

## **An Integrated Design for Cross-Cultural Teacher Education at UAF**

### **Overview**

The environment for which the College of Rural Alaska must prepare teachers has two inherent features that the following program attempts to take into account - **diversity** and **change** - both of which are addressed by the mission statement of our college. As a college, it is our special challenge "to prepare persons to work effectively in cross-cultural settings and display a sensitivity to and understanding of the *diversity* of the human condition". In addition, the college is "committed to educational processes through which its students are empowered to effect social and economic *changes* in their communities, and protect and enrich the quality of their lives and culture". We have worked from the assumption that, if we are to prepare teachers to cope with and enable diversity and change, we must offer a program that is itself capable of accommodating diversity and change and can serve as an experiential model through which the students learn. It is to that formidable task that this program is directed.

The new curriculum attempts to pull together the many ideas, suggestions and recommendations that have been considered over the past two years into a comprehensive, integrated framework for a cross-cultural teacher education program that can accommodate the diversity of rural/urban, Native/non-Native, and large and small scale teaching and learning environments that exist in Alaska. The program contains several critical components that are intended to provide the flexibility and adaptability that is necessary to respond to the vast cultural, linguistic and environmental diversity that makes Alaska unique. Some of the most important structural and contextual components that distinguish the program are as follows:

1. The program is constructed around six areas of study that are intended to encompass the range of knowledge, skills and expertise that we consider essential for a person to create appropriate teaching and learning environments in a cross-cultural context. The six major areas of study around which the program is built are **language and literacy, creative expression, teaching/learning processes, cultural/interactional processes, values and assessment, and individual/family/community wellness**. To accommodate the diversity of student and faculty interests, needs and circumstances, a variety of options are to be offered for fulfilling the requirements of each component of the program, ranging from academic courses to applied experiences.
2. The program requires all students to complete a **teaching major specialization**, either in one of the interdisciplinary areas of cultural ecology (social studies), communication arts (language/fine arts) or environmental studies (math/science), or any of the existing disciplinary majors suitable for the various subject areas offered by the schools. All teacher education students are expected to complete a dual major - one in an area of subject matter specialization, and another in education. The total

credits for the BA or BS degree range from 124-136, depending on the particular teaching major requirements.

3. The program contains a major component aimed at providing all students with some kind of guided **immersion experience** in a cultural/linguistic setting different from that with which they are already familiar. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, ranging from structured experiences in a course format to extended fieldwork in a culturally foreign environment. For rural/Native students, this may mean a semester in an urban/institutional setting (e.g., the university) or travel overseas, while for non-Native/urban students, this may mean a semester in an alternative linguistic community or in a Native village setting. All students will be provided assistance in acquiring the skills necessary to enter into and become productive members of diverse cultural and linguistic communities.
4. Early on in the program, all students will be expected to develop a **portfolio** in which they document any prior life experience that may be relevant to the program, which can then be submitted to the faculty for review as a means of receiving appropriate academic credit that can be applied toward the fulfillment of program requirements. The portfolio will continue to be expanded throughout the program, as a basis for advising, individual program planning, and assessment of progress.
5. **Theme seminars** are built into the program requirements as a means to draw faculty, students and guest speakers together on a regular basis to explore ways in which certain critical themes can serve to integrate the various clusters of experiences in which we are all engaged. Faculty will be responsible for conducting a variety of small-group and program-wide seminars on a rotating basis, some around a few continuous program-specific themes adopted by the faculty, with others organized around appropriate themes proposed by faculty and students on a semester-by-semester basis. General themes to be addressed include diversity, continuity and change, conflict and cooperation, power, and teaching and learning environments.
6. Upon completion of the baccalaureate degree, students will be granted an "Initial" Type A certificate by the state (subject to State Board approval), which will qualify the candidate to be employed as a regular classroom teacher for two years. During this two year period, the candidate will serve an on-the-job "**internship**", through which the University, in cooperation with the employing district, will provide an additional eighteen credits of guided experiences leading to the completion of a "teaching portfolio", upon which the final recommendation for full five-year certification will be based.
7. Along with the baccalaureate route to a teaching credential, a **post-baccalaureate option** is also available, in which the "teaching and learning in cultural context" components of the baccalaureate program are collapsed into a three-semester professional development cluster, to be followed by the two-year internship on the job. Both routes are based on the same set of premises, expectations and experiences, but the post-baccalaureate option involves a more intensive and compressed

preparation period. In either case, approximately half of the internship experience will be available in the form of graduate credit which may be applied toward a graduate degree.

### **Some Guiding Questions**

Following are some questions and back-of-the-head notions that have guided the formulation of the UAF cross-cultural teacher education curriculum:

1. How can we approach schooling (and teacher education) so that we think less in terms of "teaching" and more in terms of "providing opportunities for students to learn"?
2. How can we prepare our graduates so that they are able to "think globally and act locally", bringing a global perspective to bear as they construct their practice from the environment in which they are situated.
3. How can we foster respect for different forms of knowledge and ways of knowing, as well as the cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity that prepares our graduates to be productive members of any community they enter?
4. How can we achieve balance and integration between the academic knowledge and the experiential background our students are to acquire while in our charge?
5. How can we work with school districts to provide a smoother transition and a stronger support system for new teachers entering Alaska's schools?
6. How can we make more appropriate and informed judgements about the potential of our graduates as teachers when we recommend them for certification?
7. How can we build into a single curriculum structure the flexibility and adaptability to accomodate the range of environmental conditions, cultural diversity and personal circumstances that we must deal with across the on and off campus programs?
8. How can the purposes, structure and content of our teacher education program be integrated so that the whole can equal more than the sum of the parts?

### **Some Guiding Principles**

With these questions in mind, four key organizing features serve as the guiding principles around which the cross-cultural teacher education program has been designed.

1. The content and experiences associated with the program are selected and designed to give students a thorough grounding in the diversity and dynamics of cultural systems as a framework for personal and collective action. This **cross-cultural perspective** is to be interwoven throughout all aspects of the program.

2. The program is drawn together through a series of theme seminars, each serving to help integrate the various components of the program. Some of the focal constructs for achieving this **thematic integration** are diversity, continuity and change, cooperation and conflict, power, and teaching/learning environments.
3. The program places a strong emphasis on **experiential learning** and guided immersion in real world settings as a means for acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to nurture learning in a cross-cultural environment.
4. The curriculum incorporates an **interdisciplinary orientation** to the knowledge and skills needed to function as a teacher in the contemporary world. The six interdisciplinary areas of study around which the curriculum is structured are language and literacy, creative expression, teaching/learning processes, cultural/interactional processes, values and assessment, and individual/family/community wellness.

### **Cross-Cultural Perspective**

If our graduates are to have the ability to respond to the needs of students from varied cultural backgrounds, they must themselves be able to move across cultural boundaries and adapt their behavior to the contingencies of the environment in which they are situated. This implies sufficient familiarity with the diversity of human conditions to be able to make appropriate interpretations of unfamiliar behavior and situations and act on those interpretations in a constructive manner. If we are to assist students in acquiring that degree of familiarity with the diversity and dynamics of human behavior, we have to find ways of approaching our task that are compatible with the purposes we are trying to address. We need ways of thinking about what we want students to learn that reflect the features of human existence that are most critical to nurturing learning in a cross-cultural environment, yet are open-ended enough to accommodate diversity and change. One approach to this task is to design the curriculum around **ways of engaging and relating to the natural and cultural worlds in which we live**. Following are some of the relational constructs that are to be considered in implementing the curriculum:

***Ways of Being (Culture)*** Graduates would be expected to understand how cultural systems work and how they influence and are influenced by the people who participate in them, particularly with regard to processes related to education.

***Ways of Knowing (Cognition)*** Graduates would be expected to know how different forms of consciousness come into being and shape the way people perceive and experience the world around them.

***Ways of Coming Together (Community)*** Graduates would be expected to be able to enter into different kinds of communities and become constructive members by adapting to the vital features of those communities and reflecting an appreciation of the value of belonging.

***Ways of Situating Behavior (Context)*** Graduates would be expected to be able to relate their behavior to the context in which they are situated and construct their practices in response to that context.

***Ways of Communicating (Communication)*** Graduates would be expected to have a thorough grounding in the full range and manifestations of communicative behavior and demonstrate the ability to respond to the various ways in which meaning and understanding are transmitted.

***Ways of Changing (Change)*** Graduates would be expected to understand how individuals, institutions, communities and cultures evolve, adapt and create new opportunities in response to a variety of internal and external forces.

***Ways of Guiding Learning (Classroom)*** Graduates would be expected to demonstrate that they can bring all of the above to bear on the construction of educational processes and practices that nurture and facilitate learning in a cross-cultural context.

***Compendium of Knowledge and skills (Curriculum)*** Graduates would be expected to acquire a body of knowledge and skills consistent with that which they are expected to impart to others and sufficient to be able to do so in a resourceful manner.

The above list is not intended to be immutable or exhaustive, but rather to provide a point of departure for implementing a curriculum framework that reflects important aspects of how we relate to the world around us, but is sufficiently open-ended to be able to accommodate the range of diversity and change implied in a "cross-cultural perspective". These relational constructs serve as foci for the creation and selection of curricular activities that guide the student through the maze of alternative perspectives that are implied in a "cross-cultural" approach to education.

### **Thematic Integration**

Our next task is to find a way to draw the various elements of the teacher education program together so they are not experienced as disparate and discrete components independent of one another, but are recognized as part of an integrated sequence of activities and experiences that relate to some common themes and are cumulative in their effect. This can be accomplished by organizing the program into a series of phases, each built around a central theme. Five constructs are offered here to achieve this thematic integration - **culture, learning, community, schooling and education**. These are thematic constructs that are defined broadly enough to encompass the range of variables outlined in the previous section, while at the same time providing coherence and meaning in the context of cross-cultural teacher education.

Each phase (up to a year for undergraduates) of the teacher education program would be constructed around one of these themes. During the first phase, "culture" would serve as the locus for determining what learning experiences to select to address the various components of the curriculum outlined in the previous section, and for integrating those experiences into something coherent and meaningful. This would be followed in the

second phase with a focus on "learning" as the integrating theme, and then on to "community", "schooling", and "education" in subsequent phases.

Integration would be achieved through a combination of academic and experiential activities revolving around the appropriate theme. For example, during the "culture" phase, students might be expected to study another language and culture (communication), examine the "cultural" activities of a community (community, context), analyze an oral history text (cognition), complete courses in art, writing, science (curriculum), etc., all of which would be related to increasing the students understanding of how cultural processes shape our view of the world.

During the "learning" phase, students might be expected to tutor some students (classroom, curriculum), work as an aide in a school (classroom, context), attend a retriever club field trial (decognition, communication), complete a course in human development (culture, change), etc., all aimed at increasing an understanding of learning processes. During the "community" phase, students might be expected to immerse themselves in another cultural community (culture, community, change), apprentice to an elder (cognition, communication, culture), conduct a community service project (change, context, community), etc., to acquire first-hand experience at becoming a productive member of another community. During the "schooling phase, students might be expected to complete a sociolinguistic analysis of a classroom learning environment (context, communication, classroom), design, carry out and analyze a variety of learning activities with students in and out of school settings (classroom, curriculum, community, cognition), initiate a new activity in the school (change), etc., all intended to help the student understand how schools work and their role in society. This would conclude the preparatory phase of the teacher education program.

The focus in the "education" phase would be on an internship year during which all of the previous experiences would be brought to bear on a real-life school/community teaching/learning situation, with the intent of helping the graduate integrate their accumulated knowledge and expertise into a wholistic view and situationally appropriate practice of cross-cultural education.

The intent of these examples is to illustrate how thematic integration can be accomplished by organizing the curriculum around relational constructs and themes that have bearing on what a teacher needs to know to nurture learning. Within this framework it is possible to accomodate all of the knowledge and skills that a teacher might need through a combination of conventional academic coursework and carefully selected and constructed experiential activities. The following chart attempts to depict how the various elements of the curriculum that have been presented thus far can be integrated into a wholistic curriculum framework.

### **Experiential Learning**

As the examples in the previous section indicate, the approach to teacher education outlined here relies heaviliy on experiential learning as a means for students to acquire the knowledge and skills they will need to nurture learning in a cross-cultural

environment. This does not diminish the need for more academic, course driven modes of learning, particularly for acquiring the "compendium of knowledge" that is implied as being at the heart of the educational enterprise. As we move out to the relational constructs that make up the remainder of the curriculum, however, first-hand experience becomes essential for students to be able to move beyond a mere understanding of a subject and to be able to act on that understanding in an effective manner. It is important, therefore, that we find ways to build experiential activities into the program wherever appropriate and in a thoughtful and cumulative manner. If done properly, the academic and experiential components of the program should mutually reinforce and build on one another. Following are some additional examples of experiential activities that might be integrated into the teacher education curriculum:

- cultural/language/community immersion
- rural experience for urban students
- urban experience for rural students
- community service projects
- cross-cultural partnerships
- tutoring, substituting, coaching
- traveling, hosting, participating in cultural events
- home visits, community/school profiles
- day-in-the-life exercises
- cooperative, team-oriented tasks
- practica, internships, demonstrations
- workshops, conferences
- cultural events/activities
- etc.

These are but a small sample of the kinds of experiential activities in which students may be expected to engage and become active participants in their own learning. It should be possible, without too much difficulty, to construct these activities in such a way that they can be accounted for in terms of academic credit and be reflected on a student's transcript when they graduate. With only slightly more creative energy, we should be able to have students assemble a portfolio reflecting prior experience and grant credit equivalencies for that as well.

The task of fleshing out a curriculum along the lines of that outlined above should be no more difficult than identifying appropriate academic courses and experiential activities to correspond with each of the sectors shown on the curriculum chart, as was begun in the previous section. This could be done on a three-way grid made up of the relational constructs on one axis, the themes on another, and the academic vs. experiential options listed on a third. In this way, the various elements could be assembled in an integrated fashion and organized so that the whole could potentially add up to be more than the sum of the parts. The components of the grid would necessarily have to be assembled differently for students completing a degree than for those acquiring a credential following the completion of a degree.

### **Interdisciplinary Orientation**

The **Introduction to Education and Society** component of this cluster is intended to provide an orientation to the field of education and some perspective on where education fits into various socio-cultural contexts. This should include some fieldwork experience with students in appropriate schools and classrooms. (The Ed 346 course listed on the chart refers to the version of the course titled "Change and Continuity in Public Schools" outlined by the Thematic Curriculum Working Group last summer).

The **Physical Health** component provides background preparation in areas associated with health, disease, nutrition, first aid, and physical activities. Students would be expected to choose some combination totaling a minimum of three credits, depending on prior training and experience.

The **Cross-Cultural Orientation** component of the specialization cluster is intended to expose students to aspects of different belief systems, ways of knowing, ways of perceiving or ways of behaving that derive from different cultural contexts. All students would be expected to demonstrate a basic understanding of how such differences influence human behavior and understanding.

This cluster attempts to provide a basic foundation of experiences that can begin to develop the human sensitivity and understanding necessary to function effectively across cultural boundaries and in culturally diverse settings. To do so, a heavy emphasis is placed on direct experience in a cross-cultural setting, and on the integration of experiences across components as much as possible. It also means that students from different cultural backgrounds will necessarily need to have different experiences, if they are in fact to be cross-cultural. The sensitivity to cultural and community processes that is acquired through these experiences is intended to serve as a baseline against which subsequent experiences in schools can be judged.

Of all the experiences outlined in the proposed curriculum, the **Language/Cultural Immersion** experience is one of the most important, as well as one of the most difficult to specify and accomplish. Through careful preparation and placement, each student would be expected to spend a significant period of time (eight weeks minimum, semester to year encouraged) face-to-face with people situated in a cultural environment different from their own. Under ideal conditions, included in this experience would be exposure to a different language, lifestyle, world view, and all the other features that distinguish one cultural system from another. At a minimum, students should complete at least three credits worth of exposure to another language, along with at least three credits worth of guided involvement in another cultural setting, preferably including direct contact with elders (an Old Minto or Fish Camp type of concentrated exposure may provide the kind of experience outlined here, if adequately thought through). In addition, at least one element of this component should be Alaska focused.

The **Community Study** component of this cluster provides a vehicle for helping students learn how to enter a new community and accelerate the process of gaining sufficient understanding of how the community operates to make effective use of that knowledge in constructing appropriate learning experiences for the students in school. This is to be

supplemented by a more intensive **Family/Child Study** component, in which the student gains an understanding of how the child that comes to school is shaped by home and family experiences, and how these are in turn influenced by the community and cultural setting in which they are located. At least part of the experience for this component could be acquired through involvement with family/child support groups, HeadStart/ECE programs, parenting workshops, etc.. To the extent possible, these learning experiences should be acquired in the context of the community in which the "language/cultural immersion" experience is situated.

The **Communication/Interaction Processes** component further explores the cultural patterning that influences the ways people communicate and interact with one another, particularly as it relates to the interpersonal and institutional context in which schooling takes place. Once again, a strong fieldwork component is necessary to help the student translate understanding into action.

The final component in this cluster is **Creative Expression**, in which students are expected to become acquainted with some aspect of human creativity and the functions it serves for the individual and for the society from which it originates. Attention should also be given to ways in which modes of creative expression are passed on from one generation to the next.

The cluster of experiences focusing on "teaching and learning environments" represents the culmination of the preservice preparation for initial entry into the teaching profession. The experiences included in this cluster are intended to provide a teaching candidate with basic entry level teaching skills that will be built upon during a guided internship in the first two years of on-the-job teaching (see the next cluster for details). To the extent possible, the various components of this cluster should be grounded in actual teaching/learning situations and should integrate theory and practice.

The **Language, Literacy and Learning** component is intended to provide the candidate with the necessary understanding of language and literacy acquisition processes and the modes of teaching that can most effectively facilitate those processes in multi-lingual settings and in all levels and elements of the schooling environment. Special emphasis is placed on acquainting students with wholistic approaches to language/literacy development, particularly in contexts of bilingualism.

Two central components of the "teaching/learning environments" cluster are the **Pedagogical Principles and Practices** and the **Integrated Curriculum Project**, which address the practical tasks of creating and implementing productive learning environments and experiences. These two components go hand-in-hand, so as to facilitate the integration of what is being taught with how it's being taught. In addition, a strong emphasis is placed on practicum experiences that expose students to the most appropriate and current pedagogical approaches that are applicable to culturally diverse teaching/learning environments.

The **Group Processes** and the **Assessment and Placement** components are intended to be integrated with the **Supervised Intensive Teaching** experience into a 15 credit

semester-long opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired previously in a formal classroom setting. Candidates are expected to demonstrate the ability to create productive learning environments utilizing group processes and making effective and appropriate use of various assessment tools. The intensive teaching semester is to be carried out under the close supervision of an experienced teacher and university faculty member, though this may be accomplished through various arrangements, including apprenticeships or mentorships.

### **Degree Structure**

The task that remains is to fit all of this into a degree structure that is compatible with the aims of the program and is acceptable to the university. To be consistent with the real-world orientation of the curriculum, it would seem appropriate that the degree/major/minor structure would reflect a similar orientation. It becomes necessary, therefore, that we move beyond the boundaries of conventional academic disciplines and utilize a framework for categories of study that is in tune with our curriculum and the world in which it is imbedded, i.e. communities, schools and universities. One such framework is that outlined by Scollon's in their proposal for an "Axe Handle Curriculum", in which they suggest the constructs of culture, communication and bioregion as the focal points for a culturally and environmentally sensitive curriculum. Those constructs lend themselves to an interdisciplinary degree structure that permits breadth of perspective while developing depth of subject-matter knowledge in an area that is recognizable in both the school's and university's established curriculum. Consequently, the following degree options are proposed as a means to implement the cross-cultural teacher education program outlined above:

<u>Degree</u>	<u>First Major</u>	<u>Second Major</u>
B.A.	Language Arts/Humanities	Education
B.A.	Social Sciences	Education
B.S.	Math/Science	Education
B.A/B.S.	Disciplinary Major	Education
Post Bac.	Teaching Major	Education

Under this degree configuration, the B.Ed. would no longer be necessary. Instead, we would adopt the three interdisciplinary degrees outlined above and build on the core requirements for the B.A. and B.S. as a way to strengthen the academic base of our students and give legitimacy to the areas of study they carry with them into the schools in which they work. The communication arts major would be prepared to address the language and fine arts portion of a schools curriculum and relate it to the culture of the community; the cultural ecology major would be equipped to bring life to the social studies curriculum; and the environmental studies major would be able to relate math and science to the physical and cultural environment beyond the school. Our graduates would be specialists in terms of subject matter knowledge in their field, but generalists in terms of applying that knowledge to the lives of their students.

The academic specialization cluster is intended to provide several options for an area of subject matter expertise, including three interdisciplinary options available for those who wish to teach in small schools with multi-graded, multiple-subject teaching assignments. Along with the major in education, each student must complete a teaching major, the choice of which will determine if the student will receive a BA or BS degree. For secondary students, this will also determine their area of endorsement. For elementary students, the teaching major may be included as a second endorsement, indicating an area of academic specialization. Additional endorsements in areas such as Bilingual Education, Early Childhood Education, or Environmental Education may also be constructed and completed in addition to the teaching majors (subject to State Board approval).

The degree structure proposed above is contingent on our ability to develop the means to support graduates for an **internship year** following their completion of our teacher preparatory program. By constructing the teacher education program to encompass the first two years of teaching (while the candidate is employed on a two-year initial certificate granted at graduation), we can shift much of what we now require in the form of methods courses and student teaching into the internship year, provided we, in collaboration with the school districts, establish a strong support system with master/mentor teachers, workshops, release time and a variety of assessment techniques aimed at helping the intern identify strengths and weaknesses and construct a set of practices suited to the environment in which they are situated. This then frees up time within the context of the degree program to strengthen the knowledge base and the conceptual and analytical skills of our graduates. In addition, it would allow us to work with our post-baccalaureate students over a two year period, including intensive work in a real-life teaching situation during their internship year.

Graduates of the program would be assisted on the job in the application of their teaching skills by University personnel in cooperation with the respective school districts, through on-site coursework (some of which would be at the graduate level), inservice workshops, audioconferences, demonstration lessons, videotape exchange, regional and statewide seminars, and guided practicum experiences. All of this would build upon and be integrated into the actual teaching situation of each candidate. Upon completion, each candidate would have accumulated a portfolio of documents reflecting their performance and improvement as a teacher throughout the internship period, which would then be used as a basis for assessing the candidates qualifications and making a recommendation regarding the awarding of a full five-year Type A credential.

Finally, a degree structure such as that outlined above would make it possible to provide all students with exposure to the full range of K-12 teaching/learning experiences during their preparatory period, and only when they move into their internship year would they have to make a choice of elementary, secondary, or continue at the K-12 level. Such an arrangement would greatly simplify the management of our undergraduate curriculum, but it would require working through a new set of relationships with the school districts with which we are associated. It would also require some adjustments with regard to current certifications procedures and hiring practices, though both DOE and several

school districts are already committed to such an arrangement. It remains for us to formulate a plan that moves us in a compatible direction.

### **Post Baccalaureate Credentialing Program**

The post baccalaureate credentialing option is intended for candidates who have already completed a degree in a subject area that would constitute an approved teaching major, and now wish to acquire a teaching certificate. The preservice experiences outlined for such students are based on the same pedagogical principles and assumptions as the undergraduate program, but they are compressed into a three semester intensive sequence of experiences that provide the essential foundation for entry into the teaching profession. To accomplish this, the various components from the "cultural/community environments" cluster and the "teaching/learning environments" cluster are integrated into larger blocks of experience, which in some cases may be acquired through 500 level professional development activities. For post baccalaureate candidates who have not completed an undergraduate degree in an approved teaching major, additional subject matter preparation may be needed before the Initial Type A certificate can be awarded. Upon completion of the post baccalaureate preservice cluster, the graduate would enter the same "community/school internship experience" outlined above for the undergraduate program.

### **Summary**

The above integrated design for a cross-cultural teacher education program is necessarily sketchy and incomplete. It is offered as a vehicle for stimulating some discussion about alternative approaches that we might take as we review our teacher education programs. It is one way that we could potentially bring our teacher education programs in line with the mission of our college, though it's not the only way. If such a framework were to be adopted, it would require additional time and effort on many peoples part to work through the details necessary to convert it into a workable program and to create the machinery necessary to implement it. Whatever direction we move with our programs, we must find ways to better accommodate the qualities of diversity and change that so permeate our existence. This proposal is offered in the spirit of furthering those qualities.