

## INTRODUCTION

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In the spring of 1995 the College of Education at the University of Florida initiated an effort to redesign elementary and special education teacher education. Influenced by a variety of forces within and outside of the college, a planning committee of faculty and school-based colleagues began a four-year journey to unify general and special education in a teacher education program for which faculty in all of the college's five departments would have responsibility.

Not surprisingly, the reform journey was characterized by fits and starts, as reflected in the titles and duration of the five phases of the process:

- Phase I: Getting Started (10 months)
- Phase II: First Design-False Start (6 months)
- Phase III: Back to the Drawing Board—The Redesign Teams (7 months)
- Phase IV: Approval of Curriculum (3 months)
- Phase V: Developing the Courses and University Approval (26 months)

Despite the rocky road, the faculty reached the destination of program approval and the first five cohorts of preservice teachers began the Unified Elementary Special Education Proteach program in the fall of 1999.

Of course, program approval and implementation are merely one destination in the ongoing journey of program improvement. What are the students learning? How do we know? What can faculty do to make program experiences more powerful? These are the questions that guide ongoing efforts to prepare teachers for the increasingly diverse classrooms in our state and nation.

Preparing for Inclusive Teaching: Meeting the Challenges of Teacher Education Reform tells the story of the reform effort at the University of Florida. Chapters were written after completion of the first year of the three-year program; they provide a glimpse of the program's beginnings. In particular, chapters provide details of program development and description and close examination of several key features such as teaching teams, unique field experiences, and electronic portfolios. Woven through these descriptive chapters are reports of research conducted by faculty during and after the first year of program implementation. These studies and many others like them continue to provide insight into participants' experiences in the program. These insights guide faculty in adjusting courses, field experiences, and other program structures to promote preservice teacher learning of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to teach in a classroom of diverse children.

Although the chapters focus on one reform effort at a large, state university, chapters written by teacher education experts from other institutions help to contextualize the particulars of this reform within the national education and teacher education scenes. The detailed descriptions of local efforts coupled with the external authors' discussions and critiques of those efforts will be informative and thought-provoking for readers who are considering or engaged in teacher education reform.

## OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

In Part One (chapters 1 and 2) of the book, the authors overview the landscape of reform in teacher education, to include the challenges faced by most who engage in this activity. The authors of chapter 1 (Rennert-Ariev, Frederick, and Valli) describe the recommendations for teacher education reform contained in the major reports and documents of national commissions (e.g., National Commission on Teaching and America's Future), institutional partnerships (e.g., Holmes and Renaissance), and national organizations (e.g., National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education). The authors analyzed these reports to identify common recommendations that they organized into two categories: Structural Reforms and Conceptual Reforms. Included in their discussion of Structural Reforms are those reforms relating to governance (i.e., quality control of teacher preparation and credentialing), recruitment (i.e., supply of quality teachers), program extension (i.e., time in teacher preparation), and induction

(i.e., quality support systems for beginning teachers). The discussion of Conceptual Reforms focuses on the need for teacher preparation programs to include a clear vision (i.e., a common philosophy of teaching and learning to assure more coherent programs); curricula that reflect strong content and pedagogy; clinical experiences anchored in the context of schools, classrooms, and students; and teacher assessments designed to assure teacher competence. The authors close chapter 1 by discussing the factors that influenced reform groups to put their attention on teaching and teacher education: inadequate school performance, population shifts, and economic changes.

Rod Webb follows in chapter 2 with a discussion of the challenges faced by faculty and administrators who engage in teacher education reform. He overviews the context in which research universities exist, weaves in the literature on the change process, then narrows the focus to the University of Florida and describes how faculty and administrators navigated the sociopolitical and institutional contexts to achieve success in their reform efforts.

Part Two (chapters 3 through 7) contains a description of the University of Florida's reform effort, including the nature of the reformed programs (chapter 3), the processes they used to accomplish their work (chapter 4), how faculty partnered with schools and the community (chapter 5), and how teams worked together (chapter 6). This part concludes with chapter 7 by external author Marleen Pugach who pulls out major themes, raises key questions, and discusses lessons learned.

Ross, Lane, and McCallum begin Part Two in chapter 3 by tracing the history of teacher education innovation at the University of Florida to show the reader how earlier reform efforts influenced current efforts at program renewal. These authors draw on the common recommendations of national reports on teacher education reform to show how these recommendations figured into the redesign of Proteach and led to the new Unified Elementary Special Education Proteach program, UESEP. Faculty and administrators adopted inclusive education as the mission of UESEP and Ross, Lane, and McCallum articulate the themes, values, and content associated with this mission. Other program features, such as, content, cohort approach, varied field experiences, performance assessment, and collaboration are also highlighted. In addition, the authors outline the program by providing a description of each semester of UESEP.

The process used to design UESEP is the focus of chapter 4. Authors Correa, Ross, and Webb review the forces that led to the redesign of Proteach, to include the arrival of a new dean and new federal funding to support program revision. The authors walk the reader

through the various phases of the development process and show how they made initial progress, encountered setbacks, and got back on track to continue their progress toward program redesign. Perhaps of greatest benefit to the reader is the section that describes the solutions that faculty and administrators developed to overcome the barriers they encountered.

Chapter 5 emphasizes the process used to design field experiences for UESEP. Like the previous chapter, authors Griffin, Fang, Bishop, and Halsall walk the reader through the design and structure of field experiences and describe solutions to the barriers they encountered. Closing this chapter is a section devoted to the reflections of school district personnel on the UESEP program and its field experiences.

Chapter 6 focuses on teaching teams, made up of full and adjunct faculty and graduate students, who were responsible for teaching approximately 210 students each year. Through these teams, program faculty sought to ensure greater consistency in course content across sections. To document the experiences and attitudes of team members, data were collected through focus groups, surveys, and interviews. Findings reported by Webb, Ross, and McCallum offer insight into faculty perspectives on issues related to instructional autonomy, instructional improvement, collaboration strategies, and cost-benefit. The authors' thoughts about these data reveal insights into the tensions faculty face when engaging in teacher education reform at a large research university.

Chapter 7, authored by Marleen Pugach, pulls out three themes from the discussion of UESEP in Part Two: (a) the hard work of reform that must be sustained over time to be successful, (b) changing the culture of the organization, and (c) resources to support reformed teacher education. In addition, Pugach raises three questions that surfaced from her review of Part Two: How are the themes and goals (of UESEP) connected over time? How is diversity addressed? How is inclusive pedagogy defined? Finally, she addresses lessons learned related to (a) resources, (b) professional development schools, and (c) patience.

Part Three (chapters 8 through 12) includes the perspectives of general and special education faculty to make strong points about the importance of teacher education reform being a collegewide effort. Included in this section are several studies conducted by faculty and doctoral students to understand faculty, student, and practitioner responses to reform. External author Renee Clift's response to this section focuses on a number of key questions that, if answered, might form a picture of a unified teacher education program.

The first chapter in Part Three, chapter 8, examines the nature of collaboration in teaching teams comprised of faculty members from general and special education. In contrast to chapter 6, the authors of chapter 8 dig deeply into the process of collaboration. In addition to offering insights into the process of collaboration (e.g., developing a syllabus together), authors Brownell, McLeskey, Ashton, Hoppey, and Nowak discuss the tensions that resulted from the ways faculty from different fields approach their work. The areas on which the faculty differed were (a) approaches used to set time and work priorities, (b) professional autonomy, (c) views of the classroom teacher's role, and (d) perspectives of knowledge. Especially helpful in this chapter are the segments from field notes used to illustrate tensions in each of the areas on which faculty differed.

In chapter 9 Bondy, Adams, and Mallini report the findings of an interview study by using participants in the revised program's first field experience. Students (nine), cooperating teachers (nine), and instructors (two) made up the sample. Results revealed many benefits to learning and teaching in partnerships. For example, students described benefits such as "understand self as a teacher," teachers noted benefits such as "insights into the teacher education program," and instructors pointed out such benefits as "experimenting with unfamiliar teacher education pedagogy." Interviews revealed that the structure of partnerships promoted collaborative reflection, which in turn facilitated learning.

Chapter 10 was written by counselor educators Amatea and Jennie who make the critical point that teacher education reform is a collegewide effort. They developed, then taught a course on the roles of families and communities in education, and teachers' roles with families. Amatea and Jennie provide an overview of their course and the challenges they faced to assure that classrooms are actually collaborative environments. They close their chapter with a discussion of the shifts they made in their own thinking about school counselor preparation, especially because school counselors play such an important role with children, teachers, and families.

The authors (Bondy, Stafford, and Mott) of chapter 11 report another study of program participants, with a focus on student views of their experiences. Retrospective interviews were used with thirty-nine students who had completed the first two semesters of UESEP. Results showed that students valued such things as practical classes, alignment of coursework and fieldwork, and good instructors, and the meanings they attached to these things were examined. Student concerns focused on such areas as irrelevant information and inconvenience of field experiences, among others. The authors provided numerous examples of

student comments to enhance the reader's understanding. Finally, Bondy, Stafford, and Mott offer a number of recommendations for teacher education.

In chapter 12 of Part Three Renee Clift provides an overview of and offers her perspectives on the work done by faculty in the UESEP program to examine, continually and openly, the strengths and weaknesses of their program. Throughout this chapter Clift raises questions that surfaced as she reviewed the data, analysis, and interpretations of the University of Florida faculty. She concludes her discussion by addressing three key questions: What can we learn about teacher education from UESEP? What can we learn about teacher education research from UESEP? What can we learn about ourselves as university-based researchers, teacher educators, and citizens?

Part Four (chapters 13 through 15) focuses on the performance assessments built into the reformed teacher education program at the University of Florida. Following an introduction to performance assessment by external author Catheryn Weitman in chapter 13, Halsall and Vernetson, in chapter 14, provide an overview of the ongoing assessments of student outcomes that are used throughout courses and field experiences in UESEP. Although these authors refer to the use of an electronic portfolio, the detailed description of this system is described in chapter 15 by Ring, Foti, and Swain. After discussion of the development and use of the system, the authors address the challenges they faced and how they found solutions.

In Part Five, authors representing special education, general teacher education, and public elementary school, discuss their reactions to the first 15 chapters. Linda Blanton comments on lessons and recommendations for special education teacher educators and researchers. Alan Tom identifies redesign issues in UESEP and offers design ideas for teacher educators. Diane Kyle and Gayle Moore respond to UESEP from their experience as colleagues in an elementary Professional Development School attempting to strengthen presence and inservice teacher education and student learning.

There are several ways to approach the reading of this book. Some might choose to begin at the beginning and proceed through the epilogue. This approach would take readers through an overview of the national reform agenda in teacher education and a discussion of the barriers to radical reform in the university; description of the Unified Elementary Special Education Proteach (UESEP) program, the process of program development, and key features of the program; examination of faculty and student learning and experience in the first year of the program; and discussion of the assessment of preservice teacher learn-

ing in the program. Some readers may choose to begin at the end of the book with the three chapters written from special education, general education, and school-based perspectives. Others may choose to focus their reading on particular topics, such as teaching teams. In this case, the response chapters throughout and at the end of the text will help determine how to proceed.

Many colleagues within and outside of the University of Florida's College of Education participated in the preparation of this book. Chapter authors include faculty and doctoral students from four departments in the College of Education and even, in two cases, students in the UESEP. Today, there would be even more people eager to contribute. Although at the birth of the book many of the newly developed courses and field experiences had yet to be implemented, four classes of UESEP students have now graduated with the master's degree. Faculty and doctoral students continue to discuss and study the program. Their research helps to improve the program and will no doubt help other teacher educators to do the same. We are grateful to our colleagues and friends who agreed to write with us and who share our enthusiasm for doing and studying teacher education.