

## Chapter 12

### **Community-Building and Program Development go Hand-in-Hand: Teachers Educators Working Collaboratively**

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The research on teacher education is surprisingly consistent in identifying the perennial problems of teacher certification programs. Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999) succinctly list five basic critiques: inadequate time; fragmentation of the program; uninspired teaching methods; superficial curriculum; and traditional views of schools (p. 23). Lortie's (1975) observation that teacher education without substantial teacher induction programs leaves beginning teachers with too heavy a load to be successful still applies. Goodlad (1994) contends that both the structure and the content of teacher education programs need to be reconceptualized and reformed, adding that teacher education and school renewal must occur simultaneously and in collaboration (p. 1).

Addressing these serious shortcomings will require a complex solution, one that must involve the teacher educators. Who are the teacher educators? What are their issues? What are their suggestions for reform? How can they be part of the solution? Most teacher educators have a deep understanding of the issues and excellent suggestions on how to improve teacher education. Yet they are often absent from the decision-making table, which we believe is a *missing link* in teacher education renewal. Wide-scale solutions with far-reaching impact will remain elusive until teacher educators are more fully and respectfully involved in the discourse.

This chapter focuses on the work of teacher educators in the elementary preservice program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT). We begin with a brief description of the difficult times those of us in education have endured as our provincial government implemented radical "reforms" to all aspects of education. Although conditions were difficult, a group of teacher educators—Coordinators of the cohort program at OISE/UT—came together to address some of the concerns listed above. We provide some information about the

context and then describe in detail four initiatives—practice teaching, special education instruction, mathematics instruction, and research on academic assignments—aimed at helping to actualize our program principles. We conclude with some reflections and suggestions for next steps. We believe that the strong community we were able to develop among the Coordinators led to substantial improvements in the program, and as we jointly implemented our initiatives the community in turn was strengthened. This interplay between the community and program development is central to our story.

### CONTEXT OF THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

In general, education in Ontario has had a tumultuous eight years. Our extreme right-wing Progressive Conservative government had a low view of teachers and teaching, leading them to centralize many decision-making processes and implement a number of negative measures. For example, education budgets were centralized then dramatically reduced (in the first year of their term \$500 million was slashed from education and more cuts followed); punitive measures were taken towards teachers (implementation of a forced professional learning program); and school districts lost their autonomy (local school boards were dismantled and schools trustees were stripped of their power). This “war on education” hurt teacher morale and job action (strikes, walk-outs, lock-outs) became part of the yearly school experience for most students in the Greater Toronto Area. Universities were not spared the wrath of the government as our budgets were steadily decreased and we were openly criticized by our provincially-elected leaders. Schools of education were put under the microscope of the government and found lacking. To show their might, a teacher certification test was quickly developed with limited pilot testing and imposed on new teachers.

Despite the negativity surrounding education, applications to schools of education in Ontario remained strong. On average OISE/UT receives 6,000 applications for the 1,300 places. All students granted admission to the program have a minimum GPA of B (2.75) and most have experience working with children and youth. When a retirement window was opened to teachers who had approximately 30 years of service, a large proportion of those eligible to retire took the package. This resulted in a teacher shortage that has now abated. In Ontario, the vast majority of the 6,000 new teachers who graduate each year from the 10 faculties of education have completed a one-year post-baccalaureate program. By contrast with practices in many American universities, the one-year program in Ontario leads to a Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) rather than a master’s degree.

## STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

OISE/UT is a very large school of education with more than 10,000 students enrolling annually: 7,000 continuing education students; 1,300 teacher education students; and 2,100 graduate students. At the University of Toronto for three decades there were two entirely separate schools of education: one for teacher certification (B. Ed.) and continuing education (non-degree inservice courses) and one for graduate studies (master and doctoral level programs). In 1996 the two schools were forced to merge; not surprisingly, given the distinct cultures of the two schools the period since 1996 has seen a series of challenges. The elementary preservice program was seriously affected by the merger because there was an exodus of tenured/tenure-stream faculty resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of contract instructors. The heavy workload and low recognition of preservice work made it undesirable for many tenure-stream faculty; further compounding the difficulties, the new institution did not include a department of teacher education. The new OISE/UT chose a “matrix model,” with preservice diffused throughout the institution, without its own budget, democratic governance processes, or control over staffing. The lofty goal of the merger was to involve all graduate-level departments in preservice, yet this has not happened. In 2002–2003 only 10% of the elementary preservice faculty were tenure-stream/tenured, the remainder being contract or “seconded” instructors—educators on leave from their school board for a given period of time. (In the remainder of this chapter we use the term contract instructor to include both contract and seconded instructors.) An Associate Dean was ultimately responsible for teacher education, with a Director for each of the Elementary and Secondary preservice programs. One of the authors of this chapter was the Director of the elementary program for three years. This particular model is one that Tom (1997) describes as highly problematic, because the locus of control is too far removed from the teacher educators who actually deliver the program (p. 40).

At OISE/UT there has been a cohort-based preservice program at the elementary level since the mid 1980s. The 585 student teachers in the one-year post-baccalaureate elementary program are placed in nine cohorts, where they have almost all of their classes. Students choose their cohort based on program focus and location of practice teaching schools. In addition, there are also two small two-year programs, a Master of Teaching (M.T.) which admits approximately 25 students each year and a Master of Arts (M.A.) with an annual intake of approximately 40 students.

Each Cohort has:

- two Coordinators who teach courses and arrange the program, timetable, and practice teaching placements for student teachers in their cohort;

- a small team of faculty (including the Coordinators) who work together to deliver the program teaching almost all the courses;
- a small number of partner schools (approximately 12–15) where student teachers are placed for practice teaching;
- approximately 65 students (except for the Masters' level cohorts); and
- a focus to the program (e.g. the Central cohort focuses on technology, Campus cohort focuses on the arts).

Although each cohort has a distinct focus and set of schools, there is a core program to be delivered.

In each cohort the faculty team addresses the mandatory courses yet each has a particular “flavour” or focus. For example, in the Mid-Town cohort our goals for the cohort are inquiry, community, and integration. Since we have control of the timetable we can spend a significant amount of time planning to realize these goals. The first week of classes focuses on community building culminating in a two-day retreat for all faculty and students. To integrate the program many of the assignments cross course lines. The action research project spans four courses: curriculum and instruction, education psychology, teacher education seminar, and school and society. As a team we jointly develop the action research assignment having individual “steps” of the process part of different courses. With the cohort faculty responsible for practicum supervision each instructor works with his/her practice teaching schools to ensure student teachers have ample opportunity to implement their action research project. To realize the inquiry theme each instructor has elements of reflection and a theory-practice link in his/her courses and assignments. Our goal is to immerse students in a coherent program, with sequenced-activities, and all instructors working towards the same goals. Other cohorts have a different approach. The Doncrest cohort spends the first two weeks of the program doing Tribes training for all students and working on Instructional Strategies. These are the conceptual framework for the program and all courses/instructors root their work in Tribes philosophy and practices. All Associate Teachers must be Tribes-trained teachers and must use the Instructional Strategies approach in their classes. The cohort model gives the faculty team a tremendous amount of latitude yet it is accompanied with significant responsibility: the team is fully responsible for organizing both the academic program and all aspects of the practicum.

Post-merger, the 22 cohort Coordinators (18 B. Ed. and 4 M.T./M.A.) quickly became “invisible” because they did not fit into a department and no department was responsible for preservice teacher education. As a result, while the Coordinators were a very talented group they were not present at the decision-making tables. In 2002–2003 seven of the Coordinators had

doctorates and another six were working on their doctorates; four had recently been principals; five had been consultants; many had done research; most had published curriculum texts or programs; and all had had leadership experience in their school districts. Some had been with the program for more than 5 years while most were fairly new to teacher education.

### PROGRAM PRINCIPLES

As our cohort-based elementary preservice program evolved, we developed a set of principles which reflected our work and helped guide decisions about the program. We relied heavily on the work of Darling-Hammond, especially *Studies in Excellence in Teacher Preparation* (2000) which enunciated principles such as: valuing teaching and research on teaching; connections with schools that match the program's view of teaching; and tight definition of the program experience. Howey's (1996) emphasis on the need for a conceptual framework and attention to preservice pedagogy also influenced our work (p. 145).

#### *Cohort-Based Programming*

As noted, each of our elementary cohorts has a distinct program focus. Some are housed in a local elementary school. The cohort structure allows for program coherence, supports the development of community, and allows instructors to be responsive to student teacher needs and interests. Meier (1995), Wasley (1994), and Wasley, Hampel, and Clark (1997), in line with the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, stress the need to create smaller schools (or schools-within-a-school) so teachers can work together and teachers and students can get to know each other and share a common school culture. Meier (1995) claims that fostering both intellectual and social values "requires joint membership in an attractive community" (p. 113). Cohort-based programs present some challenges, such as the power of the peer group to lead in unfortunate directions (Tom, 1997); however, the research literature on teacher education repeatedly calls for this type of grouping. "When community exists, learning is strengthened—everyone is smarter, more ambitious, and productive" (Peterson, 1992, p. 2). It is the interplay between community, experience, and academic and professional learning that so urgently needs to be recognized in teacher education and education generally.

#### *Coherent Cohort Programs*

Much of our attention in recent years has focused on program coherence within a conceptual framework. For example, the Mid-Town cohort framework

includes the principles of inquiry, community, and integration. Howey and Zimpher “found that when there was an explicit and thoughtful conceptual framework, there was also likely to be a reasonable number of core teaching abilities or teacher qualities derived from this framework that were addressed thematically over time in a variety of program activities” (Howey, 1996, p. 147). While all cohorts address the core components of the program, a particular theme is emphasized in each, allowing faculty and students to explore specific topics in greater detail. The cohort faculty team plans the program, rather than simply teaching a disconnected series of individual courses. For example, the faculty team decides who will introduce certain topics (such as teachers-as-researchers), builds on the work done in other courses, interconnects assignments, designs cohort-wide assignments or activities, and plans events such as *Integrating the Arts or Science Olympics*.

#### *Effective, Collaborative Faculty*

We believe our instructors must be exemplary practitioners, using effective instructional strategies and being thoughtful about their work. As Griffin (1999) argues, “teacher educators should model the teaching they hope their students will enact” (p.15). Given our program structure and small faculty teams, there is an opportunity to teach collaboratively. Instructors new to teacher education are mentored by experienced faculty, instructors team-teach, and an instructor’s personal interests and strengths are utilized. Mutual support and professional growth are often a direct result of this collaboration.

#### *Strong School-University Partnerships*

The practicum component of preservice programs is widely acknowledged both to be critically important and yet to present a number of challenges (Goodlad, 1994; Knowles & Cole, 1996). Many researchers have stated that the campus program and the practicum should be closely integrated, with various types of connection and constant interchange and collaboration (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Fosnot, 1996; Goodlad, 1990; Howey, 1996). OISE/UT has made the development of strong school-university partnerships a major priority. We try to connect the two aspects of the program—academic courses and the practicum—in a logical, natural way, each supporting the other. All the cohorts work with a small number of schools as sites for practice teaching; students are clustered in practice teaching schools for mutual support; assignments require students to attend to both the theoretical and the practical; associate teachers often give classes/workshops in the academic program; new associate teachers are mentored and supported; liaison committees with representatives from the

practice teaching schools and university staff are formed; and professional development sessions are offered for associate teachers.

### *Research-Based Programs*

Working within a university strongly committed to research has impacted on our program in a variety of ways. Ken Zeichner, in his 1998 vice presidential address at the American Educational Research Association, implored schools of education to use the research on teacher education to guide policy decisions. At OISE/UT, research on our programs and those of other universities has had a major influence on policy and practice. Our commitment to research carries into the curriculum of our teacher education program. An inquiry focus is the conceptual framework for many of our cohorts, with students conducting small action research projects, using the internship to study a topic in depth, and participating in professors' research on the program.

## LIVING OUR PRINCIPLES: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Articulating the principles for our program was a challenge, yet living them was substantially more difficult. Richardson (1999) wisely notes that “the complex and competing goals are difficult to negotiate, particularly within boundaries that are created by educational institutions as they are structured today” (p. 152).

### *Social Connectedness*

In the merged institution, the cohort Coordinators found themselves very isolated not only from the graduate school faculty but also from each other because they rarely met as a group. Four years into the merged institution when Clare assumed the role of Director of Elementary Preservice, the program was in some disarray and the faculty were demoralized. Clive was heavily involved in preservice teaching, research, and practicum supervision. Together, we actively worked in and on the program engaging in planning and research on the program.

One of Clare's first initiatives as Director was to bring the cohort Coordinators together to help them develop a sense of belonging. It was important for us to know each other as individuals; to see each other as colleagues; and to jointly develop priorities. The first meeting of the group was characterized by great nervousness on the part of everyone. The situation was so extreme we felt it required a dramatic initiative; we took the radical step of having a

party for all the elementary preservice staff (approximately 55 instructors). Clare invited the entire faculty including administrative staff to her house for a barbecue. About 40 staff attended, the noise level rose steadily as individuals introduced each other, and the party extended far into the evening as little groups were huddled together deep in conversation. Peterson notes, "Life in a learning community is helped along by the interests, ideas, and support of others. Social life is not snuffed out; it is nurtured and used to advance learning in the best way possible" (1992, p. 3). This was the first of many social events that occurred over the next three years. The sense of connectedness with others laid the foundation for us to work together on program development.

To further community building we set meeting dates for monthly Coordinators meetings; established an email folder/line for the Coordinators with messages posted every day; and set up a second email folder for sharing materials. Recognizing that publicly posting your work could be frightening, Clare regularly shared course outlines, evaluation rubrics, letters to associate teachers, activities for teaching classroom management, and so on which led the way for others to follow her example. To recognize each person's talents and interests one Coordinator was invited to do a short opening—a reading or poem or song or activity—at each monthly meeting. As the meetings became "safe," Coordinators shared more of themselves leading to a wide range of activities including chanting a Latin verse in the stairwell of the building to create a musical round, or creating a group poem based on our individual interests. Meetings were characterized by hard work, laughter, and a place to ask about the unspoken.

As our comfort level increased, we began to post on the Coordinators' email conference information beyond the official program. We sent words of congratulations when Judy was recognized by her university alma mater as an exemplary teacher who has made a strong contribution to education; we posted the news that Larry's new book on drama was soon to be published; and we announced that Ivor was granted admission to the doctoral program. Peterson (1992) notes that celebration is key to community. "The social life of the learning community is incomplete if it doesn't include celebration, festivity, and fantasy. All these are integral parts of the human experience" (p. 39).

These community-building strategies led to strong bonds within the group, a sense of belonging, and ultimately a distinct elementary preservice culture. When we wrestled some of the control for staffing our program from senior administrative staff, we involved the Coordinators in the interviews for new instructors. Interestingly, after each interview we would ask, Would this person fit into our Coordinators' group? We knew who we were and how we wanted to act—collaboratively and collegially. We have found at the individual cohort level that if the team involved in the program is itself a community, this



facilitates program integration and serves as a support for faculty and a model and support for the cohort community as a whole. We were now experiencing this across the total elementary program. This social connectedness, beyond providing a positive feeling, has had a substantial impact on all our activities.

### *Program Initiatives*

The sense of belonging and the high comfort level the Coordinators developed amongst themselves was only partly a result of the social activities. We were simultaneously developing the preservice program, thus nurturing our professional interests. The principles of constructivist teaching and learning apply equally well to our Coordinators: “learning cannot be separated from action: perception and action work together in a dialogic manner. . . . Within this framework, the development of an individual relies on social interactions. It is within this social interaction that cultural meanings are shared within the group, and then internalized by the individual” (Richardson, 1997, p. 8). As Director of the program, Clare felt it important for the Coordinators to work together on the program because it would focus our efforts, address various needs in the programs, and develop group norms. We were heavily influenced by Judith Warren Little’s definition of collegiality: adults frequently, concretely and precisely talking about practice; observing each other and reflecting and talking about the observations; and working together on all aspects of curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation. She believed adults need to teach each other about teaching, learning, and leading (Barth, 1990, p. 31). At each Coordinators’ meeting we ensured that the Chairs of the subcommittees (described below) had a place on the agenda. This simple action validated their efforts, showed our support for their work, and allowed for active involvement of many. As Coordinators got to know each other through the socials and curriculum development projects it seemed that individuals with similar interests and styles gravitated towards each other.

If we were going to move beyond simple congeniality to collegiality, we had to get involved in the often messy work of program development. “We must engage one another intellectually and collectively design new and more vigorous programs. Part of the need for this common ground approach is pragmatic—we are politically vulnerable in our current fragmented and institutionally weak condition . . .” (Tom, 1997, p. 90). Beyond teaching and service, the Coordinators had to be involved in research, the currency valued at OISE/UT. We worked on a variety of projects, some more successfully than others, yet in each venture our community was strengthened and our program improved. We have chosen to discuss four program development activities, two large-scale and two much smaller.

The practicum subcommittee felt that supervision was absolutely essential for a successful practicum (or to work through an unsuccessful one), yet they astutely realized that part of the problem with supervision was confusion about processes. Not all instructors know *how to supervise*; granted there is not one “correct” way, there are some basic principles. The subcommittee decided as their first action to offer a workshop on supervision, immediately preceding our first practicum session. This workshop, well attended by both new and experienced supervisors, included role-playing, commonly asked questions, expectations, and procedures. The subcommittee has continued to offer workshops on supervision with each session delving deeper into the issue. The subcommittee eventually wrote the invaluable document *Guidelines for Practicum Supervision* which outlines all aspects of the supervision process.

As comfort levels increased on this topic, the Coordinators began to openly share other concerns about the practicum. Supervision loads were unevenly distributed, with some instructors having minimal supervisions and others labouring under unmanageable loads. In the OISE/UT model, course instructors do supervision; unlike many other programs, we do not hire external faculty such as retired teachers and graduate students. We worked with the Associate Dean to assign a fair and equitable supervision load to each instructor, eventually producing a chart showing everyone’s supervision allocation.

Through the subcommittees and Coordinators’ meetings we were able to address a variety of other issues related to the practicum. Part of the reason for such active involvement was our commitment to acting quickly to capitalize on efforts or to respond to concerns. As the group evolved support was always available; at least one fellow Coordinator (or Clive or Clare) would always volunteer to help out by either joining a subcommittee or meeting informally to explore a topic. No one was ever left alone to deal with an issue. A subcommittee chaired by Louise developed guidelines for dealing with a student experiencing harassment (sexual, racial, ethnic . . .). We drew on John’s revisions to the formative/interim evaluation form which led to each cohort faculty team shaping it to reflect their program. Susan’s work on lesson plan formats were widely shared and used. In short, reflection, inquiry, and action were all occurring simultaneously.

To further our school-university partnership the elementary preservice Coordinators wanted to move to the next level: professional development. Such an initiative would be unmanageable for one cohort team to organize on its own, but our combined efforts allowed us to offer in-depth and frequent sessions. For example, we organized a breakfast for the principals of all our practicum schools (approximately 90 of our 120 principals attended) which included a talk by our then Dean, Michael Fullan, on large-scale literacy reform. A second event for our approximate 800 associate teachers included

a keynote address by David Booth on technology and literacy, a publishers' display, and discussion about the role of an associate teacher. Both events were done on a shoestring budget, involved all 11 cohorts, and were highly successful. The incredible energy of the group was very productive because we focused our efforts on actualizing the program principles described earlier. As a community we were extremely proud of our accomplishments, which led to us developing a shared history. Often conversations began with, "Remember when we did . . .". Our shared history gave credence to our past efforts and provided a foundation for future endeavours.

#### *Math Activity Day—MAD*

We have found that mathematics is a challenging preservice course to teach because instructors often have to teach both pedagogy (e.g. authentic assessment and evaluation) and content (Kosnik et al., 2002a). A subcommittee which included both Coordinators and mathematics instructors was formed to address these issues. This group led by Lucy, Coordinator of the Crosstown cohort, was extremely committed, innovative, hardworking, and realistic. In the subcommittee meetings, the group shared resources for teaching, mentored new math instructors, and decided on common course activities. The math instruction in our program is outstanding in large part because of the collective efforts of the math instructors.

One of this committee's initiatives was Math Activity Day, a day for the entire elementary preservice program (over 600 students) which focused on various strands of the math curriculum. The committee felt this day would be useful in providing instruction, would maximize expertise among the instructors, and would demonstrate the program's commitment to mathematics education. To make linkages with the local school districts, the subcommittee invited local school district mathematics consultants to offer workshops. At each Coordinators' meeting the logistics for the day were discussed; all Coordinators had to agree to "give up" a day in their regular program for MAD; and commit to helping organize their cohorts. All readily agreed and were incredibly supportive, in part because they recognized the problems faced by both students and math instructors. On a minimal budget the day included a keynote speaker, a huge range of workshops, and a publishers' display. Math Activity Day, now in its third year, is enshrined in the program and has had an impact on students and instructors alike.

#### *Special Education Subcommittee*

One of the peculiarities of the OISE/UT preservice program is the absence of a formal course on special education. Although many instructors feel a course

is necessary, the convoluted governance structure makes it impossible for us, the preservice faculty, to alter the program. The senior administration is committed to special education being “infused” into all courses, which has had the unfortunate result that attention to special education varies dramatically from cohort to cohort. For example, Jackie the Coordinator of the Doncrest cohort, an expert in special education, is able to integrate special education naturally into the program. However, all cohorts unfortunately do not have a team member with Jackie’s level of expertise. The instructors for the Educational Psychology course formed a subcommittee and decided to focus their efforts initially on special education. They became involved in a range of activities. For example, Lucy and Hazel conducted formal focus groups with instructors, students, and graduates of the program to study the needs of beginning teachers regarding special education. Kath and Jackie took the lead on organizing a packet of readings on special education to be used in all cohorts: they developed a glossary of terms and practice exercises for students to use to prepare for the teacher certification test. This subcommittee has had a tremendous impact on the program, with the quality of instruction for special education improving dramatically, relieving the pressure on Coordinators to find ways to deliver the information to students, and ensuring that all cohorts receive similar information.

#### *Research on Assignments*

In terms of work on the academic program, we took a rather unusual approach. At the *Fourth international conference on self-study of teacher education practices* in 2002, Holt-Reynolds and Johnson presented a paper describing their research on the assignments for their program (Kosnik et al., 2002b, p. 14). This inspiring paper led us (Clive and Clare) to rethink our assignments in our particular courses, which in turn led Clare to suggest that the initiative for the Coordinators for the 2002–2003 academic year be a self-study of our assignments. This suggestion was well received and, over the year half of each monthly Coordinators’ meeting was devoted to this research. We worked through a five-step process:

Session 1—Working in small groups (4–6 Coordinators) we all addressed the question, Why do you require students to complete assignments?

Session 2—Each group addressed a distinct question e.g. How do you know when an assignment is not working?

Session 3—As a whole group we decided on a research methodology (survey rather than individual interviews) and a specific focus (the structure of assignments). We generated specific questions or categories to be investigated.

Session 4—As a group we reviewed and modified the questions. In addition, each pair of Coordinators tailored one part of the survey for the assignments specific to their cohort.

Session 5—Each pair of Coordinators brought the tabulated data to a meeting where we talked about our findings.

The instrument we developed had 45 questions (including 9 open-ended questions). The categories were: background information, course work, feedback, practicum, and other comments. Questions included:

- To what extent was each of the following assignments effective/valuable in preparing you to be a teaching professional? (each assignment for the particular cohort was listed)
- To what extent should there be a self-evaluation component to all assignments?
- To what extent did your assignments help you be successful in the practicum/internship?
- To what extent do you like assignments interconnecting across courses?
- To what extent is it important to you that you have a choice in topic for assignments?
- What motivates you to work diligently/fully on an assignment?
- What advice would you give your instructors regarding assignments?

Throughout the process there was lively discussion about the goals of the program and strategies for developing assignments. Because of the strong sense of community among the Coordinators and the high trust level, there was extremely honest discussion. When analyzing and discussing the findings, some described responses that surprised and even upset them. There was no denying, sugar-coating, or blaming, only true inquiry into the effectiveness of our assignments. After our general meeting, each pair of Coordinators took their individual cohort results to their faculty team for use in program development for the 2003–2004 academic year. Two further benefits of the collaborative research were that it allowed us to take some of our Coordinators who are novice researchers through an entire research cycle, and it actualized our program principle of using research to inform our practice.

## CONCLUSION

We accomplished a great deal in the past three years, but it would be misleading to suggest that all our initiatives moved forward smoothly and collaboratively. There were definitely “bumps” as we moved into program development. For

example, there was some variability in the amount of effort Coordinators were willing to contribute. As we became more public in our work, we opened ourselves up for scrutiny and criticism. Others beyond elementary preservice were sometimes quick to criticize us, perhaps precisely because of our enthusiasm, community, and success.

In addition to all the regular tasks required of Coordinators, our initiatives increased workload. It was extraordinarily heavy and at times we felt we were being exploited. We wished we had argued more vigorously for course release for the chairs of the subcommittees. As we worked to renew our program, we could not accept or act on every proposal brought forward. Some were wrongheaded and some would have been too difficult to implement. We needed to be diplomatic when a Coordinator enthusiastically brought forward an inappropriate suggestion, especially in the early stages when our community was fragile. The pressure on Clare as Director of the program was tremendous. Working through the multiple governance layers within the institution was draining, and being one of the few tenured faculty at the decision-making tables was a weighty responsibility.

Community building and program development went hand-in-hand. As we bravely undertook some initiatives we developed processes for others to present their suggestions. As we got to know each other as individuals and colleagues we learned about each other's working styles. This was especially helpful for Clare when working with the Associate Dean on staffing the cohorts. We were able to create teams that had the potential to be collaborative, with members having complementary styles or interests. As a team of Coordinators we were able to maximize our efforts, which led to substantial cross-cohort sharing. The old barter system was enacted regularly: "You do a session on learning styles with my students and I'll do a session on drama with your students." This led to our students having the benefit of many instructors, not simply those on their team. Our open dialogue helped Coordinators learn from each other and examine their own cohort program, leading to more consistency across cohorts. We did not strive for duplication; rather, similar expectations and programs. By sharing so generously with each other we could mentor new Coordinators, capitalize on each other's strengths, model our way of being, and develop our distinctive elementary preservice culture.

As we move forward, our next steps are both large and small. We would like to develop goals for each course, with exit outcomes, accompanied by a conceptual framework for our program. Given the teacher certification test and increased accountability measures we need to be more explicit about our work. And we need more involvement of full-time tenured faculty and senior

administration, because we need many voices at the decision-making tables. Our recently elected Liberal government promises to be more teacher-friendly. We hope for an era of support for all involved in education, including a place for teacher educators so they will no longer be a *missing link*.

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**Elementary Preservice  
Survey of Assignments  
2002–2003**

*Thank you so much for agreeing to complete this anonymous survey. We think it will take 30 minutes, including the open-ended final section. When completing the survey please include all components of the program (e.g. Related Studies, J/I Teaching Subject, Arts), not simply your core Option subjects.*

**Purpose**

- To develop a better sense of the effectiveness/value of assignments in the program
- To develop a better sense of the rhythm and challenges of the workload
- To develop a better sense of the requirements in the preservice program
- To model for our student teachers being a responsive teacher/teacher researcher/thoughtful practitioner

**Option Name: Mid-Town**

**A. Background Information**

1. Program: Circle One  
Primary/Junior    Junior/Intermediate  
J/I Teaching Subject \_\_\_\_\_
2. Related Studies: Fall or Winter Term, Name of Course \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you have a computer at home? Yes No
4. Do you have internet access from home? Yes No
5. Do you have a quiet place at home where you can study? Yes No
6. Do you have a part-time job? Yes No
- 6a. If yes, approximately how many hours did you work a week? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many years since your completed your B.A. or B.Sc.? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+
8. Do you have additional responsibilities? (e.g. childcare) Yes No

**B. Course Work**

9. To what extent was the course work in the **entire** preservice program manageable?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

10. Before you began the preservice program, to what extent were you familiar with the number of in-class hours?

(approximately 9:00–3:30 every day)

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

11. To what extent were the responsibilities (readings, in-class activities, course hours, attendance . . . ) for each of the following courses **appropriate**? (at this point do NOT consider assignments—see question # 15 re: assignments)

Course	A great deal	Quite a Lot	A Fair Amount	A little	Not at all
T.E.S.					
Psychological Foundations					
School and Society					
Curriculum and Instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Arts</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Social Studies</li> <li>• Science/Technology</li> </ul>					
Visual Arts					
Music					
Physical and Health Education					
Related Studies					
J/I Teaching Subject					
Religious Education					

12. To what extent were you given the course requirements in September?

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

13. Were there any courses where the requirements changed? Yes No

13 a. If yes, which courses \_\_\_\_\_

14. To what extent were you given adequate time to complete your assignments?

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

15. To what extent were each of the following assignments **effective/valuable** in preparing you to be a teaching professional?

<b>Course</b>	<b>A great deal</b>	<b>Quite a Lot</b>	<b>A Fair Amount</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
<b>TES</b> Experience/Mentor/Metaphor Paper					
Prep Steps for Action Research					
Resource Kit					
<b>Psych Foundations</b> Research Paper and Presentation					
Observation Profile of a child (TES)					
<b>School and Society</b> Draft Philosophy					
Final Philosophy					
<b>Curriculum and Instruction</b> Action Research					
<b>Language Arts</b> Sharing Outstanding Activity					
<b>Mathematics</b> Sharing Outstanding Activity					
<b>Social Studies</b> Field Trip Project					
<b>Science/Technology</b> Science Activity Hand Out					
<b>Visual Arts</b> •					
<b>Music</b> •					
Physical and Health Education •					
<b>Related Studies</b> Please list number of assignments and rank each • ____ • ____ • ____					
J/I Teaching Subject Please list number of assignments and rank each					

16. To what extent were the due dates of assignments spaced appropriately?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

17. To what extent did the Option assignments match the philosophy of the Option?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

18. To what extent is it important to you that you have a **choice in topic** for assignments (e.g. choose a topic to investigate)?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

19. To what extent were the assignments in the entire program repetitive?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

19a. What assignments were repetitive?

19 b. Which courses?

20. To what extent did the completion of assignments prepare you to write the OTQT?

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

### C. Feedback

21. To what extent was the feedback on course assignments appropriate?

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

21 a. If an assignment did not have appropriate feedback, what was not appropriate?

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22. To what extent were you clear about the expectations for each assignment?

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

22 a. If an assignment did not have clear expectations, what was unclear?

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23. To what extent **should** instructors be flexible with due dates?

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

24. To what extent do you like group assignments?

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

25. To what extent were the number of group assignments appropriate?

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

26. To what extent should instructors allow students to resubmit an assignment (after making modifications) and then receive a higher mark?

A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

27. To what extent do you like a self-evaluation component to an assignment?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

28. To what extent **should** there be a self-evaluation component to all assignments?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

29. To what extent do you like a peer-evaluation component to an assignment?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

30. To what extent do you like Pass/Fail assignments? (rather than an A, B, C...)  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

31. To what extent do you like assignments interconnecting across courses?  
(one large assignment includes marks for a number of courses)  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

32. To what extent do you think the grades on your assignments reflected your learning?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

### C. Practicum

33. To what extent did your assignments help you be successful in the practicum/internship?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

34. To what extent did you have to complete assignments for your academic courses during the practicum?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

35. To what extent did having to complete academic assignments during the practicum **limit** your success in the practicum?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

36. To what extent was your work during the practicum (lesson planning, marking, locating resources . . . ) appropriate?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

37. To what extent do you like having assignments that require you to link the topic with your work in the practicum?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

38. To what extent are assignments that are linked to the practicum effective/valuable for your learning?  
A great deal, quite a lot, a fair amount, a little, not at all, not sure

**D. Other Comments**

39. What assignments do you feel helped you prepare to be a successful beginning teacher?
40. What motivates you to work diligently/fully on an assignment?
41. What made an assignment difficult to complete?
42. What assignment(s) should be deleted from the program? Briefly explain why.
43. Were there any assignments that you felt helped you be successful in the practicum? If yes, please name the assignment and give a brief reason why.
44. Given the length of the program and university requirements (must have assignments) what advice would you give your instructors regarding assignments?
45. Other comments regarding assignments . . . .