Fall 2026 Employer Survey

Methodology: In Fall 2026, the Employer Survey was sent to 225 principals and superintendents in school districts in the surrounding areas, primarily the Montgomery River Region school systems; principals were asked to forward the survey email to assistant principals who actively supervise employees. The survey was first disseminated in Spring 2025 for the current academic year; however, due to conflicting surveys sent from the Alabama State Department of Education, AUM assessment staff and committee opted to shift to a fall dissemination to avoid survey fatigue in the spring. Thus, the survey was distributed in Fall 2025 and again in Fall 2026.

In Fall 2026, nineteen employers (5 superintendents and 14 principals) responded for a response rate of 8.4%.

Respondents were asked to select, with multiple choices possible, the most recent AUM degrees completed by their employees (i.e., Bachelor's, Alternative Master's, Advanced Traditional Master's, Educational Specialist). Due to small respondent numbers, the data were collapsed into initial, advanced, and both initial and advanced certification areas. Respondents were also asked to classify their school configuration (Elementary vs. Secondary vs. K-12 school), which allows for most of the data to be broadly analyzed at the elementary vs. secondary program level per degree type.

The survey includes items related to employers' evaluations knowledge, skills, and dispositions of AUM-prepared professionals (see Table 1), as well as overall satisfaction of employers with AUM-prepared professionals (See Table 2). The survey concludes with optional open-ended responses.

Overview of Results:

Employers rate AUM-prepared educators favorably overall. They rate overall satisfaction with the program higher than the specific teaching skills. Because only 19 employers responded, with most subgroups having 1–4 people, the subgroup differences are qualitative at best.

Educator skills (Table 1, scale 1–5)

- All 14 skills averaged between 3.79 and 4.21, which falls between "well" and "very well."
- **Strongest:** collaborating with students, families and colleagues (4.21), creating positive and engaging environments (4.16), and using technology (4.10).
- **Weakest:** using research to inform instruction (3.79), breaking down achievement data to target interventions (3.84), and self-reflection (3.89). Most of the data and assessment items were also just under 4.0.
- **By group:** educators with only an initial certification got the lowest ratings, often 3.33–3.67, especially in secondary and K-12 and on critical thinking and planning. Schools that employ both initial and advanced graduates (K-12) gave the highest ratings, about 4.67 on most items.

Program satisfaction (Table 2, scale 1–5)

- Agreement was high on every statement, from 4.50 to 4.67.
- The highest item was graduates' impact on student learning growth (4.67). The lowest was graduates welcoming and applying feedback (4.50), which is still high.
- Overall, employers agreed that the College of Education prepared their educators effectively (4.56).

***Table 1:* Educator Effectiveness Skills**

Educator Effectiveness Skills: Using a scale of 1 (Not Well at All) to 5 (Extremely Well), how well do your AUM-educated teachers and administrators at your school site/within your system do the following?	**Initial Cert**			**Advanced**		**Both Initial and Advanced Cert at School Site**			**COE Total**
	Elem (n=3)	Sec (n=3)	K-12 (n=3)	Elem (n=4)	Sec (n=1)	Elem (n=1)	Sec (n=1)	K-12 (n=3)	**N=19**
Support learner growth and development	3.67	3.67	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.67	**4.05**
Address individual differences and create inclusive environments	3.67	3.67	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.67	**4.00**
Create positive environments that encourage active engagement and motivation	4.00	3.67	3.67	4.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.67	**4.16**

Understand the central concepts of the discipline or field of study in which they were prepared to teach	4.00	3.67	3.33	4.50	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.33	**4.05**
Engage learners/clients in critical thinking and problem solving	3.33	3.33	3.67	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.67	**3.95**
Use multiple assessment methods to monitor learner progress	4.00	3.33	3.67	4.25	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.67	**4.00**
Plan goals strategically to support every learner in achieving outcomes	3.67	3.33	3.33	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.67	**3.95**
Use varied methods of assessment to support learners in meaningful activities for growth	3.67	3.33	3.33	4.50	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.67	**3.95**
Engage in continual self-evaluation and reflection of educational practice	3.33	3.67	3.67	4.33	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.67	**3.89**
Collaborate with their students, parents, partners, colleagues, and members of the educational and/or school community	4.33	3.67	3.67	4.50	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.67	**4.21**
Use various tools of technology that are appropriate for their field of study and career (IP and Advanced)	4.00	4.33	3.67	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.33	**4.10**
Use data to inform instructional, training, or professional decisions (IP and Advanced)	3.67	4.00	3.67	4.25	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.33	**3.95**
Understand and use research to inform instructional practices	3.67	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	**3.79**
Break down student achievement data in appropriate groupings to better understand patterns in performance that lead to targeted interventions in instruction	3.33	3.67	3.67	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	4.33	**3.84**

***Table 2:* AUM Preparation Program Satisfaction**

AUM Educator Preparation Program Satisfaction: Please rate your agreement with the following statements using a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)	**Initial Cert**			**Advanced**		**Both Initial and Advanced Cert at School Site**			**COE Total**
	Elem (n=2)	Sec (n=3)	K-12 (n=3)	Elem (n=4)	Sec (n=1)	Elem (n=1)	Sec (n=1)	K-12 (n=3)	**N=18**
AUM-educated teachers and administrators know expectations of Alabama State Department of Education initiatives, student testing, and curricular requirements.	4.50	5.00	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	**4.61**
AUM-educated teachers and administrators apply professional dispositions, laws, policies, and standards in their professional learning environments.	4.50	5.00	4.00	4.25	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	**4.61**
AUM-educated teachers and administrators make an impact on the learning growth of the students at the school site.	4.50	5.00	4.33	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	**4.67**
AUM-educated teachers and administrators are well-prepared each day, which leads to overall effectiveness in and out of the classroom.	4.00	5.00	4.33	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	**4.61**
AUM-educated teachers and administrators show awareness of individual differences, including cultural and linguistic diversity, and apply the knowledge into learning environments.	4.50	4.33	4.33	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	**4.56**
AUM-educated teachers and administrators welcome constructive feedback on performance from supervisors and apply the feedback to improve their effectiveness in learning environments.	4.00	4.67	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	**4.50**

The AUM College of Education was effective in preparing teachers and administrators who now work at my school site and/or system.	4.00	4.67	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	**4.56**

Note: one elementary initial-certification employer skipped that section

Optional Open-Ended Responses

What do you consider the greatest strengths of your educators who have received an AUM education?

- Content knowledge
- The educators are willing to continue to learn and ensure that they implement strategies that assist in all students being successful in the classroom. I have also noticed that they are strong in classroom management.
- I believe the greatest strengths of educators who have received an AUM education are their strong instructional foundations, professionalism, adaptability, and commitment to student success. These educators demonstrate an understanding of effective instructional practices, classroom management, and the importance of building positive relationships with students and families. They are also willing to collaborate with colleagues, reflect on their practices, and make adjustments to meet the diverse needs of learners. From an administrator's perspective, I especially value their willingness to grow professionally, accept feedback, and contribute positively to the overall school culture. These qualities help create supportive learning environments where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.
- Educators who have received an education from AUM demonstrate strong instructional knowledge, effective classroom management, and a commitment to student success. They are well-prepared to use data-driven practices to guide instruction and meet the diverse learning needs of students. Their professionalism, adaptability, and willingness to collaborate contribute to a positive school culture and continuous improvement.
- They understand instruction and implement well in the classroom.
- Competencies are strong in most all areas from AUM graduates.
- formal preparation
- Great communication regarding student progress and course updates.
- Well versed
- I am very appreciative of the graduates that serve my students. Their greatest strength is knowing the content and have a good foundation for classroom management.

- My teachers have a great knowledge of the field they teach.

What recommendations would you make to AUM Administrators to help them improve their certification and educator preparation programs?

- Many new teachers need some time alloted for an interview skills seminar and mock interviews before graduation.
- Continue to incorporate the importance of a differentiated classroom at both elementary and secondary levels. Also, continuing to make sure they know the significance of all roles when it comes to special education in the general education classrooms.
- I would recommend that AUM continue strengthening the connection between coursework and real-world classroom experiences. Providing future educators with additional opportunities for hands-on learning, classroom observations, and practical experiences in diverse school settings would help ensure they are prepared for the daily challenges of teaching. I would also encourage an increased emphasis on classroom management, differentiated instruction, special education practices, and the effective use of student data to drive instructional decisions. Additionally, continued collaboration with local school districts and administrators would allow AUM to stay informed about the evolving needs of schools and better prepare future educators for success. Finally, I believe emphasizing professional communication, collaboration, and adaptability would help develop well-rounded educators who are ready to make an immediate and positive impact on student achievement and school culture.
- I recommend that AUM continue strengthening the connection between coursework and real-world classroom experiences through increased hands-on training and field-based learning opportunities. The university should provide more preparation in classroom management, differentiated instruction, data-driven decision-making, and supporting students with diverse learning needs. Additionally, expanding partnerships with local school districts would allow candidates to gain practical experience and receive ongoing feedback from experienced educators.
- Classroom management would be a grow.
- Ensure applicable laws and requirements of ALSDE are continuously communicated during the EPP process.
- From an administrator's standpoint, teachers need to understand proper classroom management and how it pertains to the learning environment.

What additional comments would you like to provide that will help us understand the value of an AUM education?

- I believe the value of an AUM education extends beyond simply preparing individuals to earn their teaching certification. A strong educator preparation program helps develop professionals who are confident, knowledgeable, adaptable, and committed to making a difference in the lives of students. From an administrator's perspective, I recognize the importance of having educators who enter the profession with a solid instructional foundation, a willingness to collaborate, and a growth mindset. The true value of an AUM education can be seen in how well its graduates apply their knowledge in the classroom, build meaningful relationships with students and families, and contribute to a positive school culture. I appreciate AUM's commitment to preparing future educators and encourage continued partnerships with local schools to ensure graduates are equipped to meet the ever-changing needs of today's learners.
- An AUM education provides a strong foundation for professional growth by equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to make a positive impact on students. The program emphasizes leadership, critical thinking, collaboration, and the importance of meeting the diverse needs of learners. My experience with AUM has reinforced the value of continuous learning and the responsibility educators have to support student achievement and school improvement. Overall, an AUM education prepares educators to become reflective practitioners and effective leaders who make a meaningful difference in their schools and communities.
- I appreciate the partnership with AUM!
- District need to be provided with a list of their AUM graduate employees
- They are very professional
- I wish the candidates had more opportunities in diverse schools and/or Title I schools.

Overview of Comments:

- The following strengths of an AUM program completer were noted: content knowledge (most often cited), classroom management, professionalism, willingness to collaborate and grow, and openness to feedback.
- Areas to Consider:
    - Classroom management was the most frequent request; other parts of the survey and respondents listed it as a strength.

- Increase real-world preparation: more hands-on, field-based experience tied to coursework, including placements in diverse and Title I schools.
- Emphasize specific Instructional skills: more emphasis on differentiation, special education roles in general education classrooms, and using data to guide instruction. That matches the lower data ratings in Table 1.
- Additional single requests: provide graduates with interview prep and mock interviews before graduation; maintain ongoing communication about ALSDE requirements; and give districts a list of their employees who are AUM graduates.