Transforming Teacher Preparation in Early Childhood Education: Moving to Inclusion*

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Abstract: In this paper, we describe our efforts to transform the early childhood education major and the early childhood special education major into a single unified major. This unified major is intended to prepare early childhood educators to address competently the educational needs of both children with and without disabilities in a general education classroom. We describe the events occurring at both the state and university levels that led to our efforts, and the progress we have made during the first year of our work. We also identify several future challenges that we will soon confront.

Nearly a quarter of a century has passed since PL94-142 became law. Then called the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, it mandated that

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled. (300.550 IDEA, 1990).

The law demanded that separate schooling only be used when it had been clearly established that “education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (300.550 IDEA, 1990). At the time of the law’s passage, it was estimated that in the United States over half of all children with disabilities were receiving no educational services whatsoever (Smith & Luckasson, 1995).

Until recently, efforts to prepare teachers to design and implement appropriate educational programs to serve children with special needs in the general education classroom have often been sporadic and haphazard. Now, some teacher education programs (Affleck & Lowenbraun, 1995; Bondy, Ross, Sindelar, & Griffin, 1995; Ellis, Rountree, Casareno, Gregg, Schlicter, Larkin & Colvert, 1995; Feden & Clabaugh, 1986; Kemple, Hartle, Correa, & Fox, 1994; Maheady, Harper, Mallette, & Barnes, 1993; Stayton & Miller, 1993) have been specifically designed in such a way that a single program prepares both special education and general education teachers to work with all children in the general education classroom. Blanton, Griffin, Winn and Pugach (1997) have recently described ten such collaborative programs.

Despite a rich literature addressing both the moral and ethical importance and the practical value of integrating persons with special needs as fully as possible into both schools and the wider community, many

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classroom teachers and administrators remain unconvinced about the appropriateness of these efforts. Some university personnel in teacher preparation also doubt the real value of inclusion. It is essential that teacher preparation personnel be as certain of the value of inclusion as they wish their students to be (Kemple et al., 1994).

Stayton and Miller (1993) identified five areas in which integrating general and special education programs benefit higher education: administrative, curricular, faculty-related, student-related, and social. Unifying programs maximize the use of resources across departments by decreasing duplication of services and courses. Curricular benefits include the ability to model the team teaching and collaboration that new teachers will encounter in their own schools. Faculty benefit from increased opportunities to work with colleagues not only in teaching but also in scholarly activities such as grant writing, research, and professional papers. Preservice teachers have greater opportunities to practice cross-disciplinary interactions with their peers in these interdisciplinary programs.

Societal benefits result from the growing numbers of competent teachers who have been prepared to both anticipate and embrace serving a diverse population of children and families. In this paper, we will describe our efforts as an interdisciplinary faculty team to develop an undergraduate teacher preparation program in early childhood education which enables teachers to fulfill the many high expectations held for the effective implementation of best inclusionary practices.

Institutional History and Current Background

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) began its life in 1876 as a normal school whose sole mission was to prepare teachers. This mission and the student body gradually expanded, and in 1967, the institution achieved full university status, offering a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate programs in addition to the teacher education program. Figure 1 provides an overview of teacher education at UNI now.
Our institution is still regarded as the teacher education institution for the state, and teacher education remains a fundamental component of our mission. Northern Iowa is generally expected to provide leadership to our sister regent institutions, the University of Iowa and Iowa State University, to the many small private colleges which offer teacher education, and to teachers, principals, school districts, and area education agencies across the state. Although our leadership in teacher preparation has been highly regarded both within and outside of the state, the issue of inclusion seems likely to prove our greatest leadership challenge to date.

Currently, the College of Education offers separate undergraduate programs in early childhood education, elementary education, middle school education, special education, physical education and health education. Secondary teaching majors are housed in other colleges with students taking their professional education course work through the College of Education. Each year, approximately 3,000 students participate in the teacher education program. About 70% of these students have teaching majors within the College of Education (early childhood, elementary and middle school, special education, physical education, and health education), while the remaining students have content area majors (mathematics, science, English, social studies, art, etc.) housed in other colleges.

Over the years, boundaries between the different departments providing elements of the teacher education program have become fairly solid and sometimes seem impermeable. These boundaries have been strengthened by an institutional budgeting system that divvies funds by departmental area. Most special education faculty \((n = 10)\) are housed in a separate wing of the building on the first floor, while educational psychology faculty \((n = 21)\) and curriculum and instruction faculty \((n = 25)\) are housed at opposite ends of the sixth floor. These three departments have functioned largely independently of each other, except for turf issues common to most universities regarding the allocation of the hours that all students are required to take in professional education. The faculty members assigned to supervise student teachers belong to yet another department, the Department of Teaching \((n = 45)\), which is housed in another building and at regional student teaching centers across the state.

**Faculty Composition**

Within each department, faculty can be roughly classified as either “new” (hired within the past 7 years) or “established” (hired prior to the 1990s). Established and new faculty differ from each other in several important ways. Established faculty members are more likely to be male, to have a strong practitioner orientation, tightly held memories of previous curriculum conflicts between departments and colleges, and strong beliefs in the importance of seniority. New faculty are more likely to be female, have a strong theoretical and research orientation, and less faith in the value of seniority. In addition, the implicit institutional procedures and norms that were developed by the established faculty during the formative stages of their careers are usually unknown to new faculty.

Interdisciplinary collaboration on the part of new faculty often elicits a rather complex set of responses from established faculty. Sometimes such collaboration is enthusiastically endorsed as valuable; at other times, such collaboration is greeted with a curious nod, raised eyebrow, or shrug of the shoulders. However, interdisciplinary collaboration sometimes seems to be viewed as a violation of institutional norms and perhaps even as a threat to departmental integrity and academic freedom. All of these factors make interdepartmental collaboration on any issue somewhat difficult; when the issue itself is controversial and seems fraught with potential curricular changes as is the case with inclusion, collaboration must be viewed as both essential and potentially explosive.

**Licensing Structure Changes in Iowa**

In September of 1995, the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners passed a new *Unified Endorsement* for teachers of all children from birth through age eight. (See Table 1 for a timeline of major events) The unified endorsement realigns previously separate
TABLE 1. A time line of major events leading to licensure changes occurring during the first year of work by the task force.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 1993</td>
<td>The Unified Early Childhood Licensure Committee met for the first time in Des Moines. The committee was composed of Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education supervisors, administrators, parents, university and college faculty, and the Bureau of Special Education consultant and technical assistant.</td>
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<td>February 1993 to</td>
<td>Two separate subcommittees met monthly. One committee was charged with revising early childhood special education to licensure. The second subcommittee was charged with developing recommendations regarding the educational training of special education paraprofessionals.</td>
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<td>December 1993</td>
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<td>January 1994 to May</td>
<td>The Unified Early Childhood Licensure Committee met 14 times and submitted a proposal to the State Board of Educational Examiners regarding the Unified Early Childhood Birth to Age 8 Licensure proposal.</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>July 1995</td>
<td>The State Board of Educational Examiners recommended the Unified Endorsement become effective on August 31, 1997, and to discontinue on August 31, 2000, the currently authorized endorsements in early childhood special education, prekindergarten-kindergarten, and birth to grade three.</td>
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<td>August 1995</td>
<td>Faculty at UNI from the Departments of Special Education, Curriculum and Instruction, and Educational Psychology and Foundations submitted a proposal to the Iowa Bureau of Special Education requesting funding to support a project to look at the five primary components of the new endorsement to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses within the existing teacher education program with regard to the skills and competencies needed to effectively educate all children, regardless of their vast individual differences.</td>
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<td>September 1995</td>
<td>Project was funded and faculty Task Force members from the departments began meeting for two hours weekly to address the challenge of designing a program to prepare educators (birth to age 8) with the skills and competencies necessary to accommodate a wide range of individual difference in general education classrooms.</td>
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<td>October 1995</td>
<td>Across the five components of the new licensure, Task Force members attempted to identify the specific competencies needed to be an effective inclusive educator for young children (see appendix).</td>
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<td>November 1995</td>
<td>An Advisory Panel was formed to review the work of the Task Force and make recommendations regarding the inclusionary competencies that had been delineated.</td>
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<td>January 1996</td>
<td>The competencies were put into a survey format and distributed to all faculty members providing course work in the birth to age 8 personnel preparation program. Faculty were to identify the degree of coverage provided in their courses regarding each of the competencies.</td>
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<td>February 1996</td>
<td>Task force members began visiting exemplary early childhood and elementary public school inclusion programs across Iowa. A formal dialogue with Advisory Panel members was held to delineate progress made and obstacles encountered.</td>
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<td>March 1996</td>
<td>Task force members began previewing videos and evaluating materials addressing best inclusionary practices for utilization in the personnel preparation program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 1996</td>
<td>Task force members compiled and analyzed the data gathered with the survey of competency coverage. Areas of strength and weakness across the five domains of the new endorsement were identified.</td>
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<td>May 1996</td>
<td>Task force and Advisory Panel members met with Joan Turner Clary, Early Childhood Special Education Consultant from the Iowa Bureau of Special Education, to share progress and identify future tasks to be accomplished.</td>
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<td>July 1996</td>
<td>The Task Force members met and decided to prepare and submit a second grant proposal to the Iowa Bureau of Special Education for funding to facilitate the process of infusing new content addressing best inclusionary Education. A portion of this grant was used as incentive monies to encourage the active participation of faculty delivering course work in which significant course content restructuring is necessary.</td>
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requirements for regular early childhood (birth—age 8) and early childhood special education (birth—age 5) into a unified early childhood endorsement. The rationale for restructuring the early childhood and early childhood special education programs was based on five major influences that are currently affecting recommended practice in the education of young children. These influences include: 1) legal mandates for a range of options to serve children with disabilities; 2) current practices related to the inclusion of young children with disabilities in general education; 3) concerns about facilitating young children's development; 4) recommendations by professional organizations regarding personnel preparation; and 5) the need for trained personnel. Endorsement implementation began in 1997 and, by the year 2002, will be the primary endorsement granted to early childhood educators. The unified endorsement requires the development of skills and knowledge in five broad areas: 1) child growth, development and learning; 2) health, safety & nutrition; 3) family and community collaboration; 4) learning environment and curriculum implementation; and 5) professionalism.

The Collaboration Begins

In the fall semester of 1995, the Interdisciplinary Task Force of four faculty members began meeting regularly to develop a plan for transforming the early childhood education major and the early childhood special education major into a single early childhood major designed to prepare preservice teachers in best inclusionary practices. The activities of the Task Force were funded by a small grant secured from the Bureau of Special Education, Iowa Department of Education. Joan Turner Clary, Early Childhood Special Education Consultant with the Bureau of Special Education, agreed to review materials developed and provide guidance with regard to the activities and direction of the Task Force.

The mission of the project was to support the collaboration of faculty from three distinct departments in the design of a program to prepare early childhood educators to accommodate a wide range of individual differences in their classrooms. Collaboration has been recognized as an essential element for the successful blending of these two independent programs in early childhood education and early childhood special education (Bondy et al., 1995; Ellis et al., 1995; Kemple et al., 1994; Maheady et al., 1993). Team members consisted of two Special Education faculty members with early childhood emphases, a Curriculum and Instruction faculty member with expertise in early childhood and school reform, and an Educational Psychology and Foundations faculty member specializing in human development, particularly during the early childhood years. One of the Special Education team members was a member of the established faculty with a history of collaborating with faculty outside her department, and the remaining members were new faculty who had been hired over the past seven years. Thus Task Force members did not face some of the challenges identified by Bondy et al. (1995) since members had a prior history of collaboration in which they had gone beyond the stereotypes held by each others' perspectives and had made marked progress developing a common language.

An Advisory Panel was created to serve as consultants regarding the activities and recommendations of the Task Force. The Panel consisted of the department heads and one or two faculty members from each of the three participating departments. It was decided early by the Task Force members that department heads needed to be actively involved in the collaborative process if they were to provide the support and leadership essential to the change process. In addition, the early childhood special education consultant from the State Department of Education served on the Panel and represented the interests of the Board of Educational Examiners and the Special Education Division of the State Department of Education. Advisory Panel members were responsible for reviewing the work of the Task Force, making recommendations regarding the inclusionary competencies which had been delineated, and serving as liaisons between the Task Force and members of the various groups which the
Advisory Panel represented. The Panel met with the Task Force several times over the course of the academic year, and provided written qualitative feedback regarding the materials developed and compiled by the Task Force. Faculty members on the Advisory Panel also identified the major obstacles and challenges they were encountering as they moved to infuse best inclusionary practices into the content of their courses.

The Task Force identified six primary goals for its work during the 1995–1996 school year. These goals are presented in Table 2.

The Collaborative Process

Early discussions with some faculty members indicated strong doubts about the value of inclusion, particularly for children with certain kinds of special needs. For example, an Advisory Panel member from the Educational Psychology and Foundations department had a strong school psychology background that significantly shaped her beliefs about inclusion. These beliefs were based on both her reading of the school psychology literature regarding the effectiveness (or rather, the ineffectiveness) of inclusion and her practice as a school psychologist. Similar doubts about the appropriateness of inclusion existed among faculty members of all three departments, including Special Education. Both formal and informal discussions yielded comments such as, “The literature I've read just doesn’t support inclusion,” “You can't mean inclusion for all children,” and anecdotes beginning, “Well, my son was in a classroom with a special needs child, and . . .” These doubts and reservations indicated that the Task Force had to establish a firm position on the appropriateness of the educational setting to the child and child’s family and provide research evidence supporting the value of inclusion. This was accomplished in part by providing a packet of materials which succinctly delineated the value of inclusion for both typical children and children with special needs, and recent arguments against inclusion. Several discussion sessions were then held to consider the various findings and opposing positions. The goal of these sessions was not to convince “nonbelievers,” per se, but rather to create a pattern of open discussion and develop a shared knowledge base in order to facilitate continued communication among all participating faculty.

Identifying and Visiting School Programs Incorporating Best Inclusionary Practices

It became critical to identify school settings in which effective inclusion practices were being utilized so that faculty members could observe first hand how inclusion could be successfully implemented. Members of the Advisory Panel were invited to join the Task Force in visiting a variety of inclusive settings located within a 200-mile radius of UNI. Although few advisory panel members accepted this invitation, reports from the eight who did participate in six such visits proved to be invaluable in sparking discussions about curriculum modifications and environmental arrangements which could be implemented to accommodate diversity. Clearly, in this case, a picture was worth a thousand words in that these visits marked the beginning of a paradigm shift for several faculty regarding the value of inclusion for all.

TABLE 2. Primary goals of the task force.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Review professional organizations’ positions regarding inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Review relevant literature on inclusion addressing its impact on children with special needs and their typically developing peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Review licensure structures of other states regarding inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Delineate a set of competencies reflective of the state of Iowa’s new unified endorsement in early childhood education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Design and administer a survey to determine the degree to which each competency is being addressed in existing course work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Identify resources to facilitate the infusion of new inclusion content into existing course work</td>
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students, with or without disabilities. Moreover, these visits provided a "common ground" for identifying ways in which regular education and special education could complement each other (Bondy et al., 1995). The realization that inclusion could indeed work piqued the interest of many faculty members.

The marshalling of the research evidence, clarification of our positions addressing ways to accommodate diversity and the inclusion of all children in general education classrooms, and visitations to classrooms in which inclusion was working well for all the students was very beneficial. Changes in faculty attitude toward inclusion were subtle and took place quite gradually. By the end of the year, some faculty who had so adamantly expressed negative views of inclusion seemed to have taken a more reflective posture. They began to do more active listening, and were at least withholding judgment for the time being. Clearly, faculty dialogue will need to continue to address hesitations, concerns and reservations from this particular faculty constituency.

Identification of Competencies for Effective Inclusion Educators

Using the broad standards established in five areas by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners, the Task Force developed an extensive list of specific competencies in each major area. After several weeks of revising and editing, the list of competencies was given to all members of the Advisory Panel for review, requesting them to identify competencies which were redundant or missing. A formal meeting was held to obtain feedback from the Panel members, and their recommendations and suggestions were used to revise and refine a set of learner outcomes which ultimately culminated in a total of 131 competencies (see appendix).

The next mission of the Task Force was to examine current course work, practica and student teaching requirements in the preparation program with regard to these competencies. A survey was developed which asked faculty members (n = 51) teaching early childhood education majors and early elementary education majors to rate the degree of coverage they were providing on each competency. Ratings ranged from 0 (the competency was not addressed in any way) to 5 (students demonstrated the competency in an actual classroom setting).

Approximately 60% of the faculty (n = 30) returned the surveys. The responses received from the faculty were quite mixed. Many faculty responded to the survey in a timely manner and provided extensive feedback. Some faculty responded simply by completing the ratings with no narrative dialogue, and some faculty never responded at all. One faculty member responded by writing across the top of the form, "This is not relevant to what I teach." Follow-up inquiries to non-responders indicated two primary patterns of verbal response: 1) "I keep meaning to do it. Give me another week"; and 2) "I don't teach early childhood education students." The second response was particularly interesting because it often came from faculty who clearly did teach early childhood education majors in their classes. In fact, since virtually all our early childhood education students are also majoring in elementary education, it was fascinating to get the "I don't teach any" response or even no response from some faculty teaching methods classes required of all double majors.

Survey Results

As we examined the returned surveys, four general patterns of coverage emerged (see Table 3). First, competencies related to child development, instruction, assessment, and professionalism were identified as being fairly well covered when they referred to working with typically developing children. There was substantially less adequate coverage of these competencies when they referred to children with special needs. Clearly, it seems essential that we develop ways to ensure that these competencies are addressed with regard to both typically developing children and children with special needs. Second, there was a marked inadequacy of coverage in the area of health, safety, and nutrition. Early childhood education students are required to take a single course in this area, a general nutrition course offered in another college. This finding
TABLE 3. Survey summary: Percentage of specific competencies identified as being covered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence Domain</th>
<th>Poorly</th>
<th>Adequately</th>
<th>Well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child growth, development and learning (16)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmentally appropriate learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Environment and curriculum implementation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Health, safety and nutrition (20)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and community collaboration (26)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism (29)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A competency was identified as poorly covered when it received few if any ratings which indicated coverage beyond the introductory level. A competency was identified as well covered when it received ratings that indicated both in-depth coverage and application of information during advanced practica and student teaching experiences. The numbers of competencies within each domain has been given in parentheses.

From the beginning of this process of program change, interdepartmental and interdisciplinary collaboration has been an integral element of our work because it will be essential for our delivery of courses during actual program implementation. In addition, ongoing faculty collaboration provides a model for students who will be required to develop effective collaboration skills in the new unified program. The broad participation of the College of Education faculty has led to joint ownership and investment in the development of the unified early childhood program.

Structural Obstacles

There are three primary obstacles that could substantially impede our efforts. First, we serve a very large number of students in our existing programs for early childhood education (approximately 500 students) and early childhood special education (approximately 50 students), with a relatively limited number of full time, tenure track faculty (3 in early childhood education, 1 in early childhood special education, and 1 in developmental psychology). Many of our courses are taught by adjunct instructors and other faculty whose primary assignment is in other areas; thus, special efforts will be needed to prepare these teacher educators to work effectively within the unified program.

Secondly, the University of Northern Iowa has instituted a policy which guarantees that students can graduate in four years if they contract with the university to do so by the end of their freshman year and fulfill the terms of that contract (e.g., no change of

Development of the Unified Program

Sources of Support

Several different elements have provided critical support to our efforts to create a unified early childhood education program that will prepare teachers to work competently with children with special needs within the general education classroom. Changes in state policy regarding early childhood teacher certification served as a driving force as well as a support. The new unified preparation program must be developed and implemented by the year 2002, which means that curricular revision had to begin immediately. In addition, the state provided modest financial support that has allowed faculty to give greater attention to the development of this unified program than might otherwise have been the case.

Means that we need to examine the possibility of developing a new course to address these competencies or significantly revising existing courses in order to do so. Third, there was some evidence that more extensive coverage of information and skills related to family and community collaboration is needed. Finally, there were several instances in which instructors teaching different sections of the same course reported widely divergent levels of coverage for the same competency. This indicates a strong need for much more intradisciplinary discussion of course content if greater consistency across the course content delivered by differing instructors is to evolve.
major, adequate academic performance, etc.). Thus, undergraduate programs are limited in the number of total program hours as well as in the flexibility of course delivery. Adding new course work or field experiences is simply not an option in the curriculum revision process unless an equivalent number of required hours are dropped from the existing program. The unified program requires students to develop both new competencies in relationship to working with children with special needs and more advanced competencies that reflect professional organization expectations for early childhood educators. Finding ways to address these obstacles must be found if the unified program is to be successfully implemented.

The remaining obstacle concerns students’ opportunities for appropriate field experiences throughout their program. The importance and value of these experiences has been emphasized by the developers of other unified programs (Ellis et al., 1995; Kemple et al., 1994; Maheady et al., 1993). Students majoring in early childhood education at UNI typically have some type of field experience requirement each semester once they have entered the teacher education program. However, schools in our local community and other nearby areas have a very limited number of general education classes in which our students can see, experience, and ultimately practice effective inclusionary practices with preschool and primary grade children. If we wish our preservice students to become genuinely committed to working with both typically developing children and children with special needs within a general education setting, we will need to ensure that our students have ample experiences working in such classrooms. We must also ensure that our students work with classroom teachers who can model best inclusionary practices. Thus, in addition to developing a unified program for undergraduate students majoring in early childhood education, we must also develop strategies for enhancing the ability of practicing teachers to use best inclusionary practices within their general education classrooms.

**Other Challenges to the Development of the Unified Program**

An ongoing challenge faced by the Task Force will continue to be how to wed competencies viewed as critical when working with children with special needs into a philosophical orientation emphasizing constructivist education. For example, many specific skills used in special education developed out of a behavioristic framework. Special education teachers were taught how to perform detailed task analyses, develop appropriate subtask sequences, identify and use reinforcers effectively, and assess children's progress toward meeting the objectives on their individual education plans. On the surface, this approach is task- and teacher-centered, highly directive, and tends to require small, self-contained classrooms in which each child can be closely monitored at all times (Stainback & Stainback, 1996). A constructivist approach, although emphasizing small classrooms and close monitoring of children's behavior, tends to be much more child-centered, allowing large amounts of autonomy and self-direction, a focus on children's existing interests, and a belief that learning occurs as children construct meaning for themselves, not as a consequence of reinforcement, per se (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Throughout our discussions, it became extraordinarily clear that faculty members' professional identities and deeply held beliefs about teaching could be barriers to the merger of teacher education programs (Lilly, 1989). Although we continue to negotiate our individual understandings of constructivism and behaviorism as applied to the education of all young children, we chose to emphasize the importance of developmentally appropriate practice and individually appropriate practice, arguing that what is appropriate for the individual child will inherently be what is developmentally appropriate for that child.

A second challenge that we will begin to address in the coming year centers on developing plans to ensure that all of the identified competencies are appropriately addressed as students progress through the program. This will be a particularly difficult
In a sense, to change either, we must work to change both together.

A final major challenge may arise from the changing nature of the role of Special Education faculty. If, as the new state endorsement requires us to do, we eliminate the early childhood special education major in favor of an inclusionist early childhood major, what will faculty teaching courses in early childhood special education do? This concern has already arisen in the department of Special Education. If inclusion becomes the norm at all educational levels, then what happens to the unique identity and knowledge base of Special Education? Are the early childhood special education faculty simply going to move to graduate level training? And, if we argue that collaborative practices are most effective in the field, should we not emulate these practices in teacher preparation programs in higher education?

Clearly, many questions have yet to be answered, and some unforeseen challenges to the development and implementation of the unified program are likely to arise. However, we do believe there is one very critical professional commitment that is shared by all the personnel preparation faculty in the College of Education. Specifically, it is our responsibility to prepare teachers who are committed and equipped to help all the children within their classrooms learn. By working together cooperatively and pooling our knowledge and wisdom, we are much more likely to prepare teachers who are competent as learners and who know the value of working together to solve complex educational challenges in the classroom than if we work in isolation from each other.

Appendix

Performance Expectations for the Unified Early Childhood Endorsement

Child Growth, Development and Learning

1.1 Understand the nature of child growth and development for infants, toddlers, preprimary and primary school children, both typical and atypical, in areas of cognition, communication, physical-motor, social-emotional, aesthetics, and adaptive behavior.
   a. Can describe common developmental sequences for children 0–8 in each behavioral domain
   b. Can identify atypical developmental sequences for children 0–8 in each behavioral domain
c. Recognizes similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social and emotional needs of typical and atypical children
d. Can describe the characteristics of typical, delayed and disordered communication patterns of infants, toddlers, preprimary and primary school children

1.2 Understands individual differences in development and learning including risk factors, developmental variations and developmental patterns of specific disabilities and special abilities
   a. Recognizes the effects a disability may have on a child's life
   b. Can identify common risk factors in development and their likely developmental consequences
   c. Can identify common resiliency factors in development and their likely developmental consequences
   d. Describes the educational implications of the characteristics of children with various disabilities
   e. Can describe the effects of various medications on children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional behavior

1.3 Recognize that children are best understood in the contexts of family, culture and society and that cultural and linguistic diversity influence development and learning
   a. Appreciates the inherent strengths which each family and cultural group brings to childrearing
   b. Develops strategies for continually enhancing his/her knowledge of cultural groups within the local community
   c. Develops communication competencies which facilitate working with families from diverse socioeconomic groups and cultures, and families having diverse structures
   d. Can describe the characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of children with disabilities and their family

**Developmentally Appropriate Learning Environment and Curriculum Implementation**

2.1 Establish learning environments rich in social support, from the teacher and from other students, which help all children meet their optimal potential, within a climate characterized by mutual respect, encouragement, and the valuing of effort regardless of performance
   a. Develops and implements strategies to facilitate developmentally appropriate cooperative play and learning among children
   b. Models acceptance and valuing of children who vary from the classroom "norm" along one/or more physical, social, intellectual, cultural, or socioeconomic dimensions

2.2 Appropriately uses informal and formal assessments to monitor children's development, and plans and evaluates curriculum and teaching practices to meet the individual needs of children and their families
   a. Knows and can use a variety of formal assessment techniques and instruments to document developmental progress
   b. Knows and can use a variety of informal assessment techniques and instruments to document developmental progress
   c. Can describe the strengths and weaknesses of each assessment technique and instrument he/she uses
   d. Collaborates with parents and other professionals involved in the assessment of children with individual learning needs
   e. Can interpret and communicate the meaning of both formal and informal assessment data to parents, administrators, other teachers, and support personnel

2.3 Plans, implements, and continuously evaluates developmentally and individually appropriate curriculum goals, content, and teaching practices for children 0–8 based on the needs and interests of individual children, their families, and their community
   a. Uses both child-initiated and teacher-directed instructional methods, including strategies such as small and large group projects, structured and unstructured play, systematic instruction, group discussion, and cooperative decision making according to developmental appropriateness
   b. Identifies differing learning styles of students and adapts teaching practices to accommodate these styles
   c. Develops and uses strategies for facilitating the maintenance and appropriate transfer of skills across learning environments
d. Designs and implements a variety of motivational and classroom management tools which enhance the learning opportunities for both typical and atypical children

e. Demonstrates effective use of a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of both typical and atypical children

2.5 Develop and implement integrated learning experiences for home, center, and school-based environments for children 0–8

a. Develops and implements learning experiences that facilitate the cognitive, communicative, social, and physical development of infants and toddlers within the context of parent-child and caregiver-child relationships

b. Develops and implements learning experiences for preprimary and primary children with a focus on multicultural and nonsexist content that includes development of responsibility, aesthetic, and artistic development, physical, cognitive, social and emotional development, and well-being.

c. Effectively directs the activities of classroom paraprofessionals, aides, volunteers, and peer tutors

2.6 Adapts materials, equipment, the environment, programs and use of human resources to meet the social, cognitive, physical-motor, communicative, and medical needs of children with diverse learning needs

a. Modifies physical arrangements in the classroom to enhance learning opportunities for all children in the classroom

b. Modifies classroom equipment to facilitate its full use by both typical and atypical children in the classroom

c. Modifies teaching strategies in ways that reflect the abilities and needs of both typical and atypical children in the classroom

d. Uses performance data and teacher/parent/child input to make or support appropriate modifications in the learning environment

e. Incorporates support personnel as appropriate to facilitate meeting the various unique developmental and learning needs of both typical and atypical children in the classroom

Health, Safety and Nutrition

3.1 Design and implement physically and psychologically safe and healthy indoor and outdoor environments to promote development and learning

a. Identifies the unique physical safety needs of each child in the classroom

b. Recognizes potential safety hazards in classroom and playground environments

c. Identifies actions that can be taken to reduce or eliminate potential safety hazards

d. Identifies access barriers in classroom and playground environments

e. Identifies actions and strategies to eliminate access barriers in classroom and playground environments

f. Designs playgrounds and play areas which are developmentally and individually appropriate for both typical and atypical children

3.2 Promote nutritional practices that support the cognitive, social, cultural, and physical development of children 0–8

a. Plans nutritious and developmentally and individually appropriate snacks and meals

b. Identifies local, state, and federal sources of nutritional assistance for families

c. Knows and can use individually appropriate feeding techniques for children with diverse feeding needs

3.3 Implement appropriate appraisal and management of health concerns of young children including procedures for children with special health care needs

a. Can use and interpret growth norms to identify children experiencing typical and atypical growth patterns

b. Develops procedures for learning how to respond to the unique medical needs of children with allergies, epilepsy, diabetes, asthma, cerebral palsy, neuromuscular disorders, spina bifida, and other chronic medical conditions
c. Develops action plans for responding to typical medical emergencies that occur with most children, as well as plans for responding to less common emergencies and those emergencies which are unique to children with chronic medical conditions
d. Identifies and describes common contagions, their signs and symptoms, appropriate prevention and response measures, and public health reporting techniques
e. Can identify local, state, and federal sources of assistance for the families of children with both acute and chronic health concerns

3.4 Recognizes signs of emotional distress, physical and mental abuse and neglect in children 0–8 and knows local mandatory reporting procedures

3.5 Designs and implements developmentally and individually appropriate curricula and lessons related to teaching children what to do when in an abusive situation

3.6. Demonstrates proficiency in infant/child cardiopulmonary

**Family and Community Collaboration**

4.1 Applies theory and knowledge of dynamic roles and relationships within and between families, schools, and communities
   a. Understands teaching as a collaborative team effort that can be conceptualized as multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary
   b. Understands that in transdisciplinary teaming, the family is understood to be a vital component of the collaboration
   c. Identifies the systems beyond school in which the child is a part including family/home and community
   d. Understands and applies laws that require the school system to seek input on programming from families including P.L. 99-457 and the amended version of P.L. 94-142
   e. Understands and applies laws that protect the rights of parents in deciding appropriate placement and programming for their child with disabilities
   f. Develops empathic skills open to diverse understanding of the term “family,” and diverse cultural needs in relation to schooling and the idea of disability
   g. Develops knowledge of the community as an educational site and a source of support, friendship, and belonging for child and family
   h. Develops sense that community is the site into which a child grows and becomes a functioning (to greatest degree possible) independent adult
   i. Describes systems of interagency collaboration across community services, organizations, agencies and professionals who provide support to young children with disabilities and their families

4.2 Assists families in identifying resources, priorities, and concerns in relation to their child's development
   a. Enables families including those who are disabled or have educational limitations to develop knowledge of rights within the educational system, and how to protect those rights
   b. Identifies local, regional, national and international resources available to families that will assist them in helping their children reach their maximum potential and highest level of independence
   c. Develops knowledge of tools available that assist families in clarifying priorities and goals in relation to their children with disabilities
   d. Develops skills in creating, implementing, and evaluating IFSPs and IEPs in collaboration with the family and transdisciplinary team

4.3 Links families with a variety of resources based on the identified needs, priorities, and concerns of each family
   a. In conjunction with transdisciplinary team members, assists families in connecting with services available to them at the local, regional, national, and international level
   b. Demonstrates problem solving skills that will determine what services may be required in a community that are not currently in place

4.4 Uses communication, consultation, problem solving, and help-giving skills in collaboration with families and other professionals to support the development, learning, and well-being of young children
a. Implements strategies that empower parents as members of their children’s transdisciplinary teams
b. Identifies necessary team members of the transdisciplinary team from the school and community
c. Develops strategies for designing and implementing programs actively involving parents that respect the family’s manner of functioning, cultural attitudes, and goals for the child

4.5 Participates as an effective member of a team with other professionals, paraprofessionals, volunteers and families to develop and implement learning plans and environments for young children
a. In practical experiences, functions as a vital component of transdisciplinary team that includes professionals and families
b. Demonstrates collaborative skills with other professionals in the school
c. Demonstrates positive family collaborative skills

**Professionalism**

5.1 Understands legislation and public policy that affect all young children with and without disabilities, and their families
a. Is cognizant of state and local rules and regulations regarding early childhood programs
b. Clearly understands PL94-142 (its 1990 amendments, IDEA), PL99-457, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
c. Describes regional and local implementation of regulations pertaining to the education of children with disabilities

5.2 Understands legal aspects, historical, philosophical, and social foundations of early childhood education and special education
a. Is familiar with both the common and unique theoretical frameworks within which early childhood and special education are understood
b. Understands the historical, sociopolitical, and economic context from which the various frameworks developed
c. Understands the impact of theoretical, historical, sociopolitical, economic and cultural contexts on programming for young children with and without disabilities

5.3 Understands principles of administration, organization, and operation of programs for children ages 0–8 and their families, including staff and program development, supervision and evaluation of staff, and ongoing evaluation of programs and services
a. Understands range of intensity of services in special education and models for delivering those services in the least restrictive environment
b. Understands the elements of home-based and center-based delivery of services
c. Understands the state of transition special education has consistently been in
d. Identifies elements of effective programming
e. Develops critical thinking skills that lend themselves to view teaching as a process of life-long learning
f. Implements strategies to resolve conflicts and reduce stress in the work environment

5.4 Identifies current trends and issues of the profession to inform and improve practices and advocate for quality programs for young children and their families
a. Is familiar with the current debate over service delivery models in special education
b. Is familiar with and can describe the research, legislation, and litigation that has led to current best practices
c. Is familiar with major areas of research on teaching and of resources available for professional learning

5.5 Adheres to professional and ethical codes
a. Is familiar with professional organizations involved with early childhood education
b. Is familiar with various professional organizations involved in the lives of people with disabilities and their stances on appropriate schooling for children with disabilities
c. Understands and maintains confidentiality rules
5.6 Engages in reflective inquiry and demonstration of professional knowledge
   a. Recognizes that the act of teaching children with diverse needs is an intellectual process requiring a reflective practitioner with strong critical thinking skills
   b. Demonstrates the ability to apply learning in the classroom milieu or home environment
   c. Draws upon professional colleagues as supports for reflection, problem solving and new ideas, actively sharing experiences and seeking and giving feedback.

5.7 Performs under supervision of qualified professionals at least 100 clock hours of pre-student teaching field experience with 3 age levels in infant and toddler, preprimary and primary programs, in different settings such as rural and urban, and encompassing differing socioeconomic statuses, ability levels, cultural and linguistic diversity and program types and sponsorship.

5.8 Completes a supervised student teaching experience of at least 12 weeks in at least 2 different setting in 2 of 3 age levels: infant and toddler, pre-primary and primary, and with children with and without disabilities.

References


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