

During the spring of 2009, we were asked to explore how the elementary, early childhood, and special education curriculum could come closer together. We were funded by the institution to develop a summer curriculum workgroup. Part of the impetus for this was cost recovery (we have experienced some dramatic reductions in enrollment; over 50% in some cases) as well as merging to one department several years prior.

At about this same time Peter Hutchinson, President and Susan Heegaard, Vice President of the Bush Foundation made a visit to our campus to investigate our interest in one of their Bush goals (increasing student achievement in P-12 schools). Their focus on achieving this goal was to target teacher preparation. We discussed with them our interest in trying to merge standards from general education and special education into more common coursework across the two majors to better prepare our graduates to meet the diverse learning needs of students found in today's classrooms. Both Peter and Susan were excited about this idea and indicated that they had not heard it from any other institutions they had met with. So, this seemed to be a niche that we could develop, different than all other training programs across the state. At this point Dr. Teri Walseth came to our department meeting and we decided to move forward in pursuing Bush funding.

The Bush Foundation put us in a partnership with VCSU and NDSU and while we questioned this, it was clear that our involvement depended on it. If you read through the proposal posted below, you will see many levels of partnership activities that we have formulated. The guarantee of our students was a Bush requirement. As I have mentioned, Bush has had a team of national leaders in teacher reform at each of the Bush Summits to present and lead discussions with us that included cross-institutional groups (the other ten institutions involved). In this manner we have become familiar with national reform efforts as well as what other institutions in our tri-state area are discussing and planning. Mentorship and residency are elements reflected in national reform and components of all other institutions presenting proposals to the Bush Foundation. Our proposal contains many references and literature review has been conducted to identify: effective teaching, teacher leader, residency and induction programs.

During one of our first faculty meetings fall 2009, Dr. Lynn Mahlum and Dr. Sue Severson presented the same information presented to a meeting of school administrators this summer. One

of the elements discussed was the Bush requirement of Place and Support--this is where the residency and mentoring fit.

Along side the work on the Bush proposal we have had a curriculum workgroup meeting each week to develop proposed courses and redesign the proposed program that the summer curriculum workgroup developed. Faculty have been paid with minimal extra duty days for the development of courses. A big mistake we made in this process was to make the assumption we could take courses through the approval process (department, teacher prep, grad council, APAC) individually without having the entire program developed. At the Teacher Prep Committee meeting we experienced many questions regarding this, and, I understood their concerns.

We now have been meeting with content area people to conduct planning on content area courses. We had believed we could adjust credits in the content areas to be able to offer a course titled "Effective Teaching" to assure that all students had this foundation and then could apply it to content; as well as a course titled "Building Partnerships" to assure that our students develop good communication skills, demonstrate the knowledge and skills to consult and collaborate and work with families and other team members. The proposed program posted on this website a fluid document. As we have met with Arts and Sciences faculty, the issue of ED 205 arose. We had Deans from other colleges involved at these meetings and it seemed apparent that we needed to have further discussions of ED 205 with input from Secondary/K-12 education faculty.

The curriculum workgroup meets every Wednesday at 9:30 in the conference room of Holmquist. Anyone is extended an invitation to come to these meetings. These faculty are no longer being paid for this work and are therefore dedicating a great deal of time in trying to create a program that prepares our students to teach within diverse classrooms.

Initially, we were taking courses through the approval process, but since the teacher prep meeting we had decided not to pursue this process but rather continue to present courses and have discussions and then in early February bring everything for a vote at one time. This is necessary because of the fluidity of the proposed program.

It is clear that we need to continue this discussion so we will plan to have weekly meetings regarding elements of ED 205, Science sequence, Math sequence, Art and Music, Health and PE,

embedded field experience, etc. Not everyone will agree on these issues and so we need to be prepared to have discussions where there are differing opinions, but this is the place to get your opinion heard and if anyone wants to join the curriculum workgroup please let me know. The point of yesterday's meeting was discussion and that is why there were no action items on the agenda.