

One University's Response to Teacher Education Reform

By collaborating with local school districts, Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon, provides its education students with expanded opportunities.

How do we prepare education students to be outstanding teachers? This query guided the development of the Cooperative Fifth-Year/Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. To find answers, representatives from seven university departments and six local school districts¹ collaborated with the education department faculty and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to plan and implement this innovative program.

Beginning in 1987, this advisory group examined current teacher education practices, new program requirements recently established by Oregon's Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, and the education literature. We then recommended the development of a new education program at the graduate level. The program, which provides an alternate route to teacher certification, was designed to include:

- extensive field experiences,
- close cooperation between university and school districts,
- training of preservice teachers to work with students with special needs,



Marsh Hall, Pacific University

• presentation of knowledge, skills, and understandings based on current research in education (Carnegie Task Force 1986, Holmes Group 1986).

The first group of students enrolled in the program began coursework in June 1988. Six students were admitted for the first year of the program, with representatives in math, science, art, and foreign language. Enrollment for 1989-90 will increase to 18 students.

Prospective Students

The program serves those who want to pursue a teaching career in secondary education and a Master of Arts in Teaching degree. Liberal arts graduates in math, science, foreign languages, or art are eligible for the program. We selected these four subject areas both to meet local needs and to limit the number of endorsement areas during the initial year of the program. Prior to admission, students submit passing scores from the California Basic Education Skills Test and National Teaching Exam Specialty Area Test. Applicants are then screened and interviewed by university faculty and school district personnel before final selections are made.

Students participate in seminars presented by experts: university faculty, school district personnel, and community members.

Program Description

The program is a 12-month, full-time commitment for students; coursework begins in June and is completed the following May. Students document all program components in their individual professional development plans. Each student and his or her advisors—a mentor teacher and two university professors—develop and monitor this plan cooperatively.

Traditional course content is covered in a nontraditional format. Students participate in seminars presented by experts: university faculty, school district personnel, and community members. For example, in the area of multicultural education, we consult with the Oregon State Department of Education and a private corporation, Interface Network. These organizations provide both written resources and speakers.

Students serve as interns in the public schools from late August through June, in order to experience an entire school year. During the fall semester, they spend two days per week in the schools with a mentor teacher and three days on campus, participating in seminars and a campus internship. As part of their internships, students assist faculty from their major endorsement areas in one or two college classes. During the spring semester, students spend five days per week in the schools, where they assume full classroom responsibility for four to five weeks. At the same time, their seminars continue to address theoretical and practical aspects of teaching and to relate theory to practice. Thus students can apply new knowledge and skills immediately to the classroom.

Each student also completes and presents a research project. The project represents a combination of the specialty endorsement area (math, science, foreign language, or art) and teaching in the secondary classroom. Research project topics have included the prevalence of math anxiety in students at the 9th and 12th grade levels and factors that influence the retention of microbiology concepts.

Because the number of Hispanic students in the area is growing, the

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advisory group emphasized learning to teach Hispanic students as part of the program curriculum. We network with local and state resources (e.g., Migrant Education Services) to make field placements in schools with greater populations of Hispanic students. We are also ensuring preparation for teaching gifted students.

By sharing the responsibility for teacher education with local school districts, we at Pacific University are more thoroughly preparing our education students to meet the challenges of their future profession. □

1 Beaverton School District, Tigard School District, Hillsboro Union High School District, Forest Grove School District, Gaston School District, and Banks School District.

References

- Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. (1986). *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*. New York: Carnegie Foundation.
The Holmes Group. (1986). *Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group*. East Lansing, Mich.: The Holmes Group.

Nancy Nagel is Assistant Professor of Education at Pacific University, Forest Grove, OR 97116.

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