

Summer 1996

An Evaluation of the Central Washington University "Merge" Teacher Preparation Program

Sara K. Black

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/graduate_projects



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

AN EVALUATION OF THE CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
"MERGE" TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

by

Sara K. Black

July, 1996

The purpose of this project was to assess pre-service teachers perceptions of their training in the Merge Program. Merge is a pilot teacher preparation program at Central Washington University characterized by enhanced early field experience, integration of coursework, and integration of special education and regular education. To accomplish the purpose stated above, participants in the Merge Program were surveyed and data was analyzed. Current research on field experience, integration of coursework, and integration of special and regular education was reviewed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Jack McPherson, the chairman of my graduate committee, for his guidance and support throughout my master's program. I would also like to thank Dr. Dale LeFevre and Dr. Linda Beath for their time and assistance.

In addition, I would like to thank the Merge participants for their help and cooperation with this project. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Don and Ann Black, for all their help and encouragement this past year and throughout my educational career.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER I	
Background of the Study	1
Introduction	1
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Limitations of the Study	4
Definition of Terms	5
CHAPTER II	
Review of Related Literature	7
Introduction	7
Early Field Experience	7
Integration of Coursework	12
Merging Special and Regular Education	14
Summary of Literature	17
CHAPTER III	
Procedures of the Study	18
Need for the Study	18
Design and Development.....	19
Population group/sample survey	19
Administration of the Survey Instrument	19
Treatment of the Data	20

CHAPTER I

Background of the Study

Introduction

As the dynamics of the public school classrooms change so do the needs for change in teacher preparation programs. Inclusion has become more and more common in our public school classrooms. In order to deal with the diverse population of learners in these classrooms, there is a need for preservice teachers to be trained as regular education and special education teachers (Hinders, 1995). The current focus on increasing early field experiences in all phases of teacher preparation programs is a change brought about by the demands of school officials who believe that more field experiences during the professional training of teachers will prepare them for their student teaching and beyond as a classroom teacher.

In the late 1980's faculty members of Central Washington University's (CWU) Education Department began to discuss a change in the elementary education teacher preparation program. The change was a combined area of study so that students could pursue an integrated major that would prepare them to be effective elementary teachers of all students, rather than taking separate Elementary Education, Special Education, Early Childhood Education or Reading majors. Two educational researchers from the University of Iowa, Drs. William and Susan Stainback, were invited to campus to discuss what they term a "unified approach" to pre-service teacher education. Following this presentation, a small group of faculty members began to design an alternative elementary education program at CWU. During the next few years, the program

continued to be discussed and revised. But in the 1991-92 academic year, the program was delayed as the Department of Education went through an NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) re-evaluation and a change in administration. The following year, however, the program was revitalized and voted on by the Education Department faculty, with specific plans for a pilot program to be implemented in the Selah School District for the 1993-94 school year. However, because of budgetary restrictions involving travel expenses, the program developers decided not to pilot the program in Selah, but to work in the Ellensburg School District. The concept of the Merge Program was presented to the Ellensburg School Board at its meeting on December 8, 1993, with presentations to teachers and principals made at each elementary school in the weeks following the School Board meeting. In January 1994, the program was approved and plans began for the implementation of the Merge Program in the Spring of 1994.

Merge is a pilot program for an alternative elementary education certification program that is characterized by enhanced use of early field experience, integration of pedagogical content, and the integration of regular education and special education. The students completed classes in a specified sequence and moved through the program as a cohort group. Twenty-five students were recruited to participate in the pilot program, of which twenty-four completed the program. Students were accepted into the program who:

- a) had met the criteria for full admission to the teacher preparation program; and

b) who had not taken courses in the professional sequence, elementary education, or special education programs other than the prerequisite classes of PSY 314 (Human Development), SPED 301 (Intro. to Exceptional Students), and MATH 164.1 (Foundations of Arithmetic).

Schools were selected for field sites in the Ellensburg, Kittitas, and Cle Elum School Districts. The Merge students spent three quarters of their six quarter program in a field setting. The remaining quarters of the program were spent taking courses on campus at Central Washington University. The following courses were integrated during their first field-based quarter: Elementary education subject matter areas of language arts, reading, and social studies. Special education classes SPED 411 (assessment), SPED 412 (curriculum), and SPED 431 (the IEP process) were team taught during the fourth quarter. ED 311 (Methods and Materials), SPED 410 (Behavior Management), and PSY 315 (Learning Theory) were taught during the fifth quarter of the program.

The Merge Program has four goals:

1. To improve the ability of elementary education teachers to successfully integrate children of diverse learning abilities into their classrooms.
2. To improve the ability of elementary education teachers to create and manage a positive classroom learning environment.
3. To improve the ability of elementary education teachers to work in cohort teams to develop and modify content and techniques.
4. To improve the ability of elementary education teachers to integrate content and pedagogical knowledge. (see Appendix A)

The Merge Program was completed at the end of Winter Quarter 1996, when most of the pre-service teachers finished their student teaching field experience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess pre-service teachers perceptions of their training in the Merge Program regarding integration of regular education and special education, early field experience, and the integration of content areas. To accomplish this purpose, Merge participants were surveyed following the completion of their program.

Limitations of the Study

For the purposes of succinctness and focus, it was necessary to set the following limitations for this study:

1. Research. The review of literature and research summarized in Chapter II was gathered from the last ten years.
2. Population Surveyed. The study was limited to one population sample, that of the Merge pre-service teachers.
3. Characteristics of the Population. Further delimitation considered in this study were represented in the population characteristics:
 - a. The participants surveyed may have had different levels of experience and familiarity with children.
 - b. No participant surveyed had the same experience.
 - c. The findings of this study represented the responses and perceptions of the sample group at only one time during the Merge Program (March, 1996).

4. Survey Instrument. Limitations assigned to the survey instrument in the study included the following items:
 - a. The survey instrument was not created by the author for this study, it already existed.
 - b. The small sample (54 percent response rate) limits what can be generalized from the respondents. This is not a true representation of the whole group.
 - c. Respondents to the survey did not complete the survey at the same time, perhaps limiting their reaction.
 - d. The survey instrument was utilized at the culmination of the Merge Program, thereby requiring students to recall events within the past two years. Lack of immediacy is therefore a limitation of the survey instrument.

5. Presentation and Analysis of Data. The study concerned itself primarily with the presentation and analysis of survey data obtained from the participants of the Merge program.

Definition of Terms

Significant terms used in the context of this study have been defined as follows:

Co-Hort is a group, or a number of people gathered together forming a recognizable unit. A co-hort is another term for associate, colleague, or supporter. (Webster's Dictionary)

Early Field Experience are activities arranged in a school district (specifically, a classroom) for college students prior to their official student teaching experience. The word practicum is used interchangeably with the words early field experience.

Inclusion is providing education to students with special needs within a regular education classroom, with support services available as necessary.

Merge is a pilot teacher preparation program at Central Washington University. It is an alternative elementary education certification program that is characterized by enhanced field experience and the integration of content, personnel, and disciplines. The program can be completed in 6 quarters. Students successfully completing this program will earn a teaching certificate with endorsements in elementary education and special education. They may also take additional coursework to complete other endorsements.

Preservice Teachers are college students in a teacher preparation program, who have not yet received their teaching certificate.

Professional Development School (PDS)- An elementary, middle, or high school that works in partnership with a university to develop a teacher preparation program characterized by a sound arts and sciences curriculum base, and critical knowledge about learning and teaching integrated with well-coached, in-school practice and teaching. (Barret & Baker, 1994-95)

Team, a group of people working together in a coordinated manner, often toward a common goal. (Webster's Dictionary)

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The review of research and literature summarized in Chapter II has been organized to address:

1. Early Field Experience.
2. Integration of Coursework.
3. Merger of Regular and Special Education into one program, which is discussed under the heading of Integration of Diverse Populations in the Classroom.
4. Summary

Current data within the last ten (10) years was identified through an Educational Resource Information Centers (ERIC) computer search. A hand search of various other source was also conducted.

Early Field Experience

Henry David Thoreau, in his book Walden, asks:

Which would have advanced the most at the end of a month, -the boy who had made his own jackknife from the ore that he had dug and smelted, reading as much as would be necessary for this, - or the boy who had attended the lectures on metallurgy at the Institute in the mean while, and had received a Rogers' penknife from his father?

So it has been with learning the skills of teaching. Field experience has given preservice teachers the opportunity to work with students in a real classroom, in conjunction with studying the mechanics of teaching in content methods classes. Research has strongly supported the theory that increased field experience enhances preservice teachers' knowledge and performance (Pierson, 1993). When early field experience is implemented, preservice teachers are given the chance to learn in the field, to build confidence, and to be sure teaching is a profession that makes them feel comfortable and excited.

Nearly 100 American research universities have formed a consortium referred to as the Holmes Group. The Holmes Group has been committed to making teacher preparation programs more rigorous and more connected to liberal arts education. The consortium supported research on learning and teaching and has sponsored "wise" practices in the schools. Among those practices has been the implementation of a Professional Development School (PDS). A PDS has been defined as an elementary, middle, or high school that works in partnership with a university to develop a teacher preparation program characterized by a sound arts and sciences curriculum base, and critical knowledge about learning and teaching, integrated with well-coached, in-school practice and teaching.

This partnership strengthened the field experience component of teacher preparation programs (Barrett & Baker, 1994/95). Barrett & Baker pointed out that optimum field experiences were a major aspect of quality preservice preparation and provided an opportunity for the preservice teacher to observe techniques of a master teacher and various models of instruction. Fountain & Evans (1994) noted that early field experience provided preservice teachers

with opportunities to understand the culture of the schools, observe and document the roles assumed by teachers, as well as begin the process of preparing to enter the student teaching phase of their teacher preparation program. It was frequently reported that preservice students viewed their school-based experiences (usually meaning student teaching), as the most important, central part of their teacher preparation program. Many student teachers believed that the practicum provided the only *real* learning of their teacher education program (Johnston, 1994). Thus, the current trend has been for preservice teachers to spend more hours in the classroom prior to student teaching (Pierson, 1993). One benefit of early field experience was that it helped some students decide whether or not teaching was a profession they wanted to pursue at a stage early enough that they could change career directions if they chose (Hawley, 1989). Hawley continued to show that thirty percent of those who completed teacher preparation programs chose not to teach. The same study indicated that between 20 and 25 percent of new teachers leave teaching before they begin their third year. One public school teacher who worked with practicum students, wrote that preservice teachers said exposure to the classroom was a reality check. The preservice teachers hadn't realized that so much work was involved in teaching. (Beath, Bowman, Elaine, & Rizutti 1994, unpublished document.) When preservice teachers have a better understanding of this prior to teaching, they will be better prepared for the profession, its rewards and its difficulties. Hawley (1989) emphasized that the person who has completed their last year of studies in preparing to teach and then changed his or her mind, or was found to be unqualified, has made a big investment for which there is no direct return.

A good teacher preparation program is not based solely on numerous early field experiences, however. Early field experience needs to be balanced with a strong theoretical background. McPhie (1978, p. 56) wrote, "There are many ways of redesigning teacher education programs so that theory and practical application can grow out of each other in natural ways, rather than be compartmentalized as separate, mutually exclusive experiences" (pg. 56). Teacher preparation programs should not separate a preservice teacher's conceptual understanding from his or her practical knowledge and experience. It cannot be learning on the job without theoretical background, but rather it is the integration of both that brings it together (McPhie, 1978).

At Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, early, well-planned, field experience has been implemented for over twenty years (Scherer, 1995). Students enrolled at Alverno Teacher College are in the classrooms from their sophomore year on. However, Alverno educators understood that students did not take in everything unless they had a framework to guide how they gathered data. The teacher educators came up with a set of logs to help students to look at what was going on in the classroom, and how they interacted with the children. The students were asked to interview the principal, the teacher, and parents of kids at that school.

Without attention to the *quality* of these early field experiences, however, increased field hours may not have much benefit. But if field experiences can be as carefully planned and implemented as classroom instruction, then they can be seen as meaningful and valuable (Pierson, 1993). Elementary education seniors in Texas and Arkansas were surveyed to examine the

students' most productive field experiences. Students were asked to reflect on field experiences prior to their students teaching. (The survey took place midway through their student teaching semester.) The students' surveyed came up with three components that would ensure successful field experiences:

1. Clear expectations and objectives- The students' selected this as their first priority. It was reported that productive field placements were only possible when they understood what they were to learn. The expectations and objectives weren't too broad. Those students who found their early field experiences to be useful, received very specific assignments from their college professor.
2. Opportunities for feedback and discussion- Once expectations for the field experience were clearly established, the students needed to be held accountable for meeting the expectations. Even when students were given specific assignments for a field placement, they took the task more seriously when the assignment was collected and evaluated by the college instructor. As well, students reported learning a great deal more when instructors regularly reviewed field experiences in class. Students found that discussions with peers helped them digest their field experiences. The survey revealed that experiences without reflection are shallow and the benefit is often incidental.
3. Correlation with theory and methods taught in class- The students often found no relationship between the theory presented in class and the field activities. Observations in the field only enhanced the theory in the classroom when they were presented as an

integrated experience. They reported learning more in field placements that either intentionally or accidentally related to topics discussed in the classroom. (Pierson, 1993)

Integration of Coursework

Not only is it important to integrate theoretical knowledge and practical experience, but as early as 1978, Brown & Reece stated, "The integration of disciplines is also needed to enable teachers to cope effectively with the increasing complexity of the teaching role" (p. 51). The integration of subject areas has been thought to be an efficient way to teach. With the addition of many subjects and problems to the elementary and secondary curriculum, such as AIDS education, sex education, character education, SAT preparation, and drug and alcohol education, little time has been left in the school day to develop essential learning skills in the academic disciplines (Frazee & Rudnitski, 1995). When two or more subjects are integrated and instruction is centered around a theme when appropriate, emphasis is then placed on skill development rather than the coverage of subject matter. Frazee and Rudnitski stated that the integration of subjects in the curriculum was a more efficient use of "precious instructional time" (p. 135). Brown & Reece (1978) found that one of the facets of integration of disciplines was to organize knowledge in such a way that it would provide relevant, effective and efficient learning. When teachers connected subject areas so that there was a smooth transition between each area, students were able to see the relevance of learning, and how everything was connected and interdependent. The integration of disciplines has been

necessary for problem solving because of the complex nature of social problems in our world societies. The information explosion, along with the changing truths of new information being discovered, has indicated the need for shared brain power in resolving social issues. Not only that, but Brown and Reece (1978, pg. 51) went on to state that "survival in an increasingly interdependent world and humanitarian compassion and responsibility is best stressed through interdisciplinary education."

A major reason proposed by philosophers John Dewey and Francis W. Parker for the integration of subjects in instruction was that, in life, most problems and experiences are interdisciplinary in nature, and we use a multitude of skills to learn from experiences and to resolve everyday problems (Frazee & Rudnitski, 1995). The emphasis in school on subject matter only serves to make school irrelevant to students. Students see little connection between what they learn in school and what they do outside of school. The present school curriculum has often been "teacher centered, fact-oriented, textbook dominated and presented in isolated periods of time with no connecting among the various subject areas" (Bushman, 1991). Thus, integrated curriculum is more relevant to the lives of the student, bringing greater meaning and relevancy into the classroom (Beane 1992, Vars 1991). The goal of integration has been to overlap concepts, skills and attitudes to make the bits and piece of content and skill come together into some meaningful picture (Beane 1992, Fogarty 1991).

Another reason researchers have advocated the integration of curriculum is that it has been found to be brain-appropriate (Caine & Caine, 1991). The brain is made to search for patterns in ideas, and connections between ideas.

In an integrated curriculum, the focus on the relationships between the disciplines on all levels, ideas, skills, and attitudes or beliefs, make it easier for the student to see the patterns and connections. Patterns of information are also referred to as schemata (Rumelhart, 1980), or the framework of concepts in the brain. Schemata are the system of organization that we use to "file" knowledge. Thus, an integrated curriculum would help students to create these files, and promote a more connected, organized and involved understanding of the concepts being taught, and enhance the transfer of understanding from one context to another (Frazee & Rudnitski, 1995).

Merging Special and Regular Education

"We are approaching the day when, for each child,
the law will require that the schooling fit the child,
his needs, his capacities, and his wishes;
not the child fit the school.
Thus, special education may become general,
and general education, special.

(Gilhool, 1976)

The integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience, and the integration of disciplines have not been the only aspects of change in teacher education. There has also been a push to integrate regular and special education, not only in the classroom but in teacher training programs as well. In the past 30 years, the plethora of court cases and federal laws have created incredible changes in the educational opportunities and requirements of handicapped individuals. The passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, changed the way the public school system educated handicapped children. One of the provisions of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL

94-142), was to establish the right to a free and appropriate education for all handicapped children in their least restrictive environment. The Least Restrictive Environment became an integral part in planning the educational programs and placements of handicapped students. By definition the least restrictive environment called for each handicapped student to be placed according to the following criteria as stated under WAC 392-171-471:

(1) Educational setting- Each student with disabilities shall be placed:

- (a) In the regular educational environment with students without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate to his or her needs, unless it can be demonstrated by the school district that the nature or severity of the student's disability is such that his or her education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily; and
- (b) In the school which he or she would attend if not disabled, unless his or her individualized education program requires some other arrangement. If some other arrangement is required, the student shall be placed in the appropriate educational program that is as close to the student's home as is reasonably possible.

(2) Nonacademic settings- Each student with disabilities shall be provided nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities conducted by the school district (e.g., meals, recess, recreation, athletics, counseling, transportation, student club activities, etc.) with students without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the student (Common School Manual, 1995).

The regular education initiative (REI) was implemented thereafter, following growing numbers of individuals labeled and placed in special education. REI proposed that individuals needing referral for special education services and individuals currently receiving special education services be educated within regular education classrooms. The enactment of REI required changes in the responsibilities and roles of both regular and special education teachers. Regular education teachers became responsible for teaching students with special needs and students referred for special education testing. It was assumed that regular education teachers could implement individualized methodologies for students with varying needs. (Hinders, 1995)

The shift to the inclusion of special education students in regular education classes has caused some researchers (Stainback & Stainback, 1984) to advocate a merger between regular education and special education. Recent evidence has shown that administrators may prefer preservice teachers who complete both the elementary and special education training programs. With the efforts to fully integrate students with special needs into regular education classrooms, a highly specialized teacher is needed. According to Hinders (1995), infusion of this dual system must occur at the college level:

Regular and special courses should be intertwined, not separate and distinct. Preservice teachers taking beginning methods classes in regular education could learn how to modify curricular goals without sacrificing educational outcomes. Techniques promoting the integration of diverse individuals would be demonstrated and communicated. Observational techniques and beginning assessment strategies including operationalizing behaviors, conducting frequency counting, and error analysis would become part of the new curriculum to allow regular education teachers to begin to individualize education (p. 205).

If universities successfully infused regular education and special education content into one teacher preparation program, students would be certified as regular education teachers and special education teachers. Hinders (1995) stated that for inclusion to be successful, teachers who have entered the field must have the skill and knowledge to teach both regular and special education. She (Hinders) concluded that the field of education cannot expect teachers to be comfortable and skilled at addressing varying ability levels in the regular education classroom without experience and training (Hinders, 1995).

Summary of Literature

The research and literature reviewed in Chapter II supported the following themes:

1. Well-planned early field experience allows preservice teachers the chance to learn in the field, build confidence, and make sure that teaching is the profession they want.
2. The integration of disciplines provides both connection and meaning to content areas, to the benefit of the teacher as well as the student.
3. With the integration of special education and regular education, a highly specialized teacher is needed to facilitate learning in the classroom, one that is trained in both regular and special education.

CHAPTER III

Procedures of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess pre-service teachers perceptions of their training in the Merge Program. Specific attention was given to three of the main components of the Merge Program:

1. Integration of Regular and Special Education.
2. Integrated Coursework.
3. Enhanced Early Field Experience.

The following procedures employed in conducting the present study have been presented in Chapter III:

1. Need for the study
2. Design and development of the survey instrument.
3. Population group/sample surveyed.
4. Administration of the survey instrument.
5. Treatment of data obtained from the instrument.

Need for the Study

The need for the project undertaken in the present study was the direct result of a request from the Teacher Education faculty for an assessment of the Merge Program. This study sought to fulfill the need of an evaluation of the Merge Program, thereby providing information that will help in the further development of the program.

Design and Development of the Survey Instrument

The survey used in this study was designed and developed by the Kittitas Valley Student Teaching Supervisor for the Merge participants. The developer of the survey designed the instrument for the sole purpose of finding out how the Merge participants perceived their teacher preparation program. The survey instrument was later adopted by the author of this study.

Population group/sample survey

For the purpose of the present study, the population surveyed included the participants of the Merge Program. Each participant had finished or were nearly finished with their student teaching experience.

Administration of the Survey Instrument

In March on 1996 questionnaires were hand-delivered to the participants in the Merge Program during a final meeting with their Student Teaching Supervisor. Although the participants were allowed to fill out the questionnaire at home, they were encouraged to complete it at that meeting. Twelve of the twenty-four questionnaires were returned at that time, with an additional questionnaire being returned in June. In an attempt to obtain the remaining surveys, telephone calls were made to the participants; however, the remaining surveys were not recovered.

Treatment of Data

Obtained from the Instrument

Of the twenty-four forms distributed, thirteen of the Merge participants responded to the survey for a response rate of 54 percent. Due to the low response rate of this evaluation, consideration needs to be given to the limitations of the survey instrument and the information found.

The results were hand-tabulated and presented as numerical and narrative data. The data collected by this survey was presented using a narrative format.

CHAPTER IV

Results of the Study

Data presented and analyzed in Chapter IV have been organized in seven sections listed below to correspond with the major components of the survey instrument (see Appendix B) used in the study:

1. General Information
2. Participation in a Co-Hort Group
3. Integration of Coursework and Field Experience
4. Field Experience
5. Special Education Component
6. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Merge Program
7. Suggested Changes made by Participants

Analysis and discussion of the findings produced as a result of this study have been presented in a narrative format on the following pages. With a few exceptions, the responses on the survey instrument were tabulated on a percentage basis.

General Information

A summary of responses of pre-service teachers who participated in the Merge Program regarding general information about their involvement in the program has been presented below. The specific areas addressed include the following:

1. Recruitment to the Program
2. Student Status
3. Declaration of a Major
4. Coursework in Progress
5. Appeal of the Program
6. Changes made in the Course of the Program

Nine of the thirteen respondents (38 percent) were recruited through presentations given in their classes by the program director; four of the respondents (30 percent) were recruited through a friend, and three of the respondents (23 percent) were recruited through the Associate Dean of Professional Studies. The remaining respondent (7 percent) was recruited through the Merge campaign.

Seven of the respondents (53 percent) were of sophomore student status at the time they began the Merge Program, while the other six respondents (46 percent) were of junior status. Of the thirteen respondents, nine (69 percent) had already declared a Major, and four respondents (30 percent) reported that they had not declared a Major at the time that they started the Merge Program. Similarly, nine respondents (69 percent) had already started the teacher preparation program, while four of the respondents (46 percent), had not.

When asked what the most appealing aspect of Merge was, that caused them to participate, eighty-four percent of the respondents gave multiple answers. Ten respondents (76 percent) indicated that a double endorsement in regular education and special education appealed to them. Eight respondents (61 percent) indicated the two year time frame of the program was appealing. Pre-arranged courses and the guarantee of classes appealed to four respondents (30 percent), while three respondents (23 percent) indicated that both enhanced field experience and working as a co-hort group appealed to them.

When questioned about whether the courses and experiences had remained unchanged throughout the Merge Program, nine of the thirteen respondents (69 percent) indicated that they had not remained unchanged. Of those nine respondents, sixty-six percent indicated that these changes were not helpful. The participants stated that it seemed like they had someone new in charge each quarter. Sixty-one percent of the participants stated that they felt they were in constant "limbo", wondering if the program was going to be dropped, or if they had been forgotten by the coordinators. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that it wasn't until the last coordinator was in charge, that they felt like they had a strong advocate for the group, one who was always there to help.

Working as a Co-Hort Group

A summary of Merge participants responses regarding working as a co-hort group has been presented below. Respondents answered the following questions:

1. You have gone through the "Merge" program as a co-hort group. Has this been a strength or a weakness of the program?
2. Should the next "Merge" program be processed as a co-hort group?
3. During the first quarter you were placed in classrooms with two or more "Merge" students for your practicum. This was done for the purpose of team-building. Was this a success? Please explain why you believe the way you do, and what you would do to change this arrangement and still meet the team-building goal.

When the participants were questioned as to whether working as a co-hort group was a strength or a weakness; eleven respondents (84 percent) believed it was both a strength and a weakness. Two respondents (15 percent) believed that it was a strength of the Merge Program. The following reasons were given as to why the respondents felt it was a strength:

Working as a co-hort group gave them the feeling of being part of a faculty at a school, learning how to deal with others and to share ideas. One respondent wrote, "It resembles real teaching in that you work with a co-hort group. It helps you learn how to work with people, knowing who to trust and who not to". They believed that working as a group provided them with a more comfortable environment in which to exchange ideas, a safe environment to present themselves and to give praise or constructive criticism. As well, working

together as group created a competitive spirit among the participants which many felt added to their success as students. They believed that they were able to feed off of the group, causing them to perform at a higher level. A co-hort group provided the participants with a great support group. One participant stated that as a group they were able to change their professors plans to suit the needs of the group; "It was nice having twenty-four other advocates on your side to get an assignment due date extended, or a test date changed, or a point clarified. This was a major plus!" The co-hort group created ties among the Merge students, and great friendships resulted. One respondent stated the following- "I really got to know the members well. I am a shy person so this usually doesn't happen in my classes. I received a lot of support and great ideas". Another result of working in a co-hort group was that their communication and problem solving skills were enhanced, and it provided an atmosphere for group decision making.

The participants stated that working as a co-hort group could also be a weakness because it did not allow for outside opinions. Because they were surrounded by the same people everyday, all day long, Merge participants didn't get to meet many new people. As a result, participants felt they knew each other too well, which caused fighting to occur. However, it was stated that for the same reason, it was easy to "kiss and make up." Working as a co-hort group caused some participants to feel that they were over reliant on each other, and many assignments were "big copy sessions." Two participants perceived that as a group they knew they were forceful in the classroom, getting what they wanted, and at times over used their power.

Despite weaknesses in working as a co-hort group, all respondents (100 percent) believed that the Merge Program should continue being processed as a co-hort group.

For question #3, the respondents were asked to comment on their first field experience with another Merge student in their practicum classroom. All respondents (100 percent) indicated that working in teams was a positive experience. Two respondents (15 percent) stated that working in pairs was great, but three or more was too big because there were too many personal conflicts within larger groups. One respondent (7 percent) indicated that it was harder on the cooperating teachers to have more than one practicum student at a time in their classroom. Other comments made by the participants in the Merge Program regarding team-building and working in groups were:

"We both helped each other along, provided support and encouragement often and it made the quarter move along smoothly. The thing about 'Merge' is that it is totally a team building group. We were all advocates for everyone. It was nice to have that security in others." Another comment was "We worked well together and I enjoyed sharing my ideas with her." One respondent described *how* they worked together by saying, "We coordinated our teaching and curriculum interests to reflect our individual strengths in teaching. We have an excellent working relationship. We are both ambitious, hard working, and serious about our education. We shared responsibility and appreciated the opportunities given to us." One respondent who was placed in a classroom with two other Merge participants made this comment- "I was with three others, and we did build lessons together and work as a group. It was mostly positive

and successful. When friction occurred we were still able to pull things together as a group."

Integration of Coursework and Field Experience

A summary of Merge participants responses regarding the integration of coursework and field experience was been presented below. The respondents were asked to comment on the following:

1. Please comment on your first quarter in the classroom with practicum and coursework combined in the public school setting.

Eight respondents (61 percent) commented that what they enjoyed the most was how they could directly apply their coursework to the classroom. One respondent wrote: "I would have loved for all quarters to have been like the first. I learned the most and had the best time that quarter, except for student teaching." Another student stated "I like that all classes were combined or merged into each other." Still another respondent observed that "It allowed me to double-check that teaching is what I really want to do with myself."

On the other hand, there were some negative sides to the integration of coursework and field experience in this particular program. Seven respondents (54 percent) indicated that being in both the public school setting and taking classes on campus made a very long day. One comment was that the workload was very demanding and at times overwhelming. The respondents indicated that at times it was difficult to attend class from 3-9 in the evening after spending a day in the schools. Another reaction offered by one of the Merge participants was that they believed they would have been more successful with the

experience if they could have been exposed to the knowledge *prior* to being in the classroom, not at the same time. The same respondents wrote, "It was kind of like jumping into the deep end and not knowing how to swim. Learning to at least dog paddle would have been nice, or even treading water!" Overall the respondents indicated that the experience was rewarding and a great learning experience.

Field Experience

The questions and summary of responses regarding the Merge participants perceptions of their field experiences are presented below:

1. Did you have any practicums connected with your coursework on campus (after quarter one) before your 2nd full quarter of field experience?
2. Should there have been more?
3. Many of you remained in the same classroom (for your student teaching) that you were assigned to as a special education practicum student. Now that you have completed student teaching, what are your reactions to this? Was this a good idea? What suggestion do you have for the next group of students?
4. Have you compared your student teaching experiences with those of non-Merge student teachers?
5. Do you believe that you had an advantage as a student teacher because of your Merge preparation?

Eight respondents (61 percent) indicated that they had no practicum experience in any of their classes, outside of the scheduled practicums in the

Merge Program. Four respondents (30 percent) wrote that they had some practicum experience in other classes. The classes identified with this practicum experience were Physical Education and Health. One student did not respond to the question. Additional comments made by the respondents were that none of their classes spilled over to the classroom after quarter one. One respondent wrote: "Most teachers either didn't know who we were or were skeptical of the program. All seemed intimidated by us due to the fact that sometimes we pushed to get our way. There were times when we did dominate the class." When asked whether there should have been more field experience in their classes, eleven respondents (84 percent) wrote yes. Two respondents (15 percent) disagreed. Seven of the eleven respondents (63 percent) who stated there should be more field experience, indicated that they would like to have a field experience in Reading. All seven respondents (100 percent) felt weak in this area because they hadn't been able to "practice". One respondent made this comment: "Why call it 'Merge' if there is no merging with the schools? Every class should incorporate hours of observation and/or teaching with each subject area! Theory does nothing unless put into practice."

During the Merge participants student teaching experience, thirty-eight percent of the respondents chose to stay in the same classroom they were assigned to as a special education practicum student, while the remaining sixty-one percent student taught in a new placement. The respondents believed this could be both an advantage and disadvantage. Some of the reasons they gave were:

They believed it could be advantageous to stay in the same classroom because they already knew the student and their abilities, thereby allowing

them to start teaching immediately. They also believed that it provided a familiar setting for the student teacher. One respondent said, "It was a wonderful experience, I already had a good rapport with the students and teacher. The transition was smooth and easy."

On the other hand, some respondents indicated that by staying in the same classroom for the second practicum and for student teaching, put them at a disadvantage. They stated they had less experience with different teaching styles and methods. One respondent ran into trouble and commented, "The kids had trouble getting used to me as a teacher because they were used to me as a friend and helper." This created classroom management problems for the student teacher. Another respondent believed that the learning experience comes from feeling vulnerable and having to start anew, and that by staying in the same classroom for two field experiences, the pre-service teacher would not be as prepared for that first year of teaching.

The final question the respondents were asked in regard to their student teaching experience was whether they had compared their experience with that of a "Non-Merge" preservice teacher. Seven respondents (53 percent) indicated they had, five respondents (38 percent) stated they had not compared their experience, and one respondent did not answer the question. All respondents (100 percent) who had compared their experiences to another preservice teacher's, believed they had an advantage because of their previous exposure and experience in the classroom. They believed they were able to take over more quickly during the student teaching experience, and understood what was expected of them. They also stated they had learned to work in teams and had a greater resource base from which to draw on. One

respondent stated, "As opposed to me or just two people to bounce ideas off of, we had a whole team of people. I could gain ideas on entire units by asking just 2-3 'Mergers' for ideas, even copying their stuff."

Special Education Component

A summary of responses regarding the Merge participants reactions to their special education practicum is presented below. Participants were asked the following question:

1. Discuss your 2nd full quarter in the classroom as a practicum student. What were the advantages/disadvantages of the Special Education practicum quarter?

✓ Eleven respondents (84 percent) indicated that they did not have a true Special Education practicum experience, and therefore felt less comfortable teaching Special Education. Respondents made the following comments: "It would have been nice to have a full-time SPED [Special Education] practicum with supervisors, evaluations, expectations, etc."; "I wish that my SPED practicum would have been more like what most SPED students experience, I feel cheated in this"; and "I don't feel that I have the practical, hands-on experience to be a full-time Special Education teacher. I haven't seen a real IEP or even been involved in the referral process." Many others voiced that they would have liked to have been involved in the IEP process.

Two respondents were actually placed in a resource room and greatly enjoyed their experience. One commented that it was their best practicum experience.

Strengths and Weaknesses
of the Merge Program

A summary of the Merge participants responses regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the Merge Program has been present below. The following questions were posed:

1. What has been the biggest "plus" of the Merge Program? What did you like the most about the Program?
2. If you had to choose one thing you did not like about the Merge Program, what would it be?

For each question, the respondents gave multiple answers. In regard to the Merge Program's strengths, eleven respondents (84 percent) indicated working as a co-hort group, resulting in lifelong friendships and support. Ten respondents (76 percent) indicated that classroom experience was a strength, while five respondents (38 percent) wrote that gaining regular and special education endorsements in two years was a strength. Other components the respondents felt were strengths of the program were:

- Pre-planned schedules and guaranteed classes
- Familiarity with professors
- Participating in a program that was specifically designed for the job market in Washington.
- Working cooperatively with an emphasis on integration
- Competition- this made them stronger leaders/teachers/students.

In regard to weaknesses of the Merge Program, the respondents felt that the number one weakness was the special education practicum (53 percent). The

respondents felt that it needed to be in a special education classroom, and they would have liked it to be a full practicum. Other perceived weaknesses of the program were:

- Lack of communication and confusion about the program
- Too much group work, needed some individuality
- Course load was too heavy, add another quarter

Additional Comments and Suggested Changes

The Merge participants were given the opportunity to make any additional comments or suggestions they felt were relevant to the further development of the Merge Program. A summary of those responses has been presented below. All respondents (100 percent) gave suggested changes. The suggested changes are stated in the words of the participants:

1. One or two advisors should commit to follow us through and be dedicated to the program.
2. Do not emphasize getting done so quickly (2 years). I would rather get the most out of the program no matter how long it took, in other words, do not delete necessary classes.
3. Never have four special education classes in one quarter (SPED 411, 412, and 431 are each stepping stones for the next level, and it was too much to process to take them all at the same time. [five respondents indicated this])
4. Implement a full day practicum for special education. [four respondents indicated this]

5. Cut down on the class load during the first quarter field experience.
6. Gain full support of both the regular and special education faculty.
7. More communication between all parties.
8. More evaluation, one each quarter to address concerns.
9. No more than two "Mergers" in a practicum classroom.
10. Stress that we aren't in competition with one another (Do this with our cooperating teachers too).

What follows are additional comments made by the respondents. Each is a direct quote from the Merge participant:

- A. "Overall, Merge was a positive experience, but there are many changes that need to take place. The amount of communication between all parties needs to drastically increase. Also, the program directors need to work closer with the SPED faculty to gain their input and approval of our program. I was very concerned when I learned they did not like our program."
- B. I was really disappointed with the reaction of the CWU Special Education Department. I really looked up to my professors and was let down to hear of their disapproval of the program. I have faith in my abilities!"
- C. "Merge has been wonderful because we really leaned on one another. Valuable friendships have been formed and will probably last a lifetime. I know 10 years from now I can call any one of these people and still learn from them. With few exceptions, this program has been great!"

- D. I have had some excellent lead teachers and staff. I just want this program to take a look at its deficits before it starts again. I feel it should continue, but not until everything has been addressed and fixed. Don't start too quickly like the first time, but wait until things are organized and laid out similar to how the SPED program is. I am very thankful to all those who supported the program and kept it going. Thank you!"

CHAPTER V

Summary, Major Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

As the dynamics of the public school classrooms change, so do the needs in teacher preparation programs. There is a demand for a highly specialized teacher to be able to cope with the growing diversity in the today's classroom. Central Washington University has implemented a pilot teacher preparation program known as MERGE to address these needs. The format for this pilot teacher preparation program included enhanced field experience, integration of content classes taught in a field setting, and the merger of special education and regular elementary education for dual endorsement.

Major Findings

The analysis of data was organized and presented in seven sections to correspond with the major components of the survey instrument used in the study. (See Appendix B)

1. General Information
2. Participation in a Co-Hort Group
3. Integration of Coursework and Field Experience
4. Field Experience
5. Special Education Component
6. Strengths and weaknesses of the Merge Program
7. Suggested changes made by the participants.

Several of the participants indicated their frustration with the uncertainty of the program with the changes that were made in courses taught, the change in personnel teaching these courses and the changes made in the directorship of Merge. Recruitment and the lack of a designated person or place to become aware of Merge was a concern by some of the participants. Several stated they believe more students needed to be aware of Merge and have the opportunity to be part of the program. All stated that Merge should be continued.

Working as a Co-Hort group was both a strength and weakness. Many of the comments made supported working as a team both in the schools and in the university classroom. Participants indicated this was a real help to them in solving problems they had. Some of the participants stated that with a co-hort group there was a sense of power that allowed them to influence their university teacher positively and/or negatively in expectations. Others felt they had a label in the University classroom because there were known as a Merge student. Some felt the University faculty did not support them in the classroom.

The introduction of coursework and practicum was received well by some

of the Merge participants. Others believed the information and experiences were too much to process within the given time, they were overwhelmed. Those participants who liked the offering of courses during the field practicum stated that it allowed them to have "hands-on" experience as they learned new material and concepts.

Though the amount of field experience that each Merge student had in the public school classroom was a strength, several felt they needed more. They suggested that practicum experience in Reading would have helped them be prepared to teach Reading during their student teaching. Some were concerned with the amount of time required with their field experience and their coursework during the same quarter. They believed this hindered being able to fully learn from either experience.

Eighty-four percent of the participants said they did not feel they had a good field experience in their special education practicum quarter. Though each had been placed in an inclusion classroom they did not believe they had adequate exposure to the at-risk population and therefore would not be prepared to teach in a special education classroom.

Conclusions

The conclusions that have been drawn from the perceptions of the respondents are as follows:

1. The Merge model for teacher preparation has been successful and should be continued as a teacher preparation program at

Central Washington University, keeping the components that have worked, and refining areas that are lacking.

2. Additional field experience in the Merge program was a strength and the integration of coursework offered in the public schools *during* the practicum quarter allowed students to be able to directly observe and apply what they were learning.
3. Working in co-hort groups strengthens the individual with regard to their communication skills and team-building skills.
4. The goal of dual certification in Special Education and Elementary Education was not adequately met with the present Merge program.

Recommendations

From the analysis of data and the conclusions produced from the present study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. The Merge concept become a teacher preparation program at Central Washington University, with one person responsible for recruitment, coordination, and frequent evaluation of the Merge Program.

2. That the utilization of early field experience and co-hort groups continue, and consideration be given to including mini practicums in Reading for all Merge participants.
3. That more practical experience be required in a special education classroom to satisfy the dual certification concept of regular education and special education.
4. That curriculum changes in the teacher preparation program reflect the concept of interdisciplinary or integration approach to course content.
5. That a follow-up study be made on the successes of the Merge students in their first-year of teaching as compared to non-merge first-year teachers.

REFERENCES

Barrett, E., Baker B.R., (1994/95). University and classroom educators collaborate in PDS. Childhood Education, 71, 96-K.

Beane, J. A. (1992). Creating an integrative curriculum: Making the connections. NASSP Bulletin November 46-54.

Beath, L., Bowman, A., Elaine, S., & Rizutti, J., (1994). Program evaluation report of the integrated elementary education pilot program (also known as Project Merge). Unpublished manuscript, Central Washington University.

Brown, L.M., Reece, J., (1978). An interdisciplinary model for teacher education. Journal of Teacher Education, 29, 51-52.

Bushman, J.H. (1991). Reshaping the secondary curriculum. The Clearing House, 65 (2), 83-85.

Caine, R. & Caine, G. (1991). Making connections: Teaching and the human brain. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Dewey, J. (1933). How we think. New York: D. C. Heath.

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and education. New York: Macmillan.

Fogarty, R. (1991). ten ways to integrate curriculum. Educational Leadership, 49 (2), 61-65.

Fountain, C. A., Evans, D.B., (1994). Beyond shared rhetoric: A collaborative change model for integrating preervice and inservice urban educational delivery systems. Journal of Teacher Education, 45, 218-225.

Frazer, B. M. & Rudnitski, R. A. (1995). Integrating the curriculum. In E. J. O'Connor, A. E. Myers, and C. Corrice (Eds.), *Integrated teaching methods: Theory, classroom applications, and field-based connections* (pp.133-159). Delmar Publishers.

Gilhool, T. (1976). Changing public policies: Roots and forces. In M. Reynolds (Ed.), *Mainstreaming origins and implication* (pp. 8-13). Reston VA: the Council for Exceptional Children.

Hawley, W., (1989, Dec.). Teacher preparation, should it be changed? Current, 22-31.

Hinders, K., (1995). Dual certification and the Regular Education Initiative. Journal of Teacher Education, 46, 200-207.

McPhie, W.E., (1978). A teacher education dilemma: Practical application vs. theory. Journal of Teacher Education, 29, 53-56.

Pierson, C. A. (1993). Leadership in teacher education, providing structure in field placement. Childhood Education, 69, 288-K.

Rumelhart, D.E. (1980). Schemata: The building blocks of cognition. In R. J. Spiro, B. C. Bruce, and W. F. Brewer (Eds.), *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Scherer, M. (1995). How Alverno shapes teachers: A conversation with Mary Diez. Educational Leadership, March, pp 50-54.

Stainback, W., & Stainback S. (1984). A rationale for the merger of special and regular education. Exceptional Children, 51, 102-111.

Vars, G. F. (1991). Integrated curriculum in historical perspective. Educational Leadership 49 (2) 14-15.

APPENDIX A

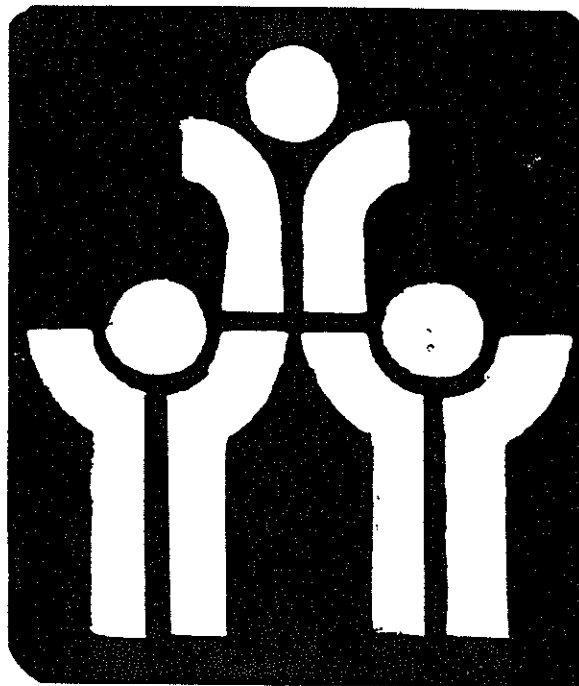
Merge Program Information

Integrated Model

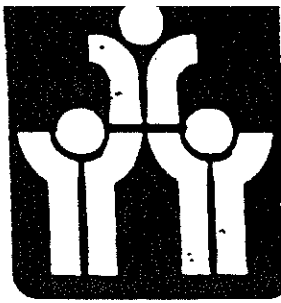
Elementary Education

Pilot program

Fall, 1993



- * Four field experiences
- * Integration of course work and practica
- * Newly developed Core, Professional Sequence and choice of 24-credit Module
 - * Cohort support
 - * Guaranteed classes as needed
- * Nine quarters of experiencing learning at its best!



Field Experience #1 _____
#2 _____
#3 _____

Fully Admitted to
Ed Program _____

Date _____

INTEGRATED MODEL

APPLICATION FOR IM
Department of Education
Central Washington University

PLEASE RETURN APPLICATION IN TRIPLICATE! ANSWER EACH QUESTION AS COMPLETELY AND ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE. PLEASE TYPE!

Full Name: _____ Date: _____
Last First Middle

University Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

University Phone: _____

Home Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Social Security #: _____

Class Rank: ___ Sophomore ___ Junior

Please indicate any experience you have had with children from diverse backgrounds: _____

List any education courses which you have completed: _____

Placement : K-3 _____ 4-6 _____

Endorsement Areas _____

Indicate any specific sensory, mental or physical disability which may necessitate special accommodation in your placement: _____

Please indicate the type of accommodation needed: _____

I UNDERSTAND THAT I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR ARRANGING MY HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION.

Signed _____

*Return to the Education Department Chair

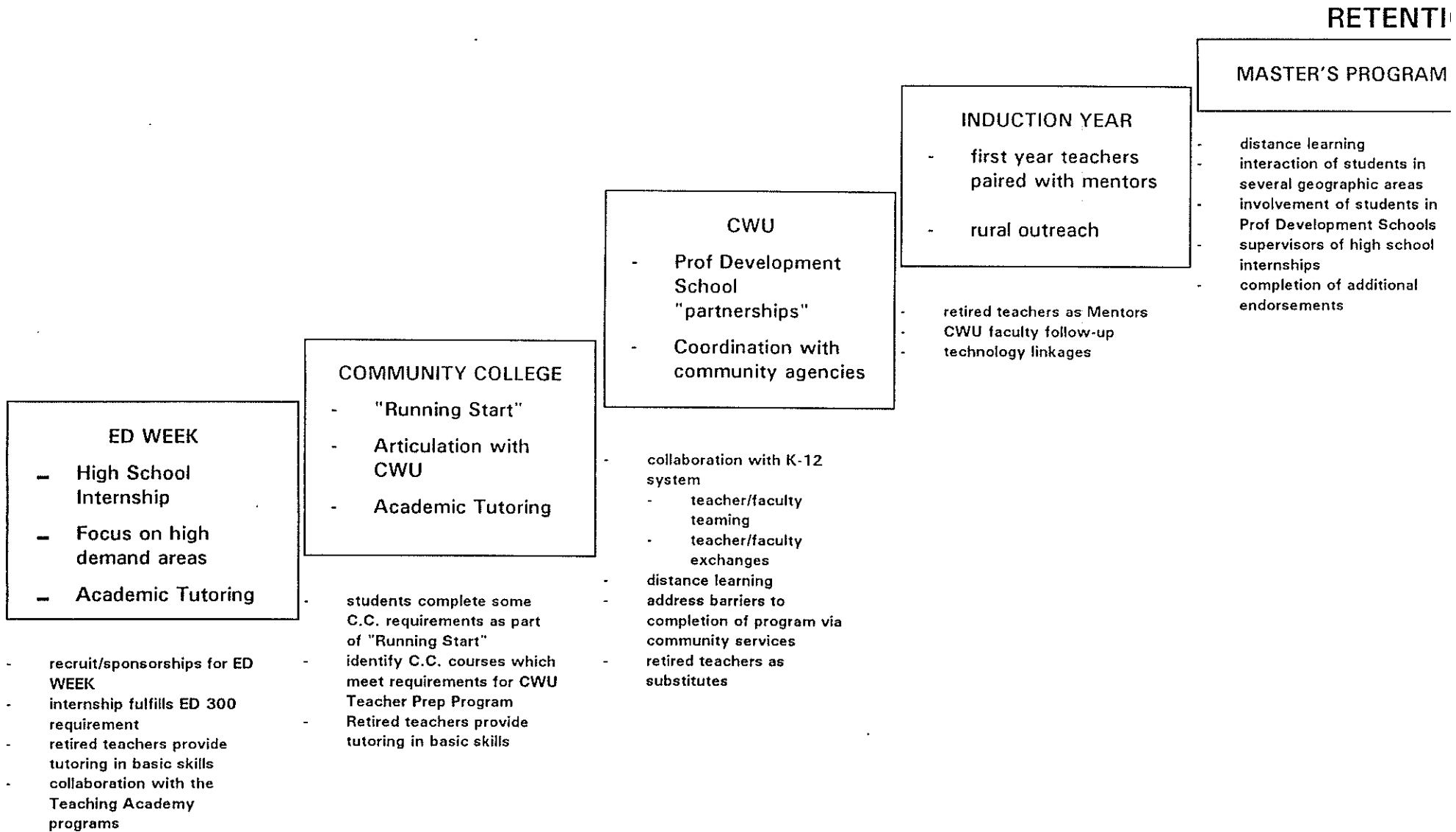
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY INTEGRATED MODEL

YEAR 1			YEAR 2			YEAR 3		
Fall Quarter	Winter Quarter	Spring Quarter	Fall Quarter	Winter Quarter	Spring Quarter	Fall Quarter	Winter Quarter	Spring Quarter
*Field (6)	Multi Culture 431 (3)	Assmnt (4)	SCED	Art	PE	Psych 314 (4)	*Field 2	* Field
SOSC (2)	SPED 301 (4)	SPED 303 (3)	ED 323	Music	Health	ED 438 (3)	METHODS/MATERIALS/ MANAGEMENT	STUDENT TEACHING/ LAW & ABUSE
L. A. (3)	Math 164.1 (5)	Technology (3)		Child Lit ED 421		Home/School Community (3)		
Rding (2)	Module (3)	Module (6)	Curriculum Design & Adaptions			Module (3)		
Seminar/Intro. to Education Intra Communication			(2)	(2)	(2)			
-----			Reading Across the Curriculum			Leadership in Education		
(2)	(1)		(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)		
			Module (6)	Module (3)	Module (3)			
15	16	16	15	15	12	15	16	17

ED 30.0 shall be taken prior to Winter of 1995

Central Washington University CONTINUUM OF TEACHER PREPARATION

-draft-



RECRUITMENT

*R. Purdoms
Director
of Proposals
2) Individual Suppl
from these notes
(which to be in...)*

PROJECT MERGE: A SPECIAL EDUCATION-REGULAR EDUCATION MERGER IN ELEMENTARY TEACHER PREPARATION

Proposal: Central Washington University Center for the Preparation of School Personnel proposes to pilot an alternative elementary education certification program that is characterized by enhanced field placement and integration of content, personnel, and discipline. Historically, graduates of Central's elementary teacher training program have been in demand throughout the state of Washington. However, recent evidence suggests that administrators may prefer students who complete both the elementary and special education training programs. In addition, recent efforts to more fully integrate students with special needs into regular education classrooms calls for a more highly specialized teacher.

have been
Students: Twenty-five students will be recruited to participate in the pilot program. Students will be accepted into the program who: *have* a) meet the criteria for full admission to the teacher preparation program; and b) who have not yet taken *any* courses in the professional sequence, elementary education, or special education programs other than PSY 314, SPED 301 and MATH 164.1.

the prerequisite
Students will complete classes in a specified sequence (~~see attached~~) and will move through the program together as a cohort group. Students entering the program will be required to complete and document a series of activities related to multicultural awareness independent of the courses specified for the program.

Goals of the Program: Project MERGE has four goals:

1. To improve the ability of elementary education teachers to successfully integrate children of diverse learning abilities into their classrooms.
2. To improve the ability of elementary education teachers to create and manage a positive classroom learning environment.
3. To improve the ability of elementary education teachers to work in cohort teams to develop and modify content and techniques.
4. To improve the ability of elementary education teachers to integrate content and pedagogical--to exhibit pedagogical content knowledge.

Consistency of Project MERGE with Knowledge Base Objectives: Central's Knowledge Base for teacher preparation stresses the importance of extensive and well-integrated field experience. Field experience is encouraged both to solidify a student's interest in teaching as a profession and to evidence expertise in specific teaching skills. Further, the Knowledge Base emphasizes the role of collaborative teaching and learning. It encourages collaboration not only across disciplines within the university but also across between university and public school faculty. Project MERGE values and is built on these same characteristics.

Levels of Integration: Five levels of integration characterize this model. Although some aspects of these levels of integration exist for all teacher preparation programs at Central, Project MERGE attempts to enhance integration at each level:

1. Teacher candidates integrate the competencies that are valued in both regular and special education by completing the teacher training requirements for both.
2. University faculty members team courses of related content to encourage and model synthesis and integration.
3. University faculty work cooperatively with public school faculty to review course content, make necessary modifications, specify skills that will be practiced in the field placement and evaluate student performance.
4. Field experience is spread throughout the program in order to ensure that information acquired in didactic courses is integrated into real world requirements for performance.
5. Field assignments assure that teacher candidates have experience with both regular and special students in both integrated and segregated settings in order to develop skills appropriate to both populations and settings.

Structure of the Program

1. School districts will be selected to participate as field sites for the program.
2. Students will spend three quarters of the six quarter program in a field setting, either partial or full day.
3. For three quarters of the program, teams of university and/or public school faculty will plan and implement blocks of courses.

Specifically, the following courses have been blocked together:

- an integrated/teaming approach with respect to elementary education subject matter areas, i.e., the language arts, reading, and social studies courses will be team taught during the first quarter and will include an elementary teacher as part of the team; opportunities for immediate application of course work within a classroom setting with faculty supervision will also occur during this quarter.
- teaming/integration of coursework within a single discipline where a natural relationship exists among the courses, i.e., SPED 411 (Assessment), SPED 412 (Curriculum, and SPED 431 (IEP Process) will be team taught during the fourth quarter.
- teaming/integration of course work, across disciplines, where a logical relationship exists among the courses, i.e., ED 311 (Methods & Materials), SPED 410 (Classroom Management), and PSYCH 315 (Learning Theory) will be team taught by Education Department and Psychology Department faculty; all courses will be taught in the school district where students are placed during the fifth quarter.

4. University faculty will volunteer to participate in the project and will receive the customary load points for their involvement. For example, during the block that included Special Education Assessment, the faculty member who volunteers to be a member of the team will be assigned the same number of load points as are typically awarded for that class.

New Classes: Four variations of existing courses: ED 498--Reading, ED 498--Reading Across Curriculum, and ED 498--Issues Seminar, have been proposed. One new course, ED 498--Collaboration/Leadership, has been added.

Future Plans: Additional refinements of the model that have been considered and may be addressed in the future include:

1. Faculty involved in content areas--art, music, physical education, health education, science education, math education, and children's literature--may be asked to form logical course blocks and field test a team approach to delivery of the courses.
2. There may be efforts to specify general education courses that would strengthen the teaching capability of students, e.g, science and math courses.
3. Additional entry requirements may be specified (e.g., 80 hours of experience as an aide or volunteer in a public school prior to participating in the program).

Outcomes for Students: This program can be completed in 6 quarters. Students successfully completing this program will earn a certificate with endorsements in elementary education and special education. Students wishing additional endorsements may complete the requirements by extending their program beyond 12 quarters (total for basic & breath plus Project Merge) or by completing endorsement requirements during a fifth year.

Program Evaluation: Both qualitative and quantitative evaluation will be used to identify student progress through the program and differences between students who complete this program and those who complete an elementary program only. Students in Project MERGE address "essential learning requirements" via portfolios as well as other "performance indicators".

Program Continuation: A cost-benefit analysis will be conducted at the conclusion of two cycles of the program to determine if students who complete Project MERGE achieve sufficient additional expertise to make the additional effort and cost worthwhile.



INTEGRATED MODEL MISSION, ASSUMPTIONS AND GOALS

MISSION:

Faculty and staff are committed to collaboratively developed field-based programs to prepare outstanding educational leaders who demonstrate the knowledge and skill necessary to educate a diverse population.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. A four year field-based program will provide students opportunities for realistic classroom practica experiences.
2. Collaboratively taught courses model the integration desired in the Integrated Model program.
3. Current demographics require prospective teachers are prepared to teach in classrooms with diverse populations.
4. Teachers need to be educational leaders to assume responsibility for community-responsive, building-based education decision-making.
5. All graduates will receive endorsements in Elementary and Special Education through core program with additional endorsements available upon completion of modules.

GOALS FOR TEACHER EDUCATORS

1. To model collaborative teaching
2. To prepare teachers to address the needs of and opportunities presented by diverse populations.
3. To work cooperatively with colleagues in program planning, development and implementation.
4. To model a "constructivist" view that we (professors, teachers, students) learn from each other and build on what we know.

DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR INTEGRATED MODEL GRADUATES

1. **Mastery of minimum competencies established by the Education Department faculty.** The minimum competencies should be flexible so they relate to information obtained from students, faculty, professional organizations, school district personnel, current research standards and findings, and societal expectations and needs.

2. **Development of student portfolios.** The portfolios should identify the uniqueness of the student's learning experience. Examples of specific strengths and abilities should be compiled and kept by each student as a direct reflection of knowledge mastered, skills demonstrated, and abilities performed. The portfolios will commence at the beginning of each student's program.

3. **Demonstration of effective teaching practices and behaviors.** Students will, during their field based experiences, demonstrate their mastery of effective teaching practices. The demonstration of specific skills will be jointly developed by the student, supervising teacher, and university supervisor.

*More Specificity.
Like a contract...*

*How does it relate
to knowledge base*

INTEGRATED OPTION

1. 25 students will be recruited for Spring Quarter. Priority will be given to students who have completed PSYCH 314, SPED 301, and MATH 164.1.
2. Students will proceed through the program as a cohort.
3. A portfolio assessment process will be used along with other strategies to evaluate program outcomes.
4. All students will graduate with EL ED and SPED endorsements
5. A decision would be made by the end of Winter Quarter '95 whether to begin a new cohort group Fall Quarter '95
6. A decision would be made by the end of Winter Quarter '96 whether to seek approval for the pilot as an option, seek approval to change all EL ED students to this format, or discontinue the pilot
7. Faculty credit loads remain unchanged
8. Only faculty who volunteer will participate in the pilot
9. No changes will occur in the subject matter areas taught outside of the Education Department
10. Additional costs will be kept to a minimum
11. Students could complete course work for additional endorsements during Summer quarters or during Spring Quarter 1996
12. This option pilots 1) an integrated/teaming approach with elementary education subject matter areas, 2) teaming/integration of course work within a single discipline where a natural relationship exists among the courses (could be taught as a block), and 3) teaming/integration of course work, Center-wide, where a logical relationship exists among the courses (Methods, materials, and management which could be taught as a block)
13. This option provides for increased time within a classroom and enhances the opportunity for immediate application of course work within a classroom setting with real live kids
14. This option provides for collaboration between district teachers and CWU faculty in preparing future teachers
15. Eventually, general ed courses might be identified

QUARTER 1 (Spring Quarter 1994)

- Spring Quarter faculty have been identified. They will meet on 11/1 to formalize course offerings/expectations for the 1st quarter of the program.
- discussion is currently taking place with the Ellensburg School District regarding student placement, teacher involvement during this quarter.
- an intended outcome for this quarter is to pilot "teaming" efforts by faculty teaching reading, language arts, and social studies

- an intended outcome of this quarter is to include a seminar related to the development of collaborative skills (syllabus currently being developed)
- an intended outcome of this quarter is to pilot the placement of CWU students in classrooms in pair and/or triads
- an intended outcome of this quarter is to provide an early field experience for CWU students

QUARTERS 2 & 3 (Fall Quarter 1994, Winter Quarter 1995)

- courses taken during these two quarters are those required for the EL ED endorsement and remain unchanged
- includes SPED 303 and SPED 432
- includes a new course, "Reading Across the Curriculum" (2 cr)
 - syllabus needs to be developed
 - the intent of the course is to integrate reading within the subject matter areas identified within the essential areas of study for EL ED
- the cohort would be registered for the same sections of SPED 303 and ED 498 (Reading course)

QUARTER 4 (Spring Quarter 1995)

- the cohort would be registered in the same section of ED 498 (Home, School, Community)
 - this course is a current requirement for all SPED majors
- the cohort would be registered in the same sections of SPED 411, SPED 412, SPED 431
 - these courses would be team taught with the intended outcome of piloting "teaming" to intentionally integrate the content of all three courses (assessment with curriculum with the IEP process)
 - faculty need to be identified so as to begin planning for co-teaching

QUARTER 5 (Fall Quarter 1995)

- students will be placed in elementary classrooms in pairs and/or triads in the Selah School District
 - the Superintendent in Selah has been contacted
 - interested teachers will need to be identified by Fall Quarter 1994 to begin planning for their involvement
 - intended outcomes are 1) the opportunity for CWU students to immediately apply course content within a classroom setting with immediate feedback from Selah teachers and CWU faculty, 2) collaborative planning and providing instruction with other members of their cohort group, and 3) teaming of Selah teachers and CWU faculty
- ED 311, PSYCH 315, SPED 410 will be taught in the Selah School District
 - these courses will be team taught with the intended

outcomes of 1) piloting "teaming" of Center faculty, and
2) intentionally integrating the content of all three
courses

- faculty have tentatively been identified, but will need to confirm participation and begin planning for 1) teaming, and 2) involvement of Selah teachers

QUARTER 6 (Winter 1996)

- Typical student teaching with placement concentrated in the Selah/Yakima area districts
- faculty teach ED 444 and ED 498 Issues Seminar (current course required for SPED majors) on site

APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument



CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Department of Education

TO: "MERGE" (96) Students

FROM: Dr. Don Black, Professional Supervisor
Kittitas Valley Student Teaching Center

DATE: March 5, 1996

RE: ATE Conference & Evaluation of "MERGE" Program

As each of you know, I attended a Professional Conference in St. Louis last week and attended many wonderful sessions on professional field experiences (i.e. student teaching, practicum, etc.). The conference I attended is known as the **Association of Teacher Educators (ATE)** or formally known as the Association for Student Teaching (AST). Most all of the 400 sessions planned for the two and one-half day conference were related to the professional preparation of future teachers.

One of the sessions was concerned with the presentation of a Professional Development Program that had been nominated for an award. This program had been in existence for 4-years in the Houston Area.

After observing the presentation and then having the opportunity to talk with 4 student teachers and two university professors involved in the program I came away with the professional observation that our "MERGE" students could compete with the graduates from that program on an equal basis.

In order to understand what has made "MERGE" successful I would like to have more information from each of you. This information will be helpful in the dialog on planning and implementing another "group" of students in a similar program.

Please respond to each of the following questions. As you respond to each item please answer with the thought of making improvements in a successful "pilot" program.

1. How did you learn about the "MERGE" program?

11. How many persons, (coordinators, directors, contact persons ,etc.) have you been involved with during your total time in the "MERGE" program?
12. Has this been a problem? Yes No (Please explain why you feel this way).
13. You have gone through the "MERGE" program as a co-hort group. Has this been a strength or weakness of the program? (Explain why you feel this way).

STRENGTH:

WEAKNESS:

14. Should the next "MERGE" program be processed as a co-hort group?
Yes No
15. Please comment on your first quarter in the classroom with practicum and coursework combined in the public school setting. (What did you like about this arrangement and what did you not like?)

19. Please discuss your second full quarter in the classroom as a practicum student (Fall 1995). What were the advantages/disadvantages (strengths and/or weaknesses) of the SpEd Practicum quarter? (Consider your setting, teacher school, goals for the quarter).

20. Many of you have remained in the same classroom, as a student teacher, that you were assigned as a SpEd Practicum student. Now that you have completed student teaching, what are your reactions to this? Was this a good idea? What suggestions do you have for the next group of students?

21. What has been the biggest "plus" of the "MERGE" Program? What did you like the most of the program?

22. If you had to choose one thing you did not like about the "MERGE" program, what would it be? Is this your concern only or do you believe that other "MERGE" students have the same concern?

APPENDIX C
Survey Data

DATA FROM SURVEYS

12 responses total at 5-1-96
13 responses total at 7-13-96

1. HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE "MERGE" PROGRAM?
Dr. Douglas- (3 responses)
Ginni Erion- (5 responses) she spoke to classes about program
Friend- (4 responses)
Merge campaign- (1 response)
2. WHAT WAS YOUR STUDENT STATUS AT THE TIME YOU ENTERED THE PROGRAM?
Sophomore- 7 students
Junior- 6 students
3. HAD YOU DECLARED A MAJOR AT THE TIME?
Yes- 9 responses
No- 4 responses
4. HAD YOU STARTED ANY OF THE ED OR SPED COURSEWORK YET?
Yes- 9 responses
No- 4 responses
5. WHAT WAS THE MOST "APPEALING" POINT OF THE "MERGE" PROGRAM THAT CAUSED YOU TO BECOME ONE OF THE IDENTIFIED PERSONS IN THE CO-HORT GROUP?
Double endorsement or double major- 9 responses
Pre-arranged schedule and guaranteed classes- 4 responses
Special ed. aspect/more marketable- 1 response
Working as a co-hort group- 3 responses
Done in six quarters or two years- 8 responses
More classroom experience- 3 responses
6. WERE THERE A SET OF CLEARLY STATED GOALS FOR THE PROGRAM WHEN YOU BEGAN?
Yes- 9 responses
No- 2 responses
Somewhat- 1 response
Don't remember- 1 response
7. WERE YOU GIVEN A COPY OF THESE GOALS AND/OR COURSE & QUARTERS THAT EACH WOULD BE OFFERED THROUGHOUT THE TOTAL PROGRAM?
Yes- 12 responses
No- 0 responses
one student gave no response
8. HAVE THE COURSES & EXPERIENCES REMAINED UNCHANGED FROM BEGINNING TO END OF THE PROGRAM?
Yes- 4 responses with comments such as: I think so; for the most part; and minor schedule changes
No- 9 responses with comments such as: Team teaching between professors didn't occur after the 1st quarter; Thought there would be more integration of subjects and classes; there were sequence changes, and the sped practicum was not what they thought it would be.

9. WERE THESE CHANGES HELPFUL?

Yes- 3 responses

No- 5 responses

Yes & No- 3 responses One student gave no response

Comments: YES- as far as scheduling in consecutive hours per day

- some changes were helpful because certain classes were pre-req. for others and needed to be changed

- class changes didn't bother me because all scheduling was done for me.

- the changes that occurred were beneficial to most students.

NO- There were some last minute building & classroom changes that were inconvenient.

- it would have been nice to have a fulltime SPED practicum w/ supervisors, evaluations, expectations, etc.

- it added confusion (2 responses)

- I would liked to have seen more integration of subjects

- When on prof. got sick, the SOSC class was added to another and we didn't learn much. We should have had another prof. teach the class instead of adding to another class.

- I wish that my SPED pacticum would have been more like what most sped students experience, I feel cheated in this area.

- I don't think the practicum changes were helpful, especially during sped pract. I don't feel that I have the practical, hands-on experience to be a fulltime sped teacher. I haven't seen a real IEP or even been involved in the referral process.

10. ARE THERE OTHER CHANGES THAT YOU FEEL NEED TO BE MADE TO CONTINUE WITH ANOTHER "MERGE" PROGRAM?

Every student responded YES!

Changes suggested:

*Initial selection process needs to be fair and open to all future ed. students- equal opportunity.

*One (or 2) advisors should commit to following us through and be dedicated to program.

*Do not emphasize getting done so quickly (2 yrs.). I would rather get the most out of the program no matter how long it took; in other words do not delete necessary classes

*Do not give classes during any practicums or student teaching!

*It would help the advisors of the program to have already "set in stone" the courses- as to the time, who will teach them, etc. Also this lets those who want to participate know their schedule so they can plan their personal schedules. Felt there was a struggle to please everyone, very irritating.

*Never have 4 SPED classes in one quarter (SPED 411, 412, 431 are each stepping stones for the next level, and it was too much to process to take them all at the same time) 5 students stated this

*Would like a full day practicum, especially for special education. 4 students responded this way.

*Less classes during the 1st practicum, felt like that was a student teaching experience in itself.

*Inform teachers of who we are and what the goals of the program are. Departments (sped/ed) in full support of what the basis of the program is about. All participants should take the same classes, if you don't it defeats the purpose of the co-hort group format.

*Generate more support from the faculty.

*Merge wasn't very clear, we need to know what we are getting into.

*Plan a SPED practicum so that students get a chance to see the paper work in action. This means working in a SPED/Resource rm. Possible solution might be to have a rotating schedule over 3 quarters. 1st quarter 1/3 of Mergers are in practicum while others take class on campus.

*Don't have only "merge" classes, allow some other students into each class to allow for new ideas to enter the minds of the students.

*More communication! Letters need to be made to notify students of when practicums start- don't just tell a few by mouth. Practicum requirements and goals need to be addressed BEFORE the practicum starts. Practicum teachers need more info about expectations.

*Don't let the students in Merge get away with so much complaining, they can handle things if they choose to do so.

*Consideration needs to be given to the schools and staff so that they don't feel overwhelmed and frustrated and negative about Merge.

*Fewer classes per quarter, take longer to complete the program. Allow for fulltime practicum in special education. Emphasize more in-class experience.

*More communication between all parties and the 4th quarter sped block should be broken up.

*A more appropriate SPED practicum is needed, in a special ed or resource room. 6 students responded this way.

11. HOW MANY PERSONS, (COORDINATORS, DIRECTORS, CONTACT PERSONS, ETC) HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED WITH DURING YOUR TOTAL TIME IN THE "MERGE" PROGRAM?

Responses were: 5, 5, 2-3, 5, many, 5, 4, 12, 8, 5-6, 2, countless, too many.

12. HAS THIS BEEN A PROBLEM?

Yes- 8 responses

No- 5 responses

Comments: YES- *I didn't know whom to go to with a question. No one seemed to know any solid answers, we seemed to be in "limbo" for a while which was frustrating. *There was always a wondering if the program was going to be dropped- changing coordinators, etc. did not show support among faculty and the Dept. *It has been a problem until Dr. LeFevre took charge, he was always there to help. *At the beginning I felt as if we were forgotten by the coordinators, but Dr. Lefevre stepped in and things went smoothly then. *Ginni Erion switched and nobody knew what was going on. Dale LeFevre took over and did a great job, but there was too much confusion about the program with the faculty. *The communication lines

weren't always activated. Each quarter it seemed like someone new was in charge, and it was frustrating. I never knew who to contact or who would have the time. *Not one person stayed with Merge throughout all 6 quarters. This is frustrating for reasons of consistency. *Until Dr. LeFevre, we almost were a burden to everyone else. Besides, nobody ever knew what was going on.

NO- *I feel they have worked together to find answers to our many questions. I believe they have all worked to do their best to support our group. *Someone has always picked up the ball. Dr. LeFevre strongly advocated for the Merge group. *The many people was a big plus of the program, everyone was supportive and helpful. *I am thankful for all the opportunities to meet a lot of professionals on campus and in the public schools.

13. YOU HAVE GONE THROUGH THE "MERGE" PROGRAM AS A CO-HORT GROUP. HAS THIS BEEN A STRENGTH OR WEAKNESS OF THE PROGRAM?

10 responded by saying it was both a strength and a weakness, while 2 said that it was a strength. Comments are listed below.

STRENGTHS: Gave a feeling of being a part of a faculty at a school- dealing with others, sharing ideas, etc. Having people to share with, now and in the future years has been a strength. *A more comfortable atmosphere for exchanging ideas, praise and criticism. *Being in a group has made me a better student- we are competitive which helped each of us perform at a higher level. *Great tie with individuals of Merge, great friendships made. Great support group. Changes professors plans to suit needs of group- it was nice having 24 other advocates on your side to get an assignment due date extended, or a test date changed, or a point clarified (this was a major plus!) *Safe environment to present yourself. Presentations and team teaching produced high quality efforts by most students. Other pluses: peer assistance in studies, leadership roles and modeling for individuals, working out differences and problem solving, and group decision making. *We have really fed off of the group, almost competitively, I believe it has added to our success. *I really got to know the members well. I am a shy person so this usually doesn't happen in my classes. I received a lot of support and great ideas. *It resembles real teaching in that you work with a co-hort group. It helps you learn how to work with people, knowing who to trust and who not to. *Built communications skills, was comfortable, and was similar to a school setting where everyone has different personalities and philosophies that must somehow meet in the middle to get anything accomplished. *We could call each other for help. We really formed a community and could help out when one was having problems. *A co-hort group is beneficial for cooperative learning, communication skills, team building, and comfort. *I wasn't as nervous to give presentation because I know everyone. I could really be myself and knew I was getting support. Could call one of 24 "friends" and know they would have an answer. *I feel more able to work with other teachers- sharing ideas, materials and workloads.

WEAKNESSES: Competitiveness (as with any group). Did not allow for outside opinion, it was nice to have "non-mergers" in classes for a change. Sometimes got tired of seeing/talking with same old people! *Same people, same day, everyday, no new ideas. Personality adjustments. *You don't meet anybody, some in the group get to comfortable and try to overpower others (some are very pushy, complain too much). *Too much complaining, overloaded schools, teachers, and profs. Don't focus on individuals and their strengths, always being referred to as a group. *Didn't get to meet a lot of new people. *knew each other too well, some fighting did occur, but was easy to kiss and make up. Over reliance on each other. Many assignments were a big "lets copy" session. *Get tired of each other. As a group I know we were forceful in the classroom to get what we wanted- I think that there were a couple of times we over used our power. *Became a little too dependent on others to help out.

14. SHOULD THE NEXT "MERGE" PROGRAM BE PROCESSED AS A CO-HORT GROUP?

All responses were YES. One comment was that yes it would work but wasn't necessary for the program to work.

15. PLEASE COMMENT ON YOUR 1ST QUARTER IN THE CLASSROOM WITH PRACTICUM AND COURSEWORK COMBINED IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTING.

comments: POSITIVE- *I liked how our course work could be directly applied to the classroom. *I would have loved for all quarters to have been like the first. I learned the most and had the best time that quarter (except for student teaching) *I liked that all classes were combined or merged into each other. I liked that we were in the classroom, getting practical experience. *Host teacher (Vogt) a very tough act to follow! However, good idea to put us in classroom and at least try new things. Good way to see whether or not this is what we wanted. Vogt/Schomer/Douglas were extremely flexible with assignments and provided us chances to immediately apply items learned in class to the classroom. Overall this was a plus, and quite fun. Going to camp with the kids was a blast (practicum started in spring, the same time as fifth grade camp), this made me totally excited about teaching! Master teacher was very helpful with developing professional and technical growth. *I liked just about everything, Joe Schomer and Beth Vogt are exceptional teachers and provided constant positive reinforcers and quality teaching. Dr. Douglas set the tone for professionalism and perfection. *It was a great way to get our feet wet. I loved the fact that the classes were integrated, and we were applying what we were learning. *I liked having my classes done by wednesday, even though it was really tough going all day. The Integrated classes were very helpful. *I liked it because it allowed me to doublecheck that teaching is what I really want to do with myself. *I liked being able to apply textbook knowledge in conjunction to classroom experience. *Liked having practicum at the same time as classes, but made for a very heavy load. *It wasn't too hard taking classes and going to the schools, because our classes were arranged around the experience. I think it depended on who you were assigned and whose classroom you were in.

NEGATIVE- *The 1st quarter was very disorganized and we didn't know what was going to happen. All evening classes were NOT good, and we also had a practicum on top of it. *Most students spend full day in the classroom, then sitting in a class listening to lecture was very hard. I did not see my daughter at all on those days. *It was somewhat stressful, because not only were we getting to know each other, but also the students and teachers. It would have been more rewarding for me to at least have some educational knowledge before being thrown into the classroom. I feel I could have been more successful with the experience if I could have been exposed to the knowledge first. It was kind of like jumping into the deep end and not knowing how to swim. Learning to at least dog paddle would have been nice, or treading water. * The workload was very demanding and at times overwhelming. *It was difficult at times to attend class from 3-9 pm. on monday nights. *It was HELL at first. No teacher education training or experience. All "mergers" were competing to out do one another. *At times the night class got a bit long! It was difficult to schedule myself for work and keep up with my schooling. *The receiving teachers needed to be more prepared to work with the college professors so that the information in the course work would have carried over to the classrooms, giving us better practice of the theories. *It made for a really long day.

16. DURING THIS QUARTER YOU WERE PLACED IN CLASSROOMS WITH TWO OTHER "MERGE" STUDENTS FOR YOUR PRACTICUM. THIS WAS DONE FOR THE PURPOSE OF TEAM BUILDING. WAS THIS A SUCCESS? PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY YOU FEEL THE WAY YOU DO, AND WHAT YOU WOULD DO TO CHANGE THIS ARRANGEMENT AND STILL MEET THE TEAM BUILDING GOAL. most students were placed with just one other person.

All responded that working in teams was a positive experience. 2 students responded that working in pairs was great, but 3 or more is too big, too many personal conflicts with larger groups. One person responded saying that it is harder on the teacher having more than one student.

Positive comments were as follows: *We both helped each other along, provided support and encouragement often and it made the quarter move along smoothly. The thing about "Merge" is that it was totally a team building group. We were all advocates for everyone. It was nice to

have that security in others. Pairs was another plus for the practicum. *We worked well together and I enjoyed sharing my ideas with her. *We coordinated our teaching and curriculum interests to reflect our strengths in teaching. We have an excellent working relationship. We are both ambitious, hard working, and serious about our education. We shared responsibility and appreciate the opportunities given to us. *It was helpful to "lean on" each other. It would have been extremely scary for me to do this alone. We were both inexperienced and were able to learn from each other. *I was with 3 others, and we did build lessons together and work as a group. It was mostly positive and successful. When friction occurred we were still able to pull things together as a group. *I have a great friendship with my partner now and I learned (very successfully) how to work with others. I enjoyed the experience.

17. DID YOU HAVE ANY PRACTICUMS CONNECTED WITH YOUR COURSEWORK ON CAMPUS (after quarter one) BEFORE YOUR 2ND FULL QUARTER OF PRACTICUM? (Please indicate which classes you had a practicum with) (Also indicate if these were what you expected/needed)

8 students responded that NO they did not have any practicum experience in any of their other classes, outside of the scheduled practicums in the Merge Program.

4 Students responded that YES they had had some practicum experience in other classes, 2 identified PE, 1 identified PE and Health, 1 identified only Health.

One student did not respond to the question.

comments- *None of our classes spilled over to practicum after quarter one. Most teachers either didn't know who we were or were skeptical of the program. All seemed intimidated by us due to the fact that sometimes we pushed to get our way. There were times where we did dominate the class. However, it helped me speak-up a lot more than normal. *No, after the first quarter there was no contact with the elementary schools until our SPED practicum. I would have like to have seen more.

SHOULD THERE HAVE BEEN MORE? YES NO IF YES, WHAT CLASS AND HOW MUCH?

YES-11 responses

NO- 2 responses

Suggested Practicums:

ED 311- 2hrs a week (make real lessons)

SPED 431- enough to see a real IEP process

Reading- 7 students requested this, with amount of time spent in class ranging from 1-2 hrs/week; 5 hrs/week; 5-10 credit reading practicum; 2 quarters; and as much as it takes. All 7 people felt weak in this area, because they hadn't been able to "practice".

Math- 1 response

Other comments- *Why call it "Merge" if there is no merging with the schools. Every class should incorporate hours of observation and/or teaching within each subject area! Theory does nothing unless put into practice. *I feel as though each quarter could have incorporated a practicum of some sort into it- If the courses could be merged/integrated. *It would have been nice to have classes on campus coupled with experience, even if for just one day or half day a week, in a real classroom. The only quarter that I would NOT recommend having a class on campus is during student teaching. It is definitely do-able but it is such a headache!

19. DISCUSS YOUR 2ND FULL QUARTER IN THE CLASSROOM AS A PRACTICUM STUDENT. WHAT WERE THE ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES OF THE SPED PRACTICUM QUARTER?

11 Responded that they did not have a true SPED practicum experience, and therefore feel less comfortable with teaching sped. many voiced that they would have liked to have been involved in the IEP process.

2 students that responded were placed in a resource room and greatly enjoyed their experience. One commented that this practicum was their best one. (#1)

All responded by saying that the practicum was beneficial, just in different ways, and perhaps not always regarding special education training.

20. MANY OF YOU REMAINED IN THE SAME CLASSROOM, AS A STUDENT TEACHER, THAT YOU WERE ASSIGNED AS A SPED PRACTICUM STUDENT. HOW THAT YOU HAVE COMPLETED STUDENT TEACHING, WHAT ARE YOUR REACTIONS TO THIS? WAS THIS A GOOD IDEA? WHAT SUGGESTION DO YOU HAVE FOR THE NEXT GROUP OF STUDENTS?

8 Students that responded did not stay in the same classroom

5 students that responded did stay in the same classroom

Comments: *2 students that changed classes responded by saying that they felt this was positive and gave them a broader experience. *Advantages to staying in the same class- *Already know the kids and their abilities, and can start teaching immediately. *Provides the student teacher with a familiar setting. *Wonderful experience, already had a good rapport w/the students and teacher. The transition was smooth and easy. *It was advantageous knowing the classroom system, and all the students thereby allowing for immediate teaching from day one. *Disadvantages to staying in the same class- *1 less experience with a different class. The kids had trouble getting used to me as a teacher because they were used to me as a friend and helper. *Seeing another style would have been more meaningful. *I think every student should get as much exposure to different methods and ideas. The learning experience comes from feeling vulnerable and having to start anew. This better prepares a student for "the first year".

21. WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST "PLUS" OF THE MERGE PROGRAM? WHAT DID YOU LIKE THE MOST OF THE PROGRAM?

Double major in 2yrs (beyond basic & breadth)-5 responses

Co-hort group/lifelong friendships/support-11 responses

Pre-planned schedule/guaranteed classes-5 responses

Classroom Experience-10 responses

Get to know profs better-3 responses

Other comments: *Merge created a comfort zone. *Great preparation for my future because of the valuable experience, both good and bad. *Participating in a program that was specifically designed for the job market in Washington. Working cooperatively with an emphasis on "integration". Competition! -This made us strong leaders/teachers/students- a great group of people.

22. IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ONE THING YOU DID NOT LIKE ABOUT THE MERGE PROGRAM, WHAT WOULD IT BE? IS THIS YOUR CONCERN ONLY OR DO YOU BELIEVE THAT OTHER MERGE STUDENTS HAVE THE SAME CONCERN?

The SPED practicum, it needs to be with SPED students, and a full practicum- 7 responded this way.

Lack of communication/confusion about what was going on- 2 responded as such

Too much group work, need more individuality- 2 responded as such

Course loads too heavy, add another quarter- 2 responded

Classroom experiences were not appropriately chosen. Need to emphasize better and more carefully selected placement in the classroom- 1 response

Allowing non-merge students into the courses. They felt very outcast because so much information was directed to "Mergers". 1 response

Pampered too much because we usually got our way after much whining. 1 response

23. WOULD YOU BECOME A MERGE STUDENT AGAIN IF YOU WERE JUST STARTING YOUR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM?

NO-2 responses REASONS: Not enough emphasis placed on the SPED endorsement; and there were problems and areas of deficit with and experimental program, BUT they would do it again if there were changes made.

YES- 10 responses REASONS: *It was a wonderful experience, and would do it again if they knew they would receive a "real" SPED practicum.(2 responses) *The friends, experiences and resources gained from this program. *Two majors, two years. *Because it was laid out. *It provided learning opportunities which don't occur when there are new people each quarter. It was nice to know you would get the classes needed for each quarter. *Local field experiences

one student did not respond

24. Not included in write up

25. HAVE YOU COMPARED YOUR STUDENTS TEACHING EXPERIENCES WITH THOSE OF NON-MERGE STUDENT TEACHERS? 7 Responded YES, 5 Responded NO, and 1 did not respond.

IF SO, DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU HAD AN ADVANTAGE AS A STUDENT TEACHER BECAUSE OF YOUR MERGE PREPARATION?

All respondents felt they an advantage because of their previous exposure/experience in the classroom. they felt they were able to take over more quickly in the student teaching experience, and understood what was expected of them. They also felt they had learned to work in teams and had a greater resource base from which to draw on. One student stated "As opposed to me or just two people to bounce ideas off of, we had a whole team of people. I could gain ideas on entire units by asking just 2-3 mergers for ideas, even copying their stuff".

26. WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THE PROGRAM TO YOUR FRIENDS?

One participant did not respond.

NO-0 responses

YES- 12 responses, with 2 saying yes with changes, and 1 respondent saying yes, depending on the friends goals.

IF THERE ARE OTHER THOUGHTS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE REVIEW OF MERGE, PLEASE WRITE THEM BELOW: (Each star indicates a different person's comments)

*Overall Merge was a positive experience, but there are many changes that need to take place. the amount of communication between all parties needs to drastically increase. Also,

the program directors need to work closer with the SPED faculty to gain their input and approval of our program. I was very concerned when I learned they did not like our program.

*I was really disappointed with the reaction of CWU Special Education Department. I really liked up to my professors and was let down to hear of their disapproval of the program. I have faith in my abilities!

*Merge has been wonderful because we really leaned on one another. Valuable friendships have been formed and will probably last a lifetime. I know 10 years from now I can call any one of these people and still learn from them. With few exceptions, this program has been great!

*I have had some excellent lead teachers and staff. I just want this program to take a look at its deficits before it starts again. I feel it should continue, but not until everything has been addressed and fixed. Don't start too quickly like the 1st time, but wait until things are organized and laid out similar to how the SPED program is. I am very thankful to all those who supported the program and kept it going. Thank you!

*This is a great idea that just needs to be refined a bit:

1. More evaluations (YES!) Evaluate each quarter so we could address concerns individually and not as a group.
2. Teams are OK, but stress individuality as well.
3. Tell professors who we are please so they treat us with a little more respect (this only applies to 2 or 3 profs). Inform them on what we are all about.
4. Don't allow for Mergers to take classes during the summer that are Merge classes. Defeats the purpose of the group-"team-ness".
5. Stress that we aren't in competition with one another. (Do this with our cooperating teachers too.) Out doing each other to better ourselves is fine, but when it leads to tension and quarrelling, that isn't cool.
6. No more than 2 Mergers in a practicum classroom.
7. Do not allow Mergers to share classes during student teaching, we need to have time on our own (I feel anyway). Besides it created some problems this winter.
8. Make sure EVERYONE in the SPED and ED offices agree on this [program] and on endorsements.
9. Make SPED practicum a REAL one, not just 1/2 day! Thanks!