently, insufficient manipulatives, boring curriculum, inadequate homework completion—participants innovated rather than blamed. They created visual

vocabulary strategies, assembled math toolboxes, redesigned homework formats, and implemented data chat systems. This resourcefulness, combined with data-driven thinking, positions them for long-term effectiveness.

- **Commitment to Equity:** Multiple participants described working with underserved students—English language learners, students below grade level, Title I populations, students lacking basic needs—with evident compassion and high expectations. Their refusal to lower standards while differentiating support demonstrates understanding of equity as access plus rigor.
- **Professional Growth Orientation:** Nearly every participant expressed interest in continued learning—LETRS training, graduate degrees, mentoring relationships, professional development. This growth mindset, essential for career-long effectiveness, may reflect program culture emphasizing continuous improvement.

As AUM's College of Education considers this evidence and recommendations, the fundamental question should not be "Are we adequate?" but rather "How can we build on demonstrated strengths while addressing identified gaps to prepare even more effective educators?" The graduates interviewed for this study demonstrate that AUM already prepares teachers who positively impact student learning. The opportunity lies in making that success universal, sustainable, and increasingly powerful.

Appendix: Select Samples of Evidence

Appendix A:
External Surveys

Table 1: Fall 2025 Alumni Survey Frequency Percentages of Responses Value of AUM Impact Items among Initial Program Completers (1, Strongly Disagree to 5, Strongly Agree)

	Disagreement		Neutral	Agreement	
Item	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Bachelor of Science Alumni					
Use data to make instructional, training, or professional decisions			60%	20%	20%
The AUM College of Education was effective in preparing me for a future in my chosen field.		20%		60%	20%
Because of my AUM education, I know how to make an impact on the lives of my students or clients.				25%	75%
Alternative Master's (M.A.Ed.) Alumni					
Use data to make instructional, training, or professional decisions	33%			33%	33%
The AUM College of Education was effective in preparing me for a future in my chosen field.		33%			66%
Because of my AUM education, I know how to make an impact on the lives of my students or clients.			33%		66%

Analysis Statement: With the exception of the neutral response among B.S. program completers, all three items provided from the Alumni Survey (disseminated in Fall 2025 to program completers extending from Fall 2022 to Spring 2025) related to the value and impact of an AUM education earned favorable ratings from the majority (60% or higher) respondents.

Appendix B: Secondary ELA Data Samples and Growth Areas

2025-2026 Student Data Chat Form

Student Name		Grade	8	HR/1st Pd	

IXL Diagnostic					ACAP 2024			
	August	Growth Goal	April/May	Goal Met		Scale Score	Proficiency Level	Goal Scale Score
ELA	800	900			ELA			
Math					Math			
					Science			

Grades								
Course	Q1 Grade	S1 Goal	S1 Grade	S1 Goal Met	Q3 Goal	Q3 Grade	Q3 Goal Met	S2 Goal
ELA	88	95						
Math	94							
Science	89							
History	91	90						

What can I do to grow?			
Read 30 minutes twice a week outside of school	Practice multiplication facts twice a week outside of school	Organize my bookbag	Turn in assignments by the due date
Utilize the time during Eagle Period to do work and study	Use IXL to practice twice a week outside of school	Participate more in class	Miss fewer days of school

Behavior
ELA- Student discusses possible distractions, student is going to try to ignore distractor.. If he is not successful we will discuss moving seats History- Exemplary student ELA - Awesome student, spoke about distractions and we will be working on focusing.

2025-2026 Student Data Chat Form

Student Name		Grade	8	HR/1st Pd	

IXL Diagnostic					ACAP 2024			
	August	Growth Goal	April/May	Goal Met		Scale Score	Proficiency Level	Goal Scale Score
ELA	520	850			ELA	441 (420-490)	2	40+
Math					Math	492 (470-540)	2	60+
					Science			40+

Grades								
Course	Q1 Grade	S1 Goal	S1 Grade	S1 Goal Met	Q3 Goal	Q3 Grade	Q3 Goal Met	S2 Goal
ELA	76	80						
Math	85	90						
Science	88	90						
History	94	97						

What can I do to grow?			
Read 30 minutes twice a week outside of school	Practice multiplication facts twice a week outside of school	Better sleep routine	Turn in assignments by the due date
Utilize the time during Eagle Period to do work and study	Use IXL to practice twice a week outside of school	Participate more in class	Miss fewer days of school

Behavior
Great student - History ELA - student struggles with staying awake - great student, is in 1st period so gets tired. Says does not try on her IXL and plans on working on it.