

EDTC 6106

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DEL EXIT SURVEYS



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Executive Summary

SPU's Digital Education Leadership (DEL) program was created in 2016/2017. The DEL graduate surveys were designed to give students a voice in the annual program assessment. The End of Program survey is sent to students before graduation and asks them to evaluate various aspects of the program. Then 6 months later graduates are sent the Completer's survey which assesses if the DEL program has equipped them to carry out new roles and responsibilities that pertain to digital education. The goal of this program evaluation was to ask in what ways, if any, do the surveys need to be amended?

A multi-informant approach was used, soliciting feedback from the program chair, the assessment director, past DEL graduates, and drawing from my personal perspective as a current student. A Google Form survey was emailed to past graduates and respondents were given one week to complete the survey. In addition to the electronic survey, participants were invited to join a follow-up Zoom interview to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the DEL program.

From the results, it was clear that participants are happy with the current surveys. One way that the End of Program survey could be personalized for the DEL program is by adding a section on program structure that asks students to evaluate various aspects of the program, such as inquiry-based learning, community engagement projects, opportunities to collaborate, alignment with ISTE standards, etc. Past graduates responded positively to this addition and emphasized the importance of this section in their open-ended responses. Other recommended changes to the surveys included updating the ISTE coaching standards, changing the wording of various questions, and changing the Likert scales.

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to determine the effectiveness or validity of the Digital Education Leadership (DEL) End of Program and 6 Month Follow-Up surveys given to graduates. A survey was conducted which involved past DEL graduates, the Director of Assessment, and the Program Chair. Graduates were also invited to participate in a follow-up Zoom interview. The goal was to gather feedback in order to update the survey with new information, improve the wording, and personalize the tool for the DEL program.

Background

Both surveys are meant to gather information regarding students' experiences in the DEL program. The End of Program survey is sent to students pre-graduation and its aim is to assess if the DEL program met students' expectations. In short, were students happy with the program structure, academics, advising, etc. The 6 Month Follow-Up survey is to determine how well the DEL program prepared students to assume new roles and responsibilities that align with digital education leadership. It asks if students were hired in new jobs that are more in line with what they earned their degree in and if the DEL coursework adequately prepared them for these new roles. Both surveys provide valuable information to the Chair of the Program, faculty, and the wider School of Education (SOE) on student experiences. Both surveys are included in an annual program assessment that each program must complete. They are two of many measures but are vital since they offer student voice into the program assessment and lead to programmatic improvements. The DEL program was created in 2016/2017 and the surveys have barely been modified since. It was clear they needed to be revamped due to the changing ISTE standards and the need to personalize the surveys more to the specific needs of the DEL program.

Research Questions

In what ways, if any, do the surveys need to be amended?

- Do the surveys gather the right information?
- Are there other topics that should be included?
- Are there questions that are unimportant or irrelevant?
- Where can the wording or structure of the survey be improved?

Methodology

Research Design

Research was conducted using Google Forms so that DEL graduates could respond when it was convenient for them. The survey consisted of 2 sections that used Likert scales and 5 open-ended questions. This mixed-method format gave more nuanced answers on which items participants viewed as important (Likert scale questions), while also allowing for more detailed responses (open-ended questions). DEL graduates were invited to a follow-up Zoom discussion if they preferred to talk instead of responding to the open-ended questions in writing.

Participants

A multi-informant approach was used, soliciting feedback from the program chair, the assessment director, past DEL graduates, and drawing from my personal perspective as a current student. I had 8 people respond out of 39 (20% response rate). Overall, there were 2 faculty members and 6 graduate students who participated. One interesting item to note was the lack of response from recent graduates. Of the 6 students who participated, 3 were from 2016, 2 were from 2017, and 1 was from 2018. No graduates from the class of 2019 or 2020 took the survey.

Procedure and Timeline

Participants were recruited via email and given one week to respond to the survey. Participants who indicated an interest in a follow-up Zoom interview were contacted the week after the survey was conducted.

Instrument/Measures

See Appendix A for survey questions.

Analysis

The Likert scale questions were coded with numbers so that the mean and mode could be calculated. In addition, outliers were identified to show where people disagreed. The End of Program survey was broken down into 4 categories: ISTE standards, program structure, aspects of program administration and resources, and overall evaluation. A mean score was calculated for each of these domains to communicate how important each respective category was to the participants. Finally, qualitative answers were color-coded by theme.

Results

End of Program Survey

In order to answer the question, “In what ways, if any, do the surveys need to be amended?” I asked participants to gauge the importance of various topics for the survey. Responses to the survey indicate that the 3 most important questions to ask are:

- Overall evaluation of the program (mean score of 2.87)
- Will graduates recommend the program to a friend (mean score of 2.87)
- Having an open-ended prompt on program strength and weaknesses (mean score of 2.87)

These questions stood out because over 87% of participants indicated they were “very important”. Respondents also indicated that the 3 least important questions to ask were:

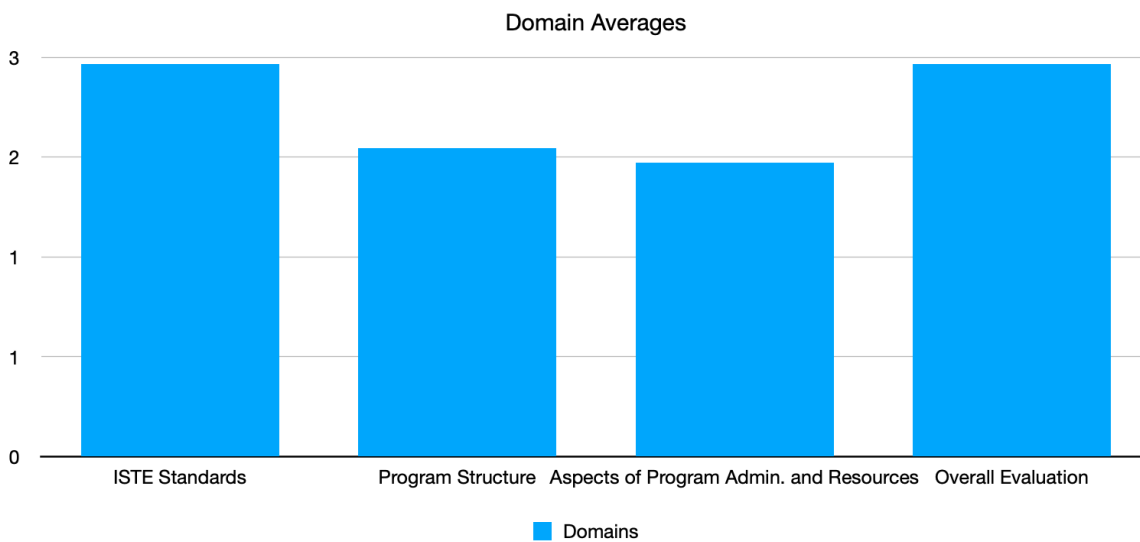
- Rating Community Engagement Projects (mean score of 1.75)
- Rating course sequencing (mean score of 1.75)
- Rating library resources (mean score of 1.62)

Domain Scores

The End of Program survey was broken down into 4 categories: ISTE standards, program structure, aspects of program administration and resources, and overall evaluation. An average was calculated for each domain, which communicated how important each respective category was to the participants.

Figure 1:

End of Program Domain Scores



The first domain, ISTE standards, scored an average of 2.75. The DEL program is structured around the ISTE standards so it was no surprise that 75% of the participants agreed that it is “very important” for students to be able to rate how

well the program prepared them to carry out these technology standards. 75% of the participants also voiced that it was “very important” for students to rate how well the DEL courses aligned with the ISTE standards.

The Program Structure domain received a mean score of 2.16. Overall, the questions in this section received very positive remarks from respondents, with the exception of one respondent who was an outlier and scored each question as “not important”. The rest of the respondents marked the questions in this domain either as “moderately important” or “very important”. Furthermore, the responses from participants in the qualitative portion of the survey supported why this section is so important to include. One of the open-ended questions on the survey asked: “What did you really appreciate about the DEL program?”. Participants highlighted various aspects of the program structure and the following themes were noted:

- Inquiry-based learning
- Collaborative cohort model
- Personalized learning
- Centered around ISTE standards

The theme that occurred the most often was the social structure of the cohort and how peers collaborated to learn from one another. Therefore, it is important to add this section on Program Structure to the End of Program survey so that students can continue to voice their experiences and thoughts on *how* the program is taught.

The third domain, Program Administration and Resources, received a mean score of 2.06. This section of the survey covers more of the nuts and bolts of how the program runs and the resources that are available to students. This section received a range of scores including “low importance”, “moderately important”, and “very important”. While this section got the lowest mark out of all the domains, the average was still good (2.06 out of 3). Students may have ranked these questions lower because they do not cover topics that they are passionate about.

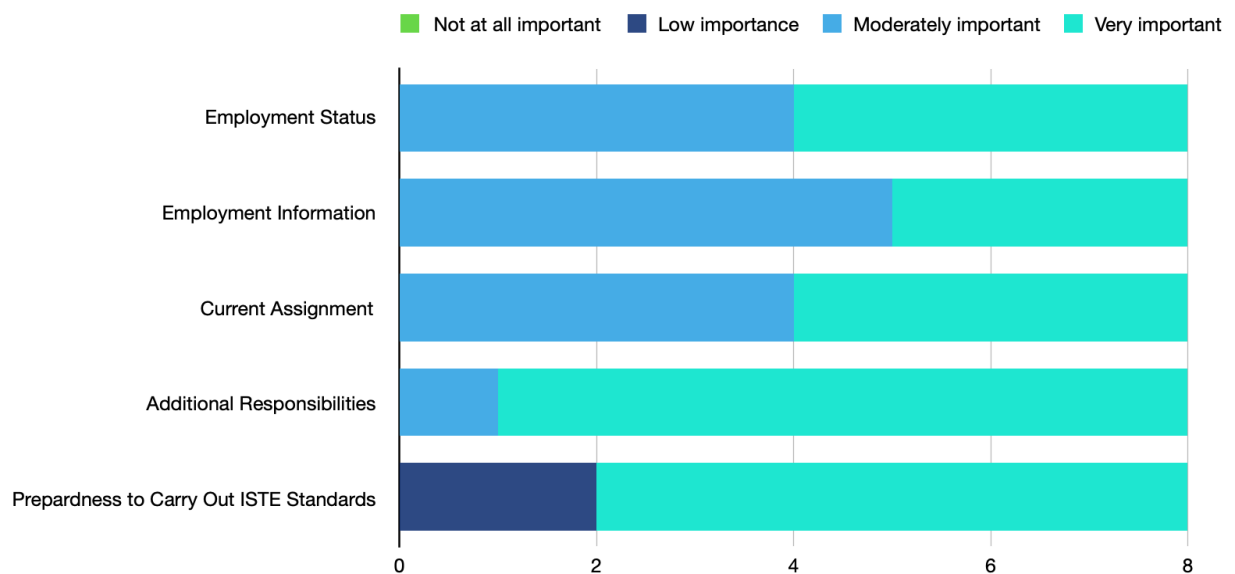
The final domain was Overall Evaluation. It received a mean score of 2.75, tying the first section on ISTE standards and indicating that this section of the survey is very valuable to graduates. The 3 highest scoring questions all came from this section. Therefore, it is essential to keep this section.

Completer's Survey

The Completer survey results were more straightforward. 4 out of the 5 questions received positive marks ("moderately important" or "very important"). However, the last question asked students to indicate how important it was to ask DEL graduates how well the program prepared students to carry out the ISTE standards. 2 out of the 8 participants marked it as "low importance". This was surprising since no one had given it that low of marks on the End of Program survey. This question is asked in the Completer's survey so that Program Chair and faculty can determine if the DEL program has in fact equipped graduates with the right knowledge and experiences to successfully carry out their new digital roles and responsibilities.

Figure 2:

Question 3.1-3.5 Completer's Survey Results



Summary

Overall, the survey showed that participants were in favor of the current questions on both the End of Program and Completer's survey and also approved adding the new section on Program Structure. This was reinforced not only by the positive scores on the Likert scale, but also by the qualitative responses in the open-ended questions. The most important questions were about the overall evaluation of the program and the least important questions were rating minor items like course sequencing and library resources.

Next Steps

My overarching question was "In what ways, if any, do the surveys need to be amended?" After conducting the survey, interviewing individuals, and comparing the current DEL surveys with other program's surveys in the School of Education, it became clear that the following changes would be good:

- Reword various questions for clarity and positivity
- Change the Likert Scales to collect more helpful information
- Update ISTE standards to match the new Coaching Standards
- Add a new section, Program Structure, which evaluates how the program is structured and how the content is delivered instead of just asking if objectives were met. This will give more valuable feedback to faculty and the Program chair on their teaching methods.

Additional Considerations

One person voiced that it may be helpful to break down the ISTE standards into multiple questions. For example, one standard has graduates evaluate how well prepared they are to differentiate, assess, and provide rigor all in the same question. It would give more specific feedback if these items were broken down into their own questions with individual Likert scales so that participants could

indicate if there was a specific area they did not feel prepared in. This is the same case when the graduates are asked to evaluate online learning tools. Canvas and Zoom are listed, but more nuanced information could be gathered if all online learning tools (Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, etc) were listed as individual questions. This would inform future instructors on which platforms were preferred.

Several times participants shared that they wished they received more career counseling. One respondent suggested there could be a question on the End of Program survey about preparedness for career change or promotion as a result of earning this degree. This would need to be a change made at the program level since career advising is not currently included in the DEL program but could be easily measured on the exit surveys.

Future Research

In the future it would be interesting to do further research into the impact DEL is having inside schools/districts, as well as other organizations. While this type of intervention would be challenging it would be so valuable not only in marking the DEL program to prospective students but also in developing more recognition of the DEL program in districts to allow graduates more upward mobility after completion.

References

Rawpixel.com. (n.d.). *Group of diverse grads throwing caps up in the sky* Free Photo. Freepik.

https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/group-diverse-grads-throwing-caps-up-sky_3366984.htm

Appendix A: Instruments

DEL Graduate Survey Instrument

This survey is intended to gather feedback on the DEL surveys, both End of Program and the Completer's survey. All feedback will be kept confidential and used strictly for the purposes of evaluating the validity of the two tools and asking in what ways if any, do the surveys need to be amended.

End of Program Survey

The purpose of the End of Program survey is to focus on student experiences within the program, pre-graduation. In summary, the survey asks students to evaluate if the program met their expectations. The survey results give insights into students' personal experiences and are used to make programmatic improvements.

Please indicate how important the following topics are on the End of Program survey:

	Not at all important	Low importance	Moderately important	Very important
How well the program prepared students to carry out the ISTE standards				
Rating course sequencing				
Rating course alignment with ISTE standards				
Rating opportunities to collaborate				
Rating inquiry-based learning				
Rating community engagement projects				
Rating capstone portfolio				

experience				
Rating advisement in applying to the program				
Rating general orientation at the beginning				
Rating general advisement after being admitted				
Rating advisement on registering for courses				
Rating advisement on meeting graduation requirements				
Rating online learning tools like Canvas and Zoom				
Rating library resources				
Overall evaluation of the program				
Preparedness to work with diverse teachers, students, and parents				
Would you recommend the program to a colleague				
Open-ended prompt on the strengths and weaknesses of the program				

Do you have any other suggestions on how to improve the End of Program survey or other topics you believe are relevant and should be included?

Completer's Survey (6 month follow-up)

The purpose of the Completer's survey is to determine the level of preparedness of students once they are out in the field. Did students take on new jobs or

responsibilities that are more in line with what they earned their degree in? And to what extent did the coursework actually prepare them for this new role?

Please indicate how important the following topics are on the Completer's survey:

	Not at all important	Low importance	Moderately important	Very important
Employment Status				
Employment information				
Current assignment (admin, teacher, ESD employee, etc)				
Additional responsibilities that involve digital education (teacher leader, technology coach, curriculum adoption committee)				
How well the program prepared students to carry out the ISTE standards				

Do you have any other suggestions on how to improve the Completer's survey or other topics you believe are relevant and should be included?

Open-ended feedback

There are several open-ended questions we'd love your feedback on. If you'd prefer a written response, please type your answers below. If you'd rather join in on a 30-minute follow-up Zoom call, please enter your preferred email address when prompted.

- What did you really appreciate about the DEL program?
- Were there any aspects of the program that could be improved?

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- Tell me more about your post-grad experience. How has DEL helped you in your current role?
 - Are you willing to participate in a follow-up Zoom call? If so, what email should I send an invite to? (Your name/email will not be connected to any of your other responses)
 - What year did you graduate from the DEL program?

Appendix B: Open-Ended Questions

Open-Ended Questions (participants could answer in writing during the survey or on a Zoom interview)

Participants:

Past DEL graduates

- What did you really appreciate about the DEL program?
 - I appreciated the inquiry-based learning model and the work with TPACK. More than anything, I appreciated David. I was part of the first cohort and so I'm five years out and don't even work in education any longer. That being said, David taught me how to get comfortable in the palace of not knowing the answers or even the questions (inquiry-based learning). As an instructor and an advisor, he gave me the skills to embrace the unknown and the confidence to experiment.
 - I really appreciated that the learning was tied to the ISTE Standards, which made it endlessly relevant to my work. I also appreciated the collaborative and social elements of the program. I keep in touch with many of my cohort members and even members of prior and subsequent cohorts.
 - I appreciate the intentional use of open access, digital resources for readings and assignments; I appreciate the cohort structure and the opportunity to get to know classmates personally and professionally on a deeper level; I appreciate the ability to tailor learning assignments and research to my own professional context and interests
 - Having a cohort with other educators was beneficial. Learning and attending resources outside my district- ISTE standards, NCCE conferences, EdCamps which supported the DEL program.
 - Collaboration. Professional Connections. Inquiry-based learning

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- Ability to personalize course content
 - I appreciated the cohort structure of the program and the closeness working together for 2 years brought to our small group of students. I also appreciated the approach instructors took to projects working with individuals to let them freely modify and mold projects to work with the program goals and current job assignments. Finally, I appreciated the content curated by instructors and how it allowed students to personalize their learning but discuss and share their understanding with cohort members in order to better develop their thinking about many aspects of digital education and how it affects students, staff and society.
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- Were there any aspects of the program that could be improved?
 - I know this may not be within the scope of the program, but I wish there had been some element of career counseling. I think there needs to be more recognition of this program and its graduates in the Districts we serve in so that we are able to be groomed to move into leadership roles. I also think there needs to be an element of exploration of DEL impact roles both within schools/districts, as well as other organization, and perhaps even government. I know that kind of intervention would be difficult; however, I believe it would help both DEL graduates and WA State K-12 greatly.
 - Encouraging the use of a centralized (virtual or in-person) place for gathering and commenting, like the EdTechSandbox blog might help cohorts to connect with those before and after them in order to help keep graduates involved after they exit the program.