

University of Maine at Fort Kent

Education Division

Interim Report to Maine State Board of Education

In response to the State Board of Education’s request, please receive and consider this Two-Year Interim Report, from spring 2010 to spring 2012, which is respectfully submitted by the University of Maine at Fort Kent Education Division. The report provides a summary of responses to the team’s comments and recommendations associated with standards one and three, which the unit was found to have conditionally met.

Upon review of the Maine Review Team Report, members of the Education Division identified seven issues of concern under standard one, including two specific recommendations. A review of standard three identified nine issues of concern with nine specific recommendations. The following is an outline of the review team’s comments and their specific recommendations for each partially met standard. This report speaks to each of the recommendations, accompanied with specific related comments and includes a body of evidence to document our process and progress in addressing these concerns.

Standard One: Initial Teacher Certification Performance

Review Team Comments:

1. Early Field Experiences
a. Align course content, school needs and assessment of observation experiences.
b. Some students had to find their own placements.
c. Inconsistencies and expectations from different instructors teaching the same course.
2. Assessment of Student - Maine 10 Initial Teacher Certification Standards
a. A rubric for what characterizes an acceptable artifact and reflection for the portfolio is not available.
b. No evidence of an effort to ensure inter-rater reliability was found.
c. Some students felt poorly prepared to teach reading and math.
d. Some students felt they needed more methods in teaching in their specific content areas.
Recommendations:
1. Require students to present a more complete body of evidence in portfolio in meeting standards.
2. Establish common expectations for content and skills in each class, including field experiences.

Standard Three: Field Experience and Clinical Practice

Comments:

1. Collaboration Between Unit and School Partners
a. Some students, notably non-traditional, certification, and transfer students stated they did not receive adequate explanation of required procedures, forms, and guidelines for field experiences.
b. Some mentor teachers complained that they only received information about their student teacher, days before the students' arrival.
c. Some mentor teachers complained that receiving the practicum handbook was not enough training to prepare them and to understand the expectations of the unit (UMFK program).
d. Principals suggested that an orientation with a specific agenda with mentor teachers.
2. Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes to Help All Students Learn
a. Several secondary students were not prepared with adequate science education methods.
3. Design, Implementation, Evaluation, of Field Experiences
a. A check off list exists for the portfolio, but criteria and rubrics were not provided.
b. Documents exhibits reported early field practicum hours were higher than what students reported. Students reported they needed earlier practicum hours.
c. Practicum and cooperating teachers suggested that students receive more instruction on reading, specifically reading methods, and a variety of current researched based teaching strategies, more hands-on instruction techniques, workshops or seminars for cooperating teachers and student teachers prior to student teaching.
d. Increase preparation in classroom management.
Recommendations:
1. Increase opportunities for students to have real time in the classrooms.
2. For each field experience, set clear goals and expectations for students, supervisors, and school faculty.
3. Develop a clearly articulated system to coordinate field placements for practicum experiences to meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional students.
4. Develop purposeful, frequent and open communication avenues between the Director of Student Teaching, Education faculty, cooperating school personnel, university supervisors and student interns to support the professional development and collaboration among all constituents.

5. Curriculum should reflect current pedagogy and the diverse methods (mechanics) of teaching specific content. In particular, elementary students need to be exposed to current methodology in teaching reading and math skills.
6. Through coursework and placements, students should have the opportunities to develop classroom management skills.
7. Address discrepancy between the numbers of pre-practicum hours reported in method courses with those reported by the students.
8. Make students accountable for pre-practicum hours.
9. Advisory board should meet once per semester as a working team and once a year for an informal social gathering. The charge of the team should be to inform constituents of not only best practices and current trends in education, but also with the realities of working in the school culture in the 21 st century.

Introduction

Since the team’s visit in March 2010, the Education Division has engaged in many discussions about how best to approach the issues outlined in the Review Team’s report. In the past five years the number of students in the education program has dropped dramatically, along with the number of full-time faculty teaching in the program.

In the fall of 2007, our program had 450 education majors, 184 students were in our approved programs and 266 students were spread across our certification programs. By the fall of 2010, those numbers had dropped to 139 majors with 61 students in approved programs and 78 students spread across our certification programs (see Appendix I). During the same time period, our faculty numbers dropped due to retirement and attrition. In the fall of 2007, the division supported 7 full-time faculty members with 12 adjuncts. In the fall of 2011, we started the semester with 4 full-time faculty members and 6 adjuncts (see Appendix II).

The drop in student numbers, along with a constructive review concerning our clinical experiences and the state’s movement towards standards-based curriculum, prompted the program faculty to pursue the development of an education major with key clinical-based components. Appendix III, in our evidence folder, covers some of the early thinking upon which our final model was derived. The final program was approved in November, 2011 (see Appendix IV) and will be implemented in the fall of 2012. While the curriculum is in place there is still much work to do before the fall program begins.

The new curriculum was designed after thoughtful discussions on how students could engage with the ten standards for beginning teachers, in both a clinical-based setting and their classrooms. Accompanying our divisional discussions the chair of the program, along with several faculty members, met with Superintendents and Principals from area schools to gather their thoughts on program requirements and how best to implement our new major.

During the time that the division was considering under taking a remodeling of the education programs, the University of Maine at Fort Kent was undertaking a review of all of its academic programs with a requirement for each division to create a revitalization plan. The revitalization process was to be focused on increasing experiential and service opportunities in academic programs in an effort to increase student success and retention. The divisional revitalization plan can be found under Appendix V.

The approach the division took to begin our process was to eliminate several courses from our curriculum (to see past curriculum, see Appendix VI) and to redirect those credits to clinical-based labs. The clinical-based labs in the new curriculum (see Appendix VII) will be taught by area master teachers who have classroom expertise in the content of the lab course and advanced degrees in education. The one credit labs will allow us to compensate participating teachers who are engaging with our students and serves as a way to facilitate our clinical-based programs. Each lab course is attached to a core education class and must be taken during the same semester. The faculty of the core class will serve as a mentor to our lab instructors and ensure they are familiar with unit expectations for assignments, assessments, meeting standards and creation of artifacts for the portfolio. Each semester there will be an orientation for lab instructors and clear expectations for the lab courses will be shared and incorporated into the clinical-based experience.

Our new curriculum is structured so that students would take 2-3 education classes each semester during their junior and senior year. Each lab requires three hours per week blended between instruction and clinical-based activities. A sample syllabus is provided in Appendix VIII. A student taking three courses would have 135 hours of lab based work per semester. The early education courses taken during the freshman and sophomore year and their lab components remain unchanged.

The impact of the new lab courses and the role they will play in mediating the concerns outlined by the review team's report will be addressed as part of our discussion under standards one and three.

Standard One: Initial Teacher Candidate Performance

Candidates preparing to work in schools as teachers or other professional school personnel know and demonstrate the content pedagogical and professional knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates meet professional, state, and institutional standards.

The majority of the issues raised by the review team under standard one revolve around the need for the division to have a more systemic approach to Early Field Experiences, both in their delivery to our students and in our assessment protocols to assure each student meets required standards.

The following paragraphs will address each concern speaking directly to the two specific recommendations. Where appropriate, comments from the report have been combined with the recommendation to illustrate the concerns raised by the review process.

Recommendation:

- 1. Require students to present a more complete body of evidence in portfolio in meeting standards.**

Concerns:

- *Align course content, school needs and assessment of observation experiences**
- *A rubric for what characterizes an acceptable artifact and reflection for the portfolio is not available.**
- *No evidence of an effort to ensure inter-rater reliability was found.**

The new portfolio process, included in Appendix X requires all students to provide 5 or more artifacts with appropriate rationales. The new draft rubrics to assess the quality of artifacts and rationales call for a clear connection of the artifacts to the standards. To accompany the changes in the portfolio assessment protocols students are required to present their portfolio to a committee of at least three faculty members as part of their application for student teaching. This process will allow a systematic review of the types and qualities of student artifacts. The new clinical-based lab courses will also provide students with an opportunity for more authentic artifacts from their early practicum experiences. The faculty reviewers will all use the same instruments as they assess a student portfolio and they will compare results working towards tools that have strong inter-rate reliability. After the he first few times the tools are used the rubrics will evolve and change as needed.

The assessment instruments will also be shared with mentor teachers and student teaching supervisors, as they will continue to review the portfolio with students during the practicum process. The Director of Pre-Service Education and Placement will conduct workshops for supervisors and mentor teachers where this work will be discussed. (See job description Appendix IX.) Mentors and Supervisors who are at a significant distance from Fort Kent will meet through the use of technology.

Accompanying those changes will be the draft rubrics for review of the portfolio and associated artifacts. The division is currently working on insuring all instruments are aligned with the new curriculum, the clinical- based labs, the Ten Teaching Standards and Maine's Common Core Curriculum. All of the tools for this effort will be approved and in place for the fall 2012 semester.

The clinical- based labs will all have common assignments, assessments and protocols. The lab instructors will help the division align the labs with the current needs and practices of the public schools. Before classes each semester, the clinical- based faculty, along with the education faculty, will meet to make sure our efforts are aligned and the Ten Standards for Beginning Teachers are at the forefront of our efforts.

A new position titled, Director of Pre-service Education and Placement will replace our past position of Director of Student Teaching. The new job description can be found in Appendix IX.

As can be seen in the job description this person will be responsible for working with the lab teachers and core faculty to find appropriate placements for our students and help establish clear expectations for the experience. The evolution of the Director of Student Teacher position, to include pre-service practicum, was to insure that all of our students have the opportunity for well organized early placements and student teaching experiences.

Recommendation:

2. Establish common expectations for content and skills in each class, including field experiences.

Comments:

***Inconsistencies and expectations from different instructors teaching the same course.**

***Students felt poorly prepared to teach reading and math.**

***Students felt they needed more methods in teaching in their specific content area.**

Currently only one section of each course is offered during a semester. Also, with the new curricula there has been a realignment of courses and what will be covered in each class. This work is just beginning, but the knowledge base, once completed, will align courses against the ten standards and provide students with assignments, assessments and evidence that they may use in their portfolio.

The clinical-based labs for core methods courses are designed to ensure students have firsthand knowledge of clinical-based pedagogies. With the clinical-based labs in Reading and Writing all students in the elementary program will be knowledgeable of current practices in elementary classrooms and see firsthand the application of Maine's Common Core Curriculum in Language Arts.

In addressing the concerns of teaching mathematics the division has voted (see Appendix XI for minutes) that elementary students will take Edu 200 Structures of Math I and Edu 201 Structures of Math II as their math credits for general education. These math courses cover a full spectrum of math content, beyond the scope of Algebra I and Finite Math, to ensure students are familiar with the math content needed to be an effective elementary teacher. These content courses are in addition to Edu 412 Teaching of Math and Edu 412L Math Manipulatives Lab.

The division is currently in the process of creating a knowledge based outline which will align course content, assignments and assessments with the Ten Teaching Standards. This process will include all courses in the revised education major and secondary core. Once completed it will become part of educational practices of the division and will be incorporated into each course syllabi. Because the major now includes clinical-based labs with the early field experiences, they will also have clearer expectations of content, skills and processes to be covered in each class. Because the division is still in a building phase of this work, the evidence folder does not have a draft version completed.

Standard Three: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice

The unit and its clinical partners design implement and evaluate field experiences and clinical practices so that teacher candidates and other clinical personnel develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to help all students learn

The review team stressed in their report on standard three the need for the division to increase collaboration with our school partners, particularly in the area of working with mentor teachers and supervisors who are working with our student teachers. This includes more frequent meetings with our partners to discuss the assessment protocols for the Professional Portfolio and the student teaching practicum experience. Along with this concern, our school partners expressed concern about our pre-service teachers being weak in their preparation to teach reading, math and secondary school science.

The following paragraphs will address each concern speaking directly to the nine specific recommendations. Where appropriate we have combined comments from the report's text to go along with the recommendations to illustrate the concerns raised by the review process.

Field Experiences and Assessment Protocols

Recommendations: 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8

- 1. Increase opportunities for students to have real time in the classrooms.**
- 2. For each field experience, set clear goals and expectations for students, supervisors, and school faculty.**

Comments from the report:

- *Some students, notably non-traditional, certification, and transfer students stated they did not receive adequate explanation of required procedures, forms, and guidelines for field experiences.**
- *Some mentor teachers complained that they only received information about their student teacher, days before the students' arrival.**
- *Some mentor teachers complained that receiving the practicum handbook was not enough training to prepare them and to understand the expectations of the unit (UMFK program).**
- *Principals suggested that an orientation with a specific agenda with mentor teachers.**
- *A check off list exists for the portfolio, but criteria and rubrics were not provided.**

- 3. Develop a clearly articulated system to coordinate field placements for practicum experiences to meet the needs of traditional and non-traditional students.**

- 7. Address discrepancy between the numbers of pre-practicum hours reported in method courses with those reported by the students.**

Comments from the report:

***Documents in exhibits reported early field practicum hours were higher than what students reported. Students reported they needed earlier practicum hours.**

8. Make students accountable for pre-practicum hours.

The above recommendations are all related to the process the division engages in with its partner schools as it places pre-service and student teachers in classrooms. In the past, this process as it relates to student teaching, involved a mentor teacher at the public school, a University Supervisor and the Director of Student Teachers. When the early practica were assigned out of course work it involved a University faculty member working directly with a classroom teacher. This process led to inconsistencies about hours and quality of experiences for students during their early practicas. During the school year of 2011-2012, the Division of Education created a new position titled: Director of Pre-Service Education and Placement, which calls for expanded duties to address practicum concerns. Along with this significant change, the Education Division approved, during the fall semester 2011, a new curriculum for the Elementary and Secondary programs.

The Director of Pre-Service Education and Placement has responsibility for both student teaching and early practicum experiences. The job description, found in Appendix IX, clearly shows that the new director is responsible for creating a systematic approach for practicum work, whether at the pre-service or student teaching level. The new Elementary and Secondary clinical- based labs, described in the introduction, will be overseen by the Director in conjunction with the divisional faculty. This oversight will involve meeting each semester with lab faculty, sharing common assessments, common expectations and the alignment of the program with Maine's Ten Standards for Beginning Teachers.

The Director, working with the Division Chair, will also be responsible for an orientation meeting each semester with mentor teachers and supervisors, who have agreed to work with our student teachers. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure they are well informed concerning divisional expectations, portfolio protocols, assessment practices and student teaching guidelines. This orientation will be provided through a virtual format for any mentors or supervisors who are at a distance from Fort Kent.

The new structure of the curriculum, along with revised protocols for the professional portfolio, will prompt a re-write of the practicum handbook and a rethinking of the student teaching guidelines and assessments. This process will take place once the new director is hired. Because of issues with our search process in fall 2011, we currently are still working with a Director of Student Teaching overseeing the practicum. Our intent is to have the new position in place at the start of the fall 2012 semester.

The clinical-based labs are scheduled for 3 hours per week. While the lab faculty may use some of that time for instruction, the core thrust of the lab course is time in the public school setting. In the elementary program major, there are ten specific clinical-based labs. Over the course of their

pre-service experience our students will obtain 40 hours of school experience in the required early classes, along with 450 hours of direct contact with public school teachers and students in the clinical-based labs, totaling 490 hours of experience before they begin student teaching. Our Secondary Education Core involves 8 clinical-based labs which are 3 hours weekly, for a total of 360 hours of clinical-based experiences, in addition to the 40 hours of early practicum experience for a total of 390 hours of practicum before student teaching.

This systematic approach puts all students into the same process with clear expectations for the divisional faculty, the Director of Pre-Service Education and Placement, and our partner schools.

***Increase opportunities for students to have real time in the classrooms**

The new curriculum, with clinical-based labs, puts each student in direct contact with public schools in a very organized, systematic and professional experience. Each lab has common assignment and assessment protocols which will bring continuity to the program. The process will have oversight through the Director of Pre-Service Education and Placement who will actively engage lab faculty, divisional faculty, mentors and supervisors to facilitate common understanding and application of protocols. The lab courses, which are attached to core methods courses, give our students the opportunity to participate and observe common core standards based education in action. The curriculum blends the theory of pedagogy with hands-on experiences which should help each teacher hone, document, and describe, their knowledge, abilities and skills, through their standards based portfolio process.

***For each field experience, set clear goals and expectations for students, supervisors, and school faculty**

The new Director of Pre-Service Education and Placement, using our new curriculum, will facilitate bringing clarity in our practicum process. The divisional faculty members recognize that addressing the inconsistencies pointed out in the review team's report, through more organized practicum protocols, will benefit our students and improve our relationships with our clinical-based partners. The assessment processes for the required professional portfolio, which will now include artifacts from courses, clinical-based labs, early practicum and student teaching, will ensure each student's portfolio review is completed with common protocols and tools with inter-related reliability. Each of these changes will ensure each student has equal opportunity to meet and demonstrate their proficiencies in their portfolio, The Ten Standards for Beginning Teachers.

***A check off list exists for the portfolio, but criteria and rubrics were not provided**

This concern was also raised under standard one and prompted the division to develop our portfolio process so that our assessment processes was more transparent, clearly linked to our standards based curriculum and easy to use for faculty members and students. The work, while still in progress, can be reviewed in Appendix X. The goal for the next year is to standardize this process with students, faculty members, mentors, supervisors and our clinical partners. This work will be a core responsibility for the new Director of Pre-Service Education and Placement, but has begun under our current Director of Student Teaching. The Education Division takes

seriously a common theme throughout the Review Team's report, that our portfolio process needs to be more systematic for all parties involved. This includes sharing rubrics, ensuring inter-rater reliability and diversifying the review process. Appendix X also contains draft versions of our scoring rubric for the portfolio and a draft rubric for judging the effectiveness of artifacts in demonstrating that they meet the standards. These tools will be ready for use in the fall 2012 semester.

Recommendation:

4. Develop purposeful, frequent and open communication avenues between the Director of Student Teaching, Education faculty, cooperating school personnel, university supervisors and student interns to support the professional development and collaboration among all constituents.

Currently the Director of Student Teachers conducts meeting with mentors, supervisors and cooperating teachers to cover the guidelines and assessment protocols for student teaching. The responsibilities and purpose of these collaborative meetings are expanded under the new job description for the Director of Pre-service Education and Placement (see Appendix X) to include all pre-service practicum, as well as student teaching.

The clinical-based lab courses will be the cornerstone of the early practicum experiences for our students under our new curricula. The lab faculty will be public school teachers, with advanced degrees who are working in area schools. The clinical-based labs make frequent meetings with lab faculty essential to ensure that courses are aligned with divisional expectations and guidelines.

The guidelines for the lab courses are currently under development, but will be completed before the new curriculum starts in the fall 2012 semester. The guidelines for the lab courses will be developed collectively with our advisory board, divisional and lab faculty. Along with the guidelines for lab courses, the new rubrics for the portfolio process, and artifacts assessment, will also be shared with lab faculty. Our students now earn a significant part of their academic credit under the clinical-based labs, and the faculty must be able to articulate what constitutes an appropriate artifact and a quality rationale. The first meeting to share these guidelines with lab faculty will be in August 2012.

The changes that we are under taking as a division, brings purpose and meaning to each practicum experience and creates a more focused meeting with cooperating faculty and lab instructors. This will create an environment where these discussions are a natural part of the curricular process of each school year.

The division will continue to meet regularly with area Superintendents and Principals to seek advice on the focus of our program and how we might better serve each other. It is our hope that increased relationships with area teachers and administrators will create a positive climate for cooperative in-services and workshops.

Recommendation:

5. Curriculum should reflect current pedagogy and the diverse methods (mechanics) of teaching specific content. In particular, elementary students need to be exposed to current methodology in teaching reading and math skills.

Comments from the report:

- *Several elementary students noted that they were ill equipped to teach reading and math.**
- *Practicum and cooperating teachers suggested that students receive more instruction on reading, specifically reading methods, and a variety of current researched based teaching strategies, more hands-on instruction techniques, workshops or seminars for cooperating teachers and student teachers prior to student teaching.**
- *Several secondary students were not prepared with adequate science education methods.**

These two concerns were also raised under standard one and were core issues in the division's decision to incorporate into clinical-based labs. The addition of a Reading and Writing lab to augment our core methods courses will improve student knowledge and abilities in teaching these subjects. UMFK is dedicated to providing students with state of the art knowledge as they enter the teaching profession. By working with area teachers, with advanced degrees in education, our students will experience a more unified clinical-based experience where they can apply what they are learning in their coursework. The clinical-based labs also allow our students to participate and observe the common core standards for English/Language Arts in action.

As mentioned under standard one, the University has hired a new math professor starting in the fall 2012 semester. After the retirement of our last full-time math faculty 5 years ago, the division needed to change how math education was offered. That change involved moving away from two math courses offered specifically for elementary teachers, to the use of college algebra and finite math as a substitute. The premise was that those two courses accompanied by Edu 412 Teaching of Math and the passing of Praxis I, would be excellent preparation. While this approach has worked well for our students with strong math skills, it has been inadequate preparation for our students with weak math skills. The recent decision (see Appendix XI for meeting minutes) to return to our practice of elementary pre-service students taking Mat 200 Structures of Math I and Mat 201 Structures of Math II was prompted by the successful search for a new Math faculty. The University attempted 3 times in the last 5 years to hire a math faculty with no success. This transition will bring us to a course sequence where the vast majority of our students will feel comfortable with their skills and ability to teach Math.

Along with these two math courses, students will continue to take Edu 412 Teaching of Math, along with Edu 412L, Math Manipulations Lab. The lab course will be clinical- based and will allow our students to participate and observe the common core standards for math in action.

***Several secondary students were not prepared with adequate science education methods**

All secondary education students are required to take Edu 358 Secondary Methods I and Edu 359 Secondary Methods II. While these courses have students from different disciplines, all students are required to complete their planning assignments in their teachable discipline. These methods classes have been highly effective for many students. The course syllabus required students to complete classrooms visits, but this requirement has been approached differently by the variety of faculty members who have taught the class in the past. In our efforts to create a process which ensures all students have a common experience, with equal expectations; we have added a clinical-based lab to both of these methods courses. This one credit lab will be organized to provide students with experiential learning opportunities with a public school secondary teacher who is currently teaching in their field of study. The one credit lab allows us to offer compensation to the cooperating teachers for their work with our students further enhancing our partnership relationships. The labs will ensure all students are exposed to secondary pedagogies which are discipline specific.

Recommendation:

6. Through coursework and placements, students should have the opportunities to develop classroom management skills.

The division has tried several models to effectively impact a pre-service teacher's ability to properly create a positive classroom environment as they enter student teaching and the education profession. Under our new curriculum for the Elementary and Secondary education programs, the course Edu 339 Classroom Management will be offered in the sophomore year as part of a student's preparation to enter the elementary major or the secondary education core.

The new curriculum will allow a student more time in public school classrooms through the collective lab experience, which will include a Classroom Management lab attached to Edu 401 Educational Psychology. This process gives a student more hands-on experience with pupils and teachers as part of their pre-service program. It will also move the curricular discussion on classroom management away from one of academic discourse, to one which blends that discourse with real experience.

Recommendation:

9. The Advisory Board should meet once per-semester as a working team and once a year for an informal social gathering. The charge of the team should be to inform constituents of not only best practices and current trends in education, but also with the realities of working in the school culture in the 21st century.

The Education Division agrees that the advisory board should become more focused on best practices and current trends; and that meeting more frequently would facilitate a better use of the board. However, as the division began working on the new curriculum, it chose to postpone the advisory meeting until we could present the clinical-based lab courses to the group. The current syllabi for lab courses are very general and the guidelines still need to be developed.

The next meeting of the advisory board will be focused on master teacher's responsibilities, with groups helping to plan the guidelines for our lab courses. The advisory group's core mission will be assisting the division in carrying out a state of the art program. We will continue to have our annual dinner celebration to thank them for their work.