

VSBPE

Date: April 4, 2019

Item: Spark Two-Year Report Update

ITEM: Shall the VSBPE accept Spark's updated two-year report and reinstate Spark to full approval to recommend for licensure?

AGENCY RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the VSBPE accept Spark's updated Two-Year Report and reinstate Spark to full approval, with the provision that Spark adds the Praxis II requirement to their Handbook, and that evidence for the narratives in the update be provided at their full ROPA review in 2021.

BACKGROUND:

Spark submitted their Two-Year Report as required in January of 2018. This report was to address the concerns from their ROPA review in 2015. At their meeting on March 28, 2018, the Board voted to accept Spark's report and to require that they address the questions and gaps in an update to the Board by January 31, 2019. When this update was not sent to the Office by that date, an email was sent notifying Spark that per VSBPE Policy N2, Spark's status would be reduced to Conditional Approval until the report was submitted and the Board voted to approve it and reinstate the program to Full Approval. Spark submitted an update to the Office on March 11, 2019; the Office combined the Two-Year Report with the original feedback and the updates that were submitted into one document, attached.

RATIONALE:

Spark did address the gaps and questions the Board asked them to, although only in a narrative form with minimal evidence. Spark submitted a revised Handbook as evidence for some items; that Handbook omits the Praxis II requirement, and that should be added immediately. It should be made clear to Spark that the ROPA review team will expect to see evidence to back up their narratives at Spark's review in 2021.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT: Spark's 2-Year Report with updates

March 28, 2019

Dr. Janaki Natarajan Tschannerl
Spark Teacher Education Institute
PO Box 409 Putney, VT 05346

Dear Janaki,

This letter serves as notification of the March 28, 2018 action by the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) accepting Spark's Two-Year Report and granting continued full approval to recommend for Vermont licensure in the following endorsement areas:

Elementary Education

Middle Grades:

- English
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies

Secondary:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies

The Board reviewed your report and granted continued approval with the condition that the questions and gaps noted in red in the Report below are addressed in an **annual update due by January 31, 2019**.

Best,

Ellen Cairns

Ellen Cairns
ROPA Consultant



Spark Two-Year Report 2018

Program Name	Spark Teacher Education Institute
Address	Educational Praxis, PO Box 409 Putney, VT 05346
Contact Name	Dr. Janaki Natarajan Tschannerl
Phone	802- 380-4847
Email	janakisn@yahoo.com

Introductory Narrative Description

The following information comprises the two-year report of the Spark Teacher Education Institute. The Agency of Education Team after its review and evaluation approved the program and particularly noted the focus on social justice. Since then the Spark Team has continually examined, critiqued and strengthened the components relating to: Student learning with Mentors; Spark relationships to Administration in schools; deeper links between subject content, social justice and assessment; mastery of core teaching standards and updating endorsement standards in all areas.

Our field trips to New York City and Washington, DC have included intern participation and presentations in workshops and conferences. Our Spark seminars have included regular participation by local teachers and alumni who are teachers in the surrounding areas.

We appreciate the cooperation and quick responses from the Agency personnel as we improve our teacher preparation work.

I. Program Overview

Initial Licensure

Program	Delivery Model	Number of Graduates in The Last 3 Years	Number of Enrollees	Notes
Elementary Secondary Math Middle School Math	Grad	2015 3 2016 1 2017 1	10 total 9 total 7 total	
Secondary Social Studies Middle School Social Studies	Grad	2015 2 2016 4 2017 1	10 total 9 total 7 total	
Secondary English Middle School English	Grad	2015 1 2016 2 2017 1	10 total 9 total 7 total	
Secondary Science Middle School Science	Grad	2015 1 2016 2017	10 total 9 total 7 total	

II. Introduction: Program Update

1. Are there any major changes at the institution that have impacted or may impact the educator preparation program(s)? The physical transition of Marlboro's graduate center moving to the undergraduate campus, the loss of Marlboro admissions staffing for the graduate school, and the turn over of graduate office personnel impacted our functioning. Spark has just added our own Spark recruiter with noticeable positive responses.
2. Are you anticipating any substantive changes to your preparation programs? We are hoping to expand and offer Early Childhood, Special Education and ELL certifications. We have begun to review the work required to do this expansion
3. How is your program staying compliant with any new educational laws, initiatives, and other changes in the field since your last review? We have strengthened our relationships with school administration and mentors. This has resulted in positive and continued acceptance of our interns. Several of our interns are Teachers in the surrounding area schools. 96% of our graduates are employed in teaching positions. We have also newly structured our Thematic Modules and added sessions on Pedagogy and Methods in the fall trimester. We are also reorganizing our Tutorials for each of our students to link the richness of their teaching experience, deepen their subject matter in relation to standards and see how these can be reflected in their portfolios. **Provide information about Licensure Portfolio, Educator Quality Standards, Act 77 (Flexible Pathways, Proficiency-Based Learning). The information presented is interesting but does not answer the question about response to new initiatives in education.**

Spark Response: We address new educational laws, initiatives and changes through our weekly seminars and our dynamic relationships with our partner schools. We invite current teachers and administrators to engage our students in current initiatives in schools, such as flexible pathways, proficiency-based learning and assessment, personalized learning plans, multi-tiered systems of support, and restorative justice practices, among others. We have units that address Act 77 through alternative assessments, which we link to flexible pathways. Examples of alternative assessments we teach include portfolios, project-based presentations, and student self-assessment. Additionally, each intern visits schools and districts which are exemplary in their implementation of proficiency-based learning. In content area seminars, students become familiar with the proficiencies of their content area and they are able to discuss the implementation process with a currently practicing teacher. Please see our updated handbook, which includes the 10 Core Teaching Standards, the updated VLP rubric, and the updated student Individualized Learning Plan.

III. Program Stipulations

Stipulation	Update	Evidence
Stipulation 1: Review program to confirm that Core Teaching Standards have replaced 16 Principles in every area before May 1, 2016. Additionally update endorsement standards to current	<p>Since the Review Team's visit in October, our program has worked to address this stipulation in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have reviewed and updated our 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Updated our Handbook so that the Core Teaching Standards have replaced the 16 Principles. 5. Individualized Learning Plan template

<p>standards in all areas. All these revisions are reflected in handbook, portfolio and/or any other documentation used by candidates and faculty.</p>	<p>Handbook so that the Core Teaching Standards have replaced the 16 Principles.</p> <p>2. We have reviewed and updated the Individualized Learning Plan template and Spark Teacher Competency Framework to reflect these changes.</p> <p>3. We are continuing to move forward with our plans to adopt the new Level I Licensure Portfolio which is aligned with the Core Teaching Standards.</p>	<p>We did not see a reference to the 16 Principles, the Core Standards, or the endorsement requirements in the Handbook or the ILP.</p> <p>No link to Spark Teacher Competency Framework.</p> <p>Spark Response: We have updated the handbook to include a revised Teacher Competency Framework, which is based on the 10 Core Teaching Standards. The revised ILP and Observation and Feedback Form also are now based on the 10 Core Teaching Standards. The Handbook also includes the endorsement requirements. We have linked the updated endorsement standards for each endorsement area for which we provide licensure recommendation</p> <p>E.C.: One missing endorsement requirement- Praxis II. No references to any endorsement competencies.</p> <p>VLP is required for all pre-service educators entering programs as of fall 2016. Is Spark currently using the VLP or still “continuing to move forward” with plans to use it?</p> <p>Spark Response: Spark is currently using the VLP. It is referenced in the updated Handbook.</p> <p>E.C.: Ok.</p>
<p>Stipulation 2: Create a crosswalk between MAT course learning outcomes, weekly elementary workshops, and the seminar schedule so that it is clear that each course-learning outcome is met over the course of the program before May 1, 2016.</p>	<p>1) We created a Master Overview spreadsheet that crosswalks where specific InTASC standards are met by individual modules and their associated courses.</p> <p>Across the top are the module names with an X marking the specific standards broken down by Performances, Essential Knowledge</p>	<p>4) Master Overview spreadsheet that crosswalks where specific InTASC standards are met by individual modules and their associated courses.</p> <p>Individual course syllabi</p> <p>Spark Seminar Overview</p> <p>Seminar Lesson Plan Template</p>

and Critical Disposition that are met. Individual [course syllabi](#) further identify the specific InTASC indicators each course is designed to meet.

- 2) We have created a [Spark Seminar Overview](#) chart to identify when each standard will be met in the specific seminar schedule for the coming year along with the learning theory, etc, each seminar will address.
- 3) Finally, to further strengthen and document our course alignments with the InTASC standards, we are adopting a [Seminar Lesson Plan Template](#) that each seminar instructor will be required to use. These Seminar Lesson Plans will take the place of the current [seminar agendas](#) and the [weekly elementary workshop notes](#).

The template will require instructors to specify which learning outcome (i.e. InTASC standard) they are addressing in the seminar for the day, along with the social justice skill they are emphasizing. Such templates will function as both clear documentation of

	<p>where the course learning outcomes are being met AND as tools enabling instructors to reflect more formally with candidates on these standards. Time will be made at the end of each seminar to review the Seminar Lesson Plans and related InTASC/Core Teaching Standard with candidates.</p>	
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Additional question: Handbook states “Spark is an intensive, field-based, teacher preparation program leading to licensure in the candidate’s chosen endorsement area” and “Spark Teacher Education Institute is approved by the Vermont Department of Education to offer a program of study providing graduate level coursework for academic credit, leading to teacher licensure.

Teacher Licensure. Upon successful completion of the program as set forth in this Handbook, the candidate will be recommended to the Vermont Department of Education for teacher licensure in the endorsement area successfully undertaken.” **It does not clarify in which endorsement areas Spark is approved to recommend licensure, which could be confusing to a prospective candidate.**

Spark Response: The endorsement areas for which Spark is approved to recommend licensure are now included in the Handbook.

**Spark Teacher Education Institute Revised/Amended ROPA 2 year report - Section IV
March 2, 2018 Progress Addressing Concerns**

Standard 1

Concern: For Middle Grades endorsements, the Professional Knowledge Middle Grades performance standards are addressed in the portfolio, however the Professional Knowledge Middle Grades knowledge standards are not being addressed. There needs to be a process to assess or document that candidates have met these standards (Indicator 1.3) Note: This was noted as a concern in the regulation check.

Spark response to concern: The professional Knowledge Middle Grades Knowledge Standards are now explicitly addressed in the endorsement portfolio; therefore, the process of assessing them and entering them is in an endorsement portfolio document.

Concern: The content knowledge portfolio addresses most of the knowledge standards of Middle Grades Mathematics, however it excludes both the NCTM Process Skills and typical misconceptions. Our recommendation is to add knowledge of the NCTM Process Skills into the portfolio. When these endorsements are updated, this may no longer be an issue. (Indicator 1.3).

Spark response to concern: We have added the NCTM Process Skills as a required part of the content knowledge portfolio. We are making sure that the only current Math endorsement student completes this requirement.

Concern: The use of appropriate standards (CCSS for Math & LA, NGSS & Vermont State for Social Studies) as reflected in lesson plans in portfolios is inconsistent. Be sure to reference the most recent content area state and national standards when designing lessons (Indicator 1.3).

Spark response to concern: Being cognizant of this concern, we are ensuring that the designs of lesson plans include the most recent state and national standards.

Standard 2

Concern: Spark needs to articulate a more thorough and transparent process to inform candidates' of assessment and evaluation products (i.e., the portfolios and action research project) at the outset of the program. (Indicator 2.2)

Spark response to concern: During the Summer Institute in August we give students a calendar of due dates for all assessments and evaluations including specific due dates for portfolios and action research projects. All due dates and programmatic resources can be found on our program Moodle site. Each student has access to Moodle throughout their time in the program. **Is this different than what was done when you were reviewed and this concern was raised? Did you make any changes based on that concern, or did you think that the concern was not valid?**

Spark response: We have instituted a systemic portfolio preparation process, through which we discuss assessment expectations with our students in an on-going, informative process through all of our courses. Field advisors play an essential role as well, providing regular feedback and clarity to students, while also mentoring them in the process of evaluation throughout the year.

Concern: It is not clear what systemic ways Spark implements to assess the effectiveness of mentors. Additionally, how does the placement provide the needed support and encouragement for a candidate? How does the program collect and analyze these data to inform future functioning of the program? (Indicator 2.3)

Spark response to concern: Field Directors and the co-directors meet with the mentor teachers at the initial appointment: two criteria are 1) that they (mentors) have taught for 3 years

and 2) have a Masters degree. Additionally, the Field Advisor checks in with the mentor teacher for feedback, the candidate also reports back during the seminar, reporting their current experiences in the schools including their relationship with the mentor teacher. We have created a survey for students to solicit feedback about their learning at their placement, including their interactions with their mentor teacher. If there are problems a meeting is set up to address any concerns in a collegial manner. Notes are kept on all of these discussions in order to collect and analyze any revisions needed for the program. We also meet once a semester with the mentor teachers as a seminar for common discussion of candidates, content, and their ideas to strengthen the program. **Is this different than what was done when you were reviewed and this concern was raised? Did you make any changes based on that concern, or did you think that the concern was not valid? Does the data that gets collected in the surveys get used to make changes to mentor selection in the future?**

Spark Response: We always carefully study the surveys and discuss each mentor selection. The evaluations and data provided are very important in our careful assessment of mentor teachers and the intern/mentor relationship. We work closely with the schools and school administrators to ensure the quality and abilities of our mentor teachers. When problems arise, we mediate the mentor teacher, and if necessary, with school administration. Sometimes this results in our removing the mentor teacher from our mentor teacher candidate pool.

Concern: We did not see an articulated process to collect and analyze program efficacy to inform future program revisions. (Indicator 2.3)

Spark response to concern: We have a formal student mid term evaluation and a final evaluation. In addition we elicit evaluations from the mentors during our meetings each semester. **Is this different than what was done when you were reviewed and this concern was raised? Did you make any changes based on that concern, or did you think that the concern was not valid? Does the data that gets collected get used to make program revisions in the future?**

Spark Response: In addition to student and mentor teacher evaluations, we have implemented a bi-annual Strategic Planning Retreat, where we use formative and summative assessments and evaluations to inform our adjustments to the program.

Standard 3

Concern: There is not clear documentation as to the procedure for selecting and evaluating mentor teachers to ensure the program continues to select high quality mentors who may reflect the mission of the program (Indicator 3.1).

Spark response to concern: The two criteria are 1) that they (mentors) have taught for 3 years and 2) have a Masters degree. Our handbook has been amended to include the program's mission to recruit mentor teachers of the highest caliber. **Amending the Handbook does not**

necessarily have any effect on the quality of teachers selected to be mentors. We are looking for evidence of the process by which you select and evaluate the mentor teachers. Is it only on the basis of three years' experience and a Masters? Do you collect and use any data on the success of the candidates based on who their mentor teachers were or anything like that?

Spark Response: The formal selection of mentors having three years' teaching experience and a masters are important, but we also have interviews with future mentor teachers. Moreover, the interns meet extensively with the mentors to make sure there is a compatible, good match in the teaching learning process. We keep records of mentor teacher strengths and challenges as they relate to Spark interns' success in the field and their ability to successfully complete the graduation requirements. In addition, please see our responses to mentor evaluations, above.

Concern: There is not clear documentation as to how Spark program collaborates with field partners to ensure candidates have access to resources (e.g., special educators, related service providers and specialists) to address students' needs. (Indicator 3.2).

Spark response to concern: We have special lectures [including from superintendents of nearby districts] as part of our seminars to address: organization of schools, laws of the educational system, detailed information about special educators and behaviorists, counselors and service providers within each school. These seminars are part of the curriculum as can be seen in the Spark modules. **Is this different than what was done when you were reviewed and this concern was raised? Did you make any changes based on that concern, or did you think that the concern was not valid?**

Spark Response: In addition to special seminars, students are required to attend IEP meetings, as well as work collaboratively with behaviorists, reading interventionists, and support staff. Included in our updated handbook: "They [interns] should be made aware of the individual needs of the students in their classrooms, including any special education plans" and "Interns will be expected to follow the stipulations and recommendations in their students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). This requires that interns familiarize themselves with those documents early on and refer to them when writing plans." These handbook requirements, along with mentor teacher and field advisor supports, ensure that interns are collaborating with special educators and other related service providers, to meet their students' needs.

Concern: Field experience tracking chart provides thorough evidence of grade level and course placement but the "other demographics" could have a descriptor about the type of diversity (i.e., cultural, SES, learning needs, linguistic) (indicator 3.5).

Spark response to concern: The interns are required to research and write a paper in the beginning of the school year that describes the diversity at their school. In this paper interns must describe in detail the cultural, SES, learning needs and linguistic diversity at their particular school which in turn Spark uses as data. **Is this different than what was done when you were reviewed and this concern was raised? Did you make any changes based on that concern, or did you think that the concern was not valid? Sharing some of those papers and that data and how it is used would be more conclusive evidence.**

Spark Response: Our updated Field Tracking Sheet has changed “Other demographics” to “School demographics,” with an explanation that interns must indicate (as observed or researched) the demographics of the school, including cultural, SES, learning needs, linguistic, etc.
