

New England College

The New England College (NEC) teacher certification program integrates theory and practice by combining a significant body of work in content areas, core education courses, and four practical experiences. The concept of scholar practitioner is prominent in our work with our students. The students experience work in school during their Professional Practices class which is taken during either their second or third semester at NEC. During that class NEC students integrate a Service Learning project within a public school setting working with the students in that setting. Their second experience is during the Special Education Procedures and Practicum class. In that course students work in schools for thirty hours at two different levels (elementary and either middle school or high school). NEC students experience their third practicum during their Methods and Practicum III class. In that course our students work in schools for twelve hours per week for a semester. The students then participate in student teaching for sixteen weeks. During that time our students work in schools on a full-time basis under the supervision of a certified teacher and an NEC supervisor.

Our students have to pass PRAXIS I in order to gain acceptance into the certification portion of our program. Students cannot apply to the program until they have passed PRAXIS I. At the current time 90% of our students pass PRAXIS II in their first attempt. We want to increase that pass rate for our students. We have implemented two procedures to assist our students with the PRAXIS tests. First, we have created an assignment in the Professional Practices class where our students must show the date from ETS for their PRAXIS I test. We believe this will allow us to assist those students for whom a portion of the test is more difficult. Second, we have instituted an assignment in which students in the Methods Practicum III class must take their PRAXIS II test and share their scores with us. Again, our thinking is that this will give us more opportunity to work with students if they need assistance. We are also in the process of assessing how to be more proactive in this process.

We are in the process of improving our methods and practicum experiences by integrating our Methods of Curriculum and Instruction classes into the Methods Practicum III process. For these courses we are creating a “block” system for our students. The students will participate in their school settings during each morning and in the afternoon they will participate in a seminar setting. This process will allow our students to integrate their learning of the methods and curriculum specific to their areas of teaching with their practicum experiences in the field. The instructors for each of the methods and curriculum classes will work with their students and the NEC field supervisor to integrate the work in both experiences into one process. The students will take their learning directly into the field in order to develop, implement, and modify their ideas and work with real students in their site schools. We believe this integration will afford our students a more comprehensive series of experiences.

As part of the methods block we have moved our Curriculum and Design class to occur earlier for our students. Our thinking is that we want our students to have already developed a

comprehensive unit prior to participating in their methods block experience. There are two goals for this move. The first is that we want our students to understand how to develop lessons according to the UbD model of curriculum development. We would like our students to understand more fully how to integrate lessons, both with each other lesson and within a unit of study. Our second goal is to have students understand how to develop an integrated unit of study using the UbD methodology in order to understand more fully the assessment process from diagnostic to formative and summative assessments. We will stress the importance of making direct connections among daily lessons and assignments, formative assessment activities, student feedback, and summative assessments. Our students will benefit from this process because they will become more prepared to move into their methods experiences in terms of their understanding of curriculum development, instructional strategies and assessment strategies in a more comprehensive and integrated fashion.

Our students will also have a better understanding of how to differentiate for their students. Students know that differentiation is a crucial component of teaching. The methods block process will afford our students more realistic opportunities to integrate differentiation into real lessons and activities with real students in public schools. This is important because even though our students believe in the importance of differentiated instruction and assessment they have not had the number of opportunities in the field necessary to develop their repertoire of strategies. This process will allow students the important experiences of developing and implementing their ideas so that they can receive feedback from their students, cooperating teachers, methods and curriculum instructors and their NEC supervisor. These multiple opportunities for feedback are critical aspects of what we believe will be an exciting and meaningful series of experiences for our NEC students.