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# Blending Worlds, Reforming Practice?: An Instrumental Case Study Of Collaborative Early Childhood Teacher Education

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Blending Worlds, Reforming Practice?: An Instrumental Case Study Of Collaborative  
Early Childhood Teacher Education

by

Ann M. Mickelson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Special Education  
College of Education  
University of South Florida

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## **Dedication**

**To Alex** – for his unconditional love and support through every single step. You truly are my “*Shelter from the Storm.*”

**To Anna** – for sharing her Mommy when she really didn’t want to and reminding me every day of what is truly important.

*“You are my sunshine” ... You are my everything.*

**To my mother** – for helping me see that I am capable and beautiful. You have always been and always will be the, “*Wind beneath my wings.*”

**To my grandmother** - for instilling in me a sense of self-efficacy and work ethic that got me to where I am today “*You are beautiful in every single way...*”

**To Annette and Doug** – for supporting us through this journey...and all other journeys...

**To the rest of my family and dear friends** - for standing by me and understanding when I didn’t have the capacity to give back. I know I will always,

*“get by with a little help from my friends.”*

**To David** - for his unwavering support, his honesty, and his dedication to mentorship...

Thank you for always being in my corner.

**To Lise** - for her passion for our field and for her endless support, confidence, and authentic guidance.

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**To Marleen** - for challenging me to be my very best.

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## Abstract

Collaborative models of teacher education have grown from the belief that through such models we can improve the quality and availability of truly inclusive opportunities for children with diverse abilities and their families. Little is known however as to the extent collaborative models are capable of influencing inclusive service delivery or in terms of their efficacy to impact the relative inclusive practice of their graduates as compared to other models of teacher education. As an important first step toward examining the relative worth and efficacy of collaborative models of early childhood teacher education, this case study applied a conceptual framework derived from activity systems theory (Engeström, 1987; 1999) and the recommended research framework for investigation into collaborative models (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) to consider one such teacher education program as a system. Doing so offers the literature a description of one program's parameters of practice and efforts to produce effective, inclusive teachers and leaders through a collaborative approach; something that was previously lacking in the literature base. Working to understand how this teacher education program operates as a system helped characterize the parameters of practice specific to collaborative program dimensions. Elements of harmony and tension as well as cultural tools specific to the program's attempts to meet its object and ultimate outcome per activity theory were also identified. Finally, case study analysis of this particular program through the conceptual framework provided insight related to current and future efforts of collaborative early childhood teacher education and broader teacher education reform.

## Chapter One

### **Introduction**

Our world, our communities, and in turn our schools, have been changing. This change is reflective of increasing levels of diversity within ethnic, linguistic, economic, and family circumstances currently affecting the demographics of children and families (Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2011). Inclusive models of service delivery for children with identified special educational needs have continually increased in prevalence across the PK-12 landscape (McLeskey, Landers, Hoppey, & Williamson, 2011; McLeskey, Landers, Williamson, & Hoppey, 2012). Consequently, teacher education programs must prepare candidates for student populations which are dramatically different in terms of racial background and ability than they were at the onset of special education legislation. Artiles (2003) describes the educational context in which teacher education must operate as a progressively complex landscape of difference and diversity situated within the political context of debates and efforts related to educational reform.

Legislative and policy circumstances have contributed to this increased complexity by introducing new foci on quality, accountability, and outcomes (Chandler, Cochran, Christensen, Dinnebeil, Gallagher, Lifter, Stayton, & Spino, 2012; Hardman & Dawson, 2008; McLaughlin, 2010). Hence, the current educational context is confronted with questions related to how teachers, schools, districts, and universities balance the competing demands of promoting and providing inclusive, socially just, and equitable

education with current accountability demands that push for universalities and standardization (Chandler et al., 2012; McLaughlin, 2010). A significant conundrum is evident in that teachers and schools are being asked to work toward greater similarity in learning outcomes despite the greater diversity observed in the learner population (Voltz & Collins, 2010). This changing context increasingly necessitates that teacher education embrace the integration of diverse perspectives through interdisciplinary partnerships (Hestenes, Laparo, Schott-Little, Chakravarthi, Lower, Cranor, Cassidy, & Neimeyer, 2009).

The emergence of collaborative models of teacher education is one response to this complexity and the literature includes many descriptions of related efforts. Such models have been embraced due to beliefs that collaboration in teacher education will lead to graduates who are better prepared for inclusive, collaborative teaching of diverse student populations (Pugach, Blanton, & Boveda, in press; Piper, 2007). Likewise, unification of the fields of early childhood education and early childhood special education (EC/ECSE) is seen as movement toward a common purpose of providing quality care and education for all children (Piper, 2007). Scholars have documented research evidence showing formal preparation of teachers and their beliefs about inclusion to be highly influential factors in the successful implementation of preschool inclusion (Odom, Schwartz, & Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion [ECRII] Investigators, 2002; Winton & McCollum, 1997). Collaborative models of teacher education are seen as a means to explore unification of the two fields and thereby produce the attitudes and knowledge/skill base necessary for the delivery of services that will result in the desired outcomes for inclusion (Kemple et al., 1994; Miller & Stayton,

1996; Stayton & Miller, 1993). Supporters of integrated or collaborative teacher education view the traditional segregated or discrete approach to be outdated and potentially harmful (Piper, 2007).

However, the literature lacks empirical evidence in support of or validation of such models and little is known as to the ways in which these models improve the preparation of inclusive teachers (Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely, & Danielson, 2010). Further, while studies exist which examine components of collaborative programs; there is a dearth of information regarding more complex program-wide study (Pugach, Blanton, & Boveda, in press). Concurrently, traditional teacher education is under attack and alternative routes to teaching are proliferating while debate ensues as to whether teacher education really matters (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2008; Brownell et al., 2010; Brynes, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006a; Zeichner, 2006). At a time when teaching and teacher education are under such intense scrutiny, it is vital that we closely examine how we prepare our teachers for the realities of the complex educational contexts in which they will teach. Accordingly, it is essential that we establish an increased understanding of how collaborative models of teacher education operate. Information regarding the worth of collaborative models as this particular practice is increasingly embraced is also important (Brownell et al., 2010).

This introductory chapter will first discuss definitions of inclusion as well as rationale for inclusive services as inclusion is seen as a core impetus for collaborative models in teacher education. The current context in which inclusive teaching and teacher education for inclusion are situated will then be described. Next, a brief introduction to collaborative models of teacher education, one approach to teacher education for

inclusion, will lead to the statement of the issue central to this study followed by the specific research questions which guide the inquiry.

### **Inclusion**

The issue of inclusion of children with special needs in educational settings is clearly not new; it has been an issue of importance in the United States since the onset of federal special education legislation (Pugach, Blanton, & Correa, 2011; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Undeniably, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), originally passed as the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) P.L. 94-142 in 1975, provided the impetus to educate children with special needs in inclusive settings with the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) provision (Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Legislation has included reference to inclusive settings as the “preferred” method of educating children with disabilities since the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Specifically, Section 504 stated that recipients of federal financial assistance “...shall educate, or shall provide education of, each qualified handicapped person in its jurisdiction with persons who are not handicapped to the maximum extent appropriate...” (Section 84-34 a).

In the current climate, IDEIA remains focused on mandating that services be provided in the LRE. While the LRE is individually defined, it is considered to be the general education setting whenever possible (IDEIA, 2004). The definition of LRE has remained stable in the implementing regulations since 1977 and is as follows:

Each public agency must ensure that—

- i. To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and
- ii. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (IDEIA, 2004, 34 C.F.R.300.114[a][2])

There is much evidence that inclusive models of education can benefit all children (Bailey, McWilliam, Buysee, & Wesley, 1998; Jones, 1995; Kilgo & Bruder, 1997; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; Odom, 1998, 2011; Odom & Diamond, 1998; Odom, Buysee, & Soukakou, 2011; Sailor & Roger, 2005) and, as noted, there is a long history of federal policy and legislative support for inclusion broadly defined as receiving services in settings with peers who are typically developing. State licensing has also been seen as evolving toward inclusive practice particularly in the area of early childhood education where many states now offer a unified or merged teaching license (Geiger, Mickelson, McKeown, Barton, Kleinhammer-Tramill, & Steinbrecher, in press). Such licensure blends the fields of early childhood and early childhood special education (Raschke, Maude, Brotherson, & Milburn, 2001; Miller & Stayton, 1998; Stayton & McCollum, 2002; Piper, 2007) and has been seen as a support to collaborative models of teacher education (e.g., Heston, Raschke, Kliwer, Fitzgerald, & Edmiaston, 1998). Over time, inclusive service has become the primary model of special education in early childhood



(Odom, 2000; Odom, Buysee, & Soukakou, 2011) and for the majority of school-aged students (USDOE 2008; McLeskey et al., 2012).

While there is much support for the notion of inclusion and it is now seen as the primary service delivery model for most children with special educational needs, there does not exist a common, shared definition of inclusion across contexts. However, an invariable commonality is that children with and without disabilities are educated together in the same setting (Odom & Diamond, 1998). Consequently, it is important that a definition of inclusion within this study be discussed. This research will focus on the early childhood context and therefore definitions of inclusion from that arena will be prioritized.

Currently, notions of inclusion are often focused primarily on services for children with disabilities. For example, statistics on inclusion from the U.S. Department of Education use time spent in the general education classroom as a marker of inclusion (USDOE, 2008; McLeskey et al., 2012). Specially, students who spend at least 80% of their school day in the general education classroom are considered to be served inclusively. Professional organizations have also provided position statements on inclusion. For example, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) which serves special educators and related service providers offers the following:

Inclusion is a term used to describe the ideology that each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, should be educated in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students).

Those who support full inclusion believe all students, regardless of his or her disability, should be in a regular classroom/program full time, and all educational services the child needs should be provided to the child in the general education classroom.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act does not require inclusion. However, the law does require that children with disabilities must, to the maximum extent appropriate, be educated in the least restrictive environment. IDEA considers the general education classroom to be the least restrictive environment (CEC, 2011).

The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the CEC and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) jointly issued a position statement pertaining specifically to early childhood inclusion representing a shared definition across general and special education within this context. The statement defines early childhood inclusion as:

Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports (DEC/NAEYC, 2009, p. 2).

However, some notions of inclusion are more complex and broader in their definition as to whom inclusion applies. In addition to the increased presence of children with disabilities, and therefore of inclusion, the diversity of the educational context is amplified by the dramatically changing demographics of the population (Artiles, 2003; Frey, 2011; USDOE 2008). Baglieri, Bejoian, Broderick, Connor, & Valle (2011) highlight how inclusion has been defined in a restrictive manner within U.S. special education and argue that definitions should be expanded to incorporate all children. Further, they suggest that we need more cohesion in our systems and practice and argue against what they call the “myth of the typical child” which is seen as leading to this narrow and dichotomized view of inclusion. Seemingly in line with a broader definition for inclusion, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) embraced the following definition of inclusion for discretionary grant competition related to personnel preparation for 2012, “Inclusive” or “inclusion” refers to an “active commitment to equity for all students” so as to “maximize the participation of all learners, by making learning opportunities relevant and high-quality.”(USDOE, OSEP, 2012, p. 46077). This definition appears to best represent the notion posited by Baglieri et al., (2011) as its open language seems to embrace inclusion as an issue of equity for all children regardless of the type of diversity or difference they present.

As this particular study is concerned with inclusion as defined and operated in the context of early childhood education, and early childhood teacher education programs are charged with following the recommendations for personnel preparation proffered by their respective professional organizations, the DEC/NAEYC definition will serve as the primary definition throughout data collection and analysis. The broader definition

embraced recently by OSEP coupled with the views set forth by Baglieri et al., (2011) will provide important constructs of inclusion to critically analyze study findings.

### **The Current Context for Inclusive Education**

The current legislative landscape, shaped by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), has brought about significant changes in how schools and other educational settings work with groups of children. Practice is increasingly focused on meeting adequate-yearly-progress (AYP) goals within the K-12 context in an era of increased accountability and standard-based reform. Accountability, standards, and child and family outcomes are increasingly important aspects of teaching within the early childhood arena as well.

Parallel to these aspects is the increasingly diverse population teachers are expected to serve. Seidl and Pugach (2009) assert that children representing such diversity are at increased risk of school failure and referral to special education due to the contrast between the demands of the school context and the child's cultural context. The persistent overrepresentation of minority children in special education has been attributed to teachers' lack of preparation and skill to work with diverse communities of children including children of color, children from working class and poor families, and children who are English Language Learners (ELLs) (Artiles, 2003; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Dunn, 1968; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Villegas, 2008).

The educational context is further altered as accountability concerns drive an increasing focus on the fidelity of implementation of evidence based practice (Dunst, 2009; Kutash, Duchnowski, & Lynn, 2009; Odom, 2009). Dunst and Trivette (2009) define evidence-based practices as "...practices informed by research findings

demonstrating a (statistical or functional) relationship between the characteristics and consequences of a planned or naturally occurring experience or opportunity where the nature of the relationship directly informs what a practitioner or parent can do to produce a desired outcome” (p. 41).

The Response to Intervention (RtI) initiative, which has been promoted as a means to support inclusive education as well as improve special education identification practices, has created a further need to examine practices within the routines and activities of the typical education setting from both general and special education perspectives. The RtI model, derived from the concept of treatment validity, is based on a structure of pre-special education services developed by Fuchs (1995). The purpose of RtI is described as, “preventing failure and reducing risk, identifying who needs what type of supports, monitoring the effectiveness of that support, modifying support in an iterative fashion for better outcomes, and ultimately helping to make decisions concerning transitions to typical environments or specialized services” (Barnett, VanDerHeyden, & Witt, 2007, p. 48).

Widespread implementation of a variety of RtI approaches is now evident (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009) and the practice is increasingly observed with younger and younger populations (Buysse, Peisner-Feinbert, & Burchinal, 2012; Fox, Carta, Strain, Dunlap, & Hemmeter, 2010; VanDerHeyden & Snyder 2006). As such, RtI is now being examined for application in the early childhood context. Indeed, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and the National Head Start Association (NHSA) recently collaborated on a joint position

statement which provides guidance on how to conceptualize RtI within early childhood and considerations for implementation of RtI with young children.

The current context necessitates rigorous investigation into ways in which school personnel and teacher education programs can work collaboratively to implement and promote appropriate, inclusive services in the best interest of all children. For inclusion and initiatives such as RtI to be effective, expertise from both general and special education must be combined to create a collaborative culture where all professionals take a shared approach to responsibility for all children (Murawski & Hughes, 2009; NAEYC, CEC, & NHSA, 2012). This type of collaborative culture is seen as an essential component to successful inclusive education (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). The preparation of teachers has been linked to successful implementation of preschool inclusion (Odom et al., 2002). Yet teacher education has not traditionally focused on preparation for inclusive contexts (Garguilo, Sluder, & Streitenberger, 1997), collaboration (McKenzie, 2009), or diversity (Merryfield, 2000). A brief introduction to the history of teacher preparation for inclusion will be discussed next.

### **Teacher Education for Inclusion**

Teacher education has been suggested as being at the heart of initiatives for developing inclusive practices in schools (Ainscow, 2003). Florian (2010) states that the central challenge for teacher preparation for inclusion is a need to create programs that prepare teachers to respond to human differences in ways that include rather than exclude learners in what is ordinarily available in classrooms and schools. Both special and general education teacher preparation can act as partners to ameliorate these voids by

working collaboratively to prepare teachers for inclusive contexts and in so doing helping to create quality, inclusive, and socially just education.

The preparation of teachers for inclusive practice has been a concern in the United States since the enactment of modern special education legislation in 1975 (Pugach, et al., 2011; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Accordingly, teacher education programs have been charged with identifying how best to prepare their students for the profession. The first example of such efforts can be seen in a series of federal discretionary grants which came to be known as The Deans' Grants Projects (Pugach, 2005; Stayton & McCollum, 2002).

The Deans' grants provided Deans of schools, colleges, and departments of education with funding to support curricular reform for addressing the need to prepare general educator to work with students with disabilities (Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2003; Pugach, 2005; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). The central purpose of the Deans' Grants' was to promote integration of the preservice preparation of general and special educators (Pugach et al., 2011). These grants operated from the perspective that collaboration between general and special educators was essential and that the education of all teachers was an institution-wide responsibility (Pugach, 2005).

Several models for preparing general education teachers to work with children with special needs were explored through these projects including adding special education content to existing general education curricula and infusing special education content throughout programs. The most prevalent model established was an additive model (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) characterized as adding special education content and experiences to existing general education curriculum (Pugach et al., 2011). This model of

teacher education was consequently set as a precedent and remains highly prevalent (Pugach et al.; 2011).

A second example of efforts to improve general educators' preparation for inclusion has been seen in state requirements for licensure. States began to require that special education content, specifically that which pertains to characteristics of disabilities as well as environmental and instructional strategies for including children with disabilities in the general education classroom, be included in general education teacher education programs (Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Some states were observed to require some general education content in special education programs as well. The additive model described above was embraced most widely.

However, research suggests that the practice of adding one or two courses in special education or adding field experiences in inclusive settings has not been consistent across higher education programs and has not resulted in adequately prepared general educators for inclusive settings (Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Consequently, an alternative trend for preparing teachers for inclusion has been seen in collaborative models of teacher education some of which are marked by efforts to unify the higher education general and special education curricula (Strawderman & Lindsey, 1995). In early childhood, unified programs have been defined as those that combine all of the recommended personnel standards from the respective general education and special education program into a newly conceptualized curriculum (Miller & Stayton, 1998).

Teacher preparation is indeed guided by personnel preparation standards. In the early childhood arena, the long history of support for collaborative, interdisciplinary work among educators, related service providers, and families is reflected in standards



from DEC as well as NAEYC. Recently, DEC revised and validated the early childhood special education (ECSE)/ early intervention (EI) initial and advanced personnel standards to be used as part of educational accountability systems and in teacher personnel preparation program accreditation (Cochran, Gallagher, Stayton, Dinnebeil, Lifter, Chandler, & Christensen, 2012). NAEYC also updated their personnel preparation standards in 2009. Further, an alignment of the CEC/DEC and NAEYC personnel preparation standards was recently conducted (Chandler, et al., 2012). All of these standards align with the joint position statement on inclusion from DEC and NAEYC introduced earlier.

Despite efforts to reform teacher education in response to increased inclusion and diversity, scholars have continually lamented that teachers are not adequately prepared to teach a diverse range of young children in inclusive contexts (Blanton, Pugach, & Florian, 2010; Chang, Early, & Winton, 2005; Dinnebeil, McInerney, Fox, & Juchartz-Pendry, 1998; Early & Winton, 2001; Kamens, Loprete, & Slostad, 2003). OSEP has also recognized this issue and in the priority written for the 2012 discretionary grant competition pertaining to personnel preparation in early childhood special education it stated the following:

The majority of professionals who make up the current early childhood workforce are not adequately prepared to provide effective services and evidence-based interventions that lead to improved developmental and learning outcomes for infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families (National Governor's Association, 2010). In a survey of IDEA Part C and Part B, Section 619 coordinators, more than half of the States reporting indicated that

personnel currently employed in early intervention and preschool programs were not properly trained to work with infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families (Bruder, 2010). The Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) each has a set of early childhood personnel standards for personnel working with infants, toddlers, and preschool children and their families. The majority of States' personnel standards, however, do not align to these national standards (Stayton et al., 2009). (USDE, OSEP, 2012).

Taken together, the aligned ECSE/EI and NAEYC personnel standards as well as the DEC/NAEYC joint position statement on inclusion (2009) provide a foundation for the design, implementation and assessment of early childhood teacher preparation programs, particularly those with a focus on promoting inclusive practice. The use of these standards by personnel preparation programs may help ameliorate the issues surrounding persistent inadequate preparation. Collaborative models of teacher education have been touted as having such a focus as they are designed to promote inclusive practice.

### **Collaborative Models in Teacher Education**

Over time, institutes of higher education (IHEs) have responded to the diversifying context and the need to focus on inclusion in several ways in terms of how they structure teacher education programs (Piper, 2007; Pugach & Blanton, 2009; Stayton & McCollum, 2002; Ryndak, Clark, Conroy, & Holthaus Stuart, 2001). Some have maintained separate general/ECE and special/ECSE teacher education programs while others have looked to ways to increase collaboration across the two fields (Piper, 2007;

Pugach & Blanton, 2009; Ryndak et al., 2001; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). This latter response is seen in the movement toward collaborative models of teacher education that strive to work together across general and special education teacher preparation programs. Defined as purposeful integration of preservice general and special teacher education, collaborative teacher education has become a clear trend in initial teacher preparation (Pugach et al., 2011). Pugach et al. (2011) highlight that some of the most progressive and pioneering work around this endeavor has taken place in the context of early childhood teacher education (e.g., Correa, Hartle, Jones, Kemple, Rapport, & Smith-Bonahue, 1997; Kemple, Correa, Hartle, & Fox, 1994; Miller & Stayton, 1998). The context of collaborative models is complex as there are varying degrees of collaboration and multiple definitions of key constructs seen across programs (Piper, 2007; Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Descriptions of models of collaboration as well as key components of these collaborative programs can be found in the literature review (Ch. 2).

The phenomenon of collaborative teacher education is currently seen across the PK-12 teacher education landscape and an increase has been observed in recent years (Pugach et al, 2011). Blanton and Pugach (2011) describe the inherent goals of these collaborative programs as twofold. First, programs seek to improve the preparation of general education teachers to increase their ability to be successful with students who have disabilities. Secondly, programs aspire to build on this improved preparation of general education teachers as a way of redefining the roles and preparation of specialists. These goals are based on a core assumption that collaboration across general and special education at the preservice level will lead to graduates who are better prepared to address

the wide diversity of students, including those with disabilities, they will teach (Pugach, Blanton, & Boveda, in press).

While collaboration in teacher education programs that prepare general and special educators has existed for decades, such program models have not been examined sufficiently (Blanton & Pugach, 2011; Piper, 2007; Pugach & Blanton, 2009; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). There remain numerous questions as to how such programs should be developed and organized as well as to what end teacher education should become more collaborative (Piper, 2007; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Pugach et al (2011) have argued that the current political and social context may create an impetus to address preservice issues including the interactions between special and general education more than ever before. Increased research into this progressively more common practice may help all teacher educators ascertain whether collaborative programs are better positioned as compared to other models to prepare teachers for diverse, inclusive contexts (Pugach & Blanton, 2009).

In the early childhood context there is a long history of opposition to separate general and special teacher education. In a now seminal article, Miller (1992) posited that separate programs for early childhood and early childhood special education were immoral and unjust highlighting a philosophical impetus for blending or even merging of the two fields. Similarities have been documented across PK-12 general and special education (e.g., Carta, Schwartz, Atwater, & McConnell, 1991; Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum, 2005; Kilgo, Johnson, LaMontagne, Stayton, Cook, & Cooper, 1999). As noted, licensing in ECE and ECSE has reflected this notion and lent support to collaborative models and perspectives in ECE with the emergence of blended or unified

licenses. The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) reported in 2005 that a total of 20 states either offered a single, blended certificate for ECE and ECSE or are planning to add such a certificate in the near future (Danaher, Kraus, Armijo, & Hipps, 2005). Recent figures are believed to be similar (Stayton, personal communication, Oct. 2012).

After reviewing the literature pertaining to collaborative models in the early childhood context, most attention to date has been on providing descriptions of unified or collaborative preparation programs. The literature was found to be replete with descriptions of the development and implementation of unified early childhood teacher education programs, but to lack depth in terms of outcomes, program effectiveness, or the broader impact of increased collaboration. Findings from a national study which attempted to describe the current status in the development of unified early childhood education/early childhood special education programs (Miller & Stayton, 1998) suggested that the rationale to develop unified programs had a tendency to be based more on philosophical beliefs than empirical data. Additionally, the definition of and design for unified programs varied greatly across institutions (Miller & Stayton, 1998).

Another recent literature review (Pugach et al, in press) also revealed that while the research base includes empirical studies on components of programs, (e.g., a specific course or practicum format) it lacks studies examining these programs as holistic, comprehensive systems and therefore lacks information as to whether and how this movement relates to teacher education reform. In regards to reform focused on inclusion, it is important to note that while philosophical definitions of inclusion guide practice, inclusion is also defined by the ways it is enacted by systems and individuals (Odom,

2011). Without examining programs as holistic, comprehensive systems, the field is at a loss when trying to ascertain the impact of various models for teacher preparation on overall teacher education reform related to the shifting roles and responsibilities of all teachers in light of the diversifying educational context.

### **Statement of Intent**

As a reform agenda to address the need to prepare teachers for increasingly diverse educational contexts and in an effort to recognize the shared elements across the fields of general and special education, the movement toward collaborative or blended models of teacher education now has a significant history and continues to grow particularly at the early childhood level (Piper, 2007; Pugach, et al., 2011; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Yet, this movement lacks an empirical foundation informing the field as to how such programs can function as systems to represent and impact major reform of teacher education for both general and special education. Therefore, in an effort to inform broader teacher education reform efforts, this study will describe and analyze how one collaborative or blended early childhood teacher education program functions as a system through its design and enactment to promote its desired outcomes related to preparing teachers for inclusive practice. Specifically, this study will address the following research questions.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does a collaborative early childhood teacher education program operate as a system to promote the social-construction of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for inclusive, collaborative teaching?

- a. How and why does an early childhood teacher education program articulate/define the intentions, philosophies and assumptions driving the program?
  - i. How do the philosophies, intentions & assumptions inform the program structure, content, field sites, sequence, delivery etc.?
  - ii. What are the defining characteristics?
- b. How do faculty enact the philosophy and approach of an early childhood teacher education program?
  - i. How is the program enactment perceived by faculty and candidates?
  - ii. How do participants describe the program in terms of its ability to promote inclusive practice?
- c. To what extent do the components represent program coherence (Darling-Hammond, 2006b)?
  - i. How do the characteristics of the program (espoused and perceived) compare to the current literature on collaborative teacher education?
  - ii. How do perceived characteristics of the program compare to the espoused program?

## Chapter 2

### **Review of the Literature**

Collaborative models of teacher education are situated in a long history of educational change and reform. These models have been defined broadly as “purposeful integration of general and special education at the preservice level, and increasingly characterized by graduates earning two (or more) teaching licenses either simultaneously or sequentially” (Pugach et al., 2011, p. 183). Such models operate under a core assumption that through collaboration at the preservice level, graduates will be better prepared to teach diverse students (Pugach & Blanton, 2012) and therefore be better prepared for inclusive contexts.

The purpose of this qualitative, instrumental case study is to inform teacher education reform efforts in relation to collaborative models by investigating how the design and enactment of one collaborative early childhood teacher education program functions as a system in the preparation of teachers for inclusive practice. To contextualize this reform effort and this particular study, this chapter will first briefly trace the history and emergence of inclusive service delivery and that of collaborative models of teacher education from the historical context of separate general and special educational systems. Next, a review of the current literature pertaining to collaborative models at the early childhood level will document what has been learned of these models as well as remaining questions that call for further research. In particular, this review will



detail a need for analysis of teacher education programs that will lead to a greater understanding of how collaborative models of teacher education work. Understanding how a program operates and delivers teacher education is a necessary element of understanding program efficacy. The chapter will then describe aspects of the broader teacher education reform literature summarizing what are currently considered critical components of quality, efficacious programs. Application of such information along with a research framework designed specifically for examination of collaborative models of teacher education (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) will then be explained as a means to examine teacher education programs as holistic systems which is the focus of this study.

### **The History and Emergence of Inclusive Service Delivery and Collaborative Models of Teacher Education**

Society has long looked to the educational system as a means to prepare children to become productive citizens. However, the capacity of the educational system to meet this need for all children who enter it has been continually challenged since the dawn of free, public compulsory education in the United States (Osgood, 2005; Yell, 2012; Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998). In the early 1900s, the onset of compulsory education, society became shaped by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). These forces as well as growing enrollments in elementary and secondary schools fueled by compulsory education brought greater diversity to United States classrooms. Consequently, the system was confronted with the dilemma of what to do about children who did not "conform to the common notions of normal" (Winzer, 1993, p. 328). Increasingly, those who were found to be different, either by nature of having some sort of disability or merely due to an apparent or perceived inability to benefit from

the standard instructional format, were delegated to an emerging separate educational system out of concern both for meeting their needs and protecting the integrity of the education for those considered “normal” (Winzer, 1993, p. 328).

However, the need for and development of a separate system was contested from the beginning. While some such as Ayres (1909) suggested that students who were not successful in the classroom be excluded on the basis that it made the job of the teacher overly difficult and threatened the education of other children, others such as Wallin (1914) took an contrasting view stating that educators should abandon rigid instructional practices seen as the root of the issue, and embrace differentiated instruction that could meet the needs of all children. This debate continues today.

Compulsory education also created a growing need for teachers as the number of students increased. This growing need, coupled with a focus on quality, propelled calls for professional standards and the beginning of teacher certification requirements (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Geiger, et al., in press). By 1920, completion of a preparation program became the preferred form of quality assurance for teachers (Geiger et al., in press). A flurry of interest, research, and professional organization around the teaching profession ensued (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). While general education teacher preparation was housed in teachers colleges, the earliest special education teacher preparation programs emerged in residential facilities and were clinical in nature (Brownell et al., 2010). The tradition of separate general and special education systems both in terms of services for children and preparation for teachers was firmly established during this period and formed the foundation on which the current educational system was built.

It was not until the Civil Rights Movement, which many consider to span from the early 1950s to the 1980s, that societal values and attitudes toward difference would begin to change. These changes in societal attitudes would spark an explosion of attention toward issues of civil liberties and injustice based on race and ethnicity which would begin to challenge notions of separate systems in society and education due to increased attention to inequalities and equal rights for those considered different. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 marked a significant shift in political views toward race and inequality and would pave a path for similar rights issues to come to the forefront for individuals with disabilities.

Responses to the Civil Rights Movement made it increasingly apparent that issues pertaining to discussion of race applied to other groups of individuals including individuals with disabilities (Osgood, 2005; Yell, 2012). The eventual passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA), which was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990, would establish Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) essentially ending exclusionary practices based on ability in schools. A second key tenet, the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), was also instituted and differing interpretations of its meaning have fueled debates regarding inclusion since (Yell, 2012).

Over the past three decades, there has been steady progress towards the provision of inclusive programs for students receiving special education services and supports as well as increasing societal and political attention to equity and human rights. The majority of students with disabilities are now served in inclusive settings (McLeskey et al., 2012; McLeskey, Landers, Hoppey, & Williamson, 2011; Odom, 2000, 2011;

USDOE 2008). Inclusion has increasingly become not only a policy supported mode of service delivery but also the most prevalent method. Further, decades of research has documented that inclusion can provide multiple benefits to children with and without disabilities (e.g., Buysse & Bailey, 1993; Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Freeman & Alkin, 2000; Odom & Diamond, 1998; Odom, 2000; 2011; Ryndak, Morrison, & Sommerstien, 1999). In early childhood, an increase in inclusive service delivery has been particularly evident since the 1986 amendments to IDEA extended FAPE to 3-5 year olds (Bredekamp, 1993; Miller, 1992; Stayton & Miller, 1993). As a result, the primary responsibility for the education of children with disabilities has been increasingly afforded to the early childhood or general education teacher (Chang et al., 2005).

As inclusive practice has increased, the format of inclusive settings has also been evolving. The movement toward increased inclusion has necessitated examination of both general and special educator teaching roles, responsibilities, and collaboration (Brownell et al., 2010). Fuchs, Fuchs, and Stecker (2010) describe a new range of inclusive, general education placements including co-teach and resource models. Fuchs et al, (2010) also raise a salient, enduring concern regarding how this increasingly inclusive system will provide intensive services within the general education framework to all children who need them; including those with disabilities. Inclusive models of education are increasingly important as they may provide a conduit for successful attainment of this central goal. The future success of inclusion will depend on whether appropriate and effective inclusive programs can be developed (McLeskey et al, 2010; 2011).

Additionally, for inclusion to be effective, teacher education must identify and evaluate models of preparation for inclusive roles and responsibilities that are best suited

to create a workforce who can deliver a high quality education program that meets the needs of all students. Diverse needs in schools exist across many populations, not just those with disabilities. Therefore, for inclusive models to be successful for all children, notions of a definition for inclusion that moves beyond only one aspect of human diversity, disability, still need to be developed. As Pugach & Blanton (2009) indicate, the curricula of teacher education programs will need to move away from an additive approach, where special education content has simply been placed within or appended to an existing curriculum, if true transformation and reform of the teacher education enterprise is to be realized. Further, in reexamining this curricula, programs will need to explicitly address how to “situate content related to disability within multiple, intersecting diversity communities”, requiring a significant consideration of the curriculum’s underpinnings (Pugach & Blanton, 2012, p 265).

To date, research has documented that most teacher candidates are White and middle class and have had limited experience with those from cultures or areas different from their own (Hollins, Torres, & Guzman, 2005). Consequently, their predispositions toward those different from themselves are often negative and they lack understanding of different cultures and related values in relation to education and schooling. This lack of experience coupled with negative assumptions has been touted as a reason for the overrepresentation of minority children in special education (Harry & Klingner, 2006).

While much related to special education has changed over the last 100 years, Osgood (2005) suggests that the history is marked by a common and constant deliberation of three key questions: (1) Who decides who is disabled and why?; (2) Where are special education services provided and by whom?; and (3) To what extent is

special education so “special” as to necessitate it being separate from general education? As noted, the context of teaching and that of teacher education is marked by diversifying demographics of children and families as well as growing numbers of children with disabilities being educated in inclusive contexts. The key question as to whether general education should be expected to address the full range of human diversity remains a highly contested issue. Therefore, teacher educators are faced with yet another question: How can teacher education programs best prepare professionals to work in the current and future diverse context of inclusive education?

### **Preparation of Teachers for Diversity and Inclusion**

Throughout the history of the onset and impact of compulsory education, teacher education reform in the United States has been focused on identifying characteristics of effective teachers and appropriate design of teacher education curricula (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). A considerable amount of policy directed at teacher education as well as debate over whether different approaches vary in effectiveness has ensued (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In particular, the Civil Rights era witnessed a series of attacks on teaching and teacher education in the face of events including the launch of Sputnik and blue-ribbon reports decrying schools and teachers as failing (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Lagemann, 2000). The 1980s saw a plethora of research and attention to teacher education including the report of the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, the Holmes Group (1986; 1990), and the founding of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 1989; 2002). These examples marked the beginning of efforts by analysts, policy makers, and practitioners of teaching and teacher education to

ascertain the crucial elements required to build a more knowledgeable and skillful professional teaching force (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Teacher education has also focused specific attention on the needs related to teaching the diversifying population over the course of this history. Perhaps the most glaringly apparent aspect of difference that has fueled the development of separate systems of education as well as the continual failure of the school system to meet the needs of all learners is the ever present fact that teacher and students often differ along cultural, ethnic, and linguistic characteristics (Delpit, 2006). The disconnect that occurs often creates significant challenges. Many argue that it is this disconnect that is at the root of overrepresentation of children representing diverse traditionally minority groups in the special education system (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Preparation of teacher candidates to work with diverse populations has included foci such as: models designed to reduce prejudice; equity pedagogy; and providing field experiences with diverse populations (Hollins et al., 2005). Studies to date indicate that while some short term positive results are seen in terms of attitudes and beliefs, little is known as to whether candidates implement pedagogy to improve the academic performance of culturally and/or linguistically diverse students and candidates receive few opportunities to implement or observe culturally relevant practices in classrooms (Hollins et al, 2005).

Teacher education in general and special education has historically been separate in the United States which has resulted in the production of special educators who are underprepared in academic and pedagogical content knowledge and general educators who are underprepared to teach children with diverse educational needs (Drame & Pugach, 2010). As teacher education has garnered increased attention and schools have

become more inclusive, traditional roles and responsibilities of both general and special educators have become muddled (Brownell et al., 2010). Increasingly, collaboration between the two fields has been illuminated as essential as teachers have begun to work in more shared settings. In response, teacher education reform efforts have emerged to prepare special and general educators together in collaborative teacher education programs (Pugach, 2005). As noted above, these models operate under a core assumption that through collaboration at the preservice level, graduates will be better prepared to teach diverse students (Pugach & Blanton, 2012) and therefore be better prepared for inclusive contexts. Pugach, et al. (2011) detail a historical perspective on collaboration in teacher education stating this history can be understood in three stages.

The first stage, which transpired between 1975 and 1982, paved the way for collaboration in teacher education. The passage of EAHCA in 1975 sparked the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) to recognize the need to prepare general education teachers for working with students with disabilities by launching a series of federal discretionary grants which came to be known as The Deans' Grants Projects (Pugach, 2005). The Deans' grants provided deans of schools, colleges, and departments of education with funding to support curricular reform for addressing the need to prepare general educators to work with students with disabilities (Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2003; Pugach, 2005; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). The central purpose of the Deans' Grants' was to promote integration of the preservice preparation of general and special educators (Pugach et al., 2011). These grants operated from the perspective that collaboration between general and special educators was essential and that the education of all teachers was an institution-wide responsibility (Pugach, 2005). This marked a significant



diversion from previous notions which had fueled the development of separate systems. While the principal intention was related to broad teacher education reform, what ensued was the development of practice characterized as adding special education content and experiences to existing general education curriculum (Pugach et al., 2011). Consequently, an additive model (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) for preparing general education teachers to work with children with special needs was established and set as a precedent (Pugach et al.; 2011). This model of teacher education for inclusion remains highly prevalent.

During the second stage, which was from approximately 1983 to 2001, there was a focus on the relationships between standards in general and special education and professional organizations (e.g., CEC/DEC, NAEYC) engaged in development of professional practices and guidelines for personnel preparation (Pugach et al., 2011). While the K-12 landscape contained very few examples of progress, collaboration at the early childhood level represented more broad-based, systematic efforts to reform teacher preparation (Pugach et al., 2011). Indeed, the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the beginning of the movement to unify the fields of ECE and ECSE through innovative new models of teacher education in higher education (Piper, 2007; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Pugach et al. (2011) detail several factors fueling the increase of collaboration at the EC level: (a) the passage of P.L 99-457 which extended FAPE to 3-5 year olds and supported early intervention for 0-3 yr. olds; (b) theoretical and practical analyses and debates that continued to demonstrate commonalities across the two fields; (c) changes in state licensure policies which added ECSE licensure options; and (d) support from OSEP funding for unification through the Preparation of Personnel to Provide Early

Intervention Services to Infants and Toddlers with Handicaps discretionary grant priorities.

The third and current stage, began with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed as NCLB in 2001. The preparation of teachers in respect to the content areas in which they would teach began to receive increased scrutiny due to the mandate for teachers to be highly qualified (Pugach, et al., 2011). The 2004 amendments to IDEA clarified that the highly qualified mandate applied to special educators as well as general educators and included Response to Intervention (RtI) as a means to identify students as having a learning disability (Pugach et al., 2011). In response to this policy context, there has been a dramatic increase in various forms of collaborative teacher education particularly those that are characterized by candidates earning both general and special education licenses (Blanton & Pugach, 2011; Pugach et al., 2011).

Teacher education programs remain highly pressured to prepare teachers to effectively meet the needs of a diverse population of children who struggle and to recognize early signs of difficulty through the RtI process (Pugach et al., 2011). Pugach and Blanton (2012) indicate that collaborative models of teacher education are often described as designed not only to improve education for children with disabilities but also to better respond to all aspects of diversity seen in student populations. Therefore, they assert, "...collaborative teacher education programs seem to be predicated on better preparing teachers for the complex and diverse ecologies of their classrooms and school communities" (Pugach & Blanton, 2012, p., 254). Further, collaborative teacher education appears to be increasingly relevant and common representing a clear national

trend across the PK-12 landscape (Pugach et al., 2011). However, the degree of actual, meaningful collaboration in such programs varies widely leading to vast variation in practice and nomenclature (Pugach, et al., 2011). Further exploration into how collaborative models are defined and conceptualized is warranted.

### **A Framework for Research and Classification System to Promote Understanding of Collaborative Models**

Pugach and Blanton (2009) suggest a framework for research on collaborative models of teacher education that promotes the use of a common language to describe collaborative models as a means to advance research on such models through support for cross-site comparisons and clarity of descriptions and results (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Additionally, this research framework can promote analysis of programs as systems by helping to focus inquiry on key elements of collaborative in teacher education.

The framework is based on the assumption that collaboration represents a robust, systematic integration of special and general education across all aspects of the pre-service curriculum (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). It consists of a continuum of collaboration with three distinct yet overlapping levels of collaboration between general and special teacher education (i.e., discrete, integrated, and merged) which are differentiated along a continuum based on the degree to which faculty collaborate and the degree of curricular integration in existence. To aid in the utility of the framework for research in this area, Blanton and Pugach (2011) have developed indicators of practice for each model. Using these indicators may help researchers classify and more adequately describe the nature of collaborative teacher education programs. In the next section, each model will be defined and the corresponding indicators are listed in Table 2.1. The research framework will

then be further explained through discussion of the five program dimensions or common study variables proposed by Pugach and Blanton (2009).

**Discrete models.** Discrete models are those in which minimal interaction can be observed between teacher education faculty in general and special education. The preservice curriculum and field or clinical experiences for each respective program remain mostly independent of one another (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). This represents a historically common model of general education teacher preparation in which candidates might take one or two stand-alone courses within a program of study that are related to children with special needs (Pugach & Blanton, 2009; Pugach et al., 2011). The core assumption within discrete models holds that the traditional curricula of each program (i.e., special education and general education) represent mutually exclusive and defensible bodies of existing knowledge that are distinct from any other program. A second assumption is that preservice teachers will independently make connections across courses and even programs. A third assumption states that graduates will carry out distinct roles (general vs. special) when they enter schools. Graduates may exit discrete programs lacking a solid understanding of how to collaborate effectively with colleagues in today's educational landscape due to the lack of collaboration at the higher education level (Blanton & Pugach, 2011).

**Integrated models.** In the middle of the continuum are integrated models of teacher preparation. These programs are characterized by intentional and systematic efforts by faculty across general and special education to coordinate aspects of their programs including coursework and clinical experiences. Some components of the preservice curriculum such as courses and/or clinical experiences are deliberately

redesigned to complement each other (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). The guiding principle of integrated models is that preparation for both general and special education teachers is redesigned and enhanced so that all teachers are prepared to teach a wider range of students (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). The core assumption of integrated models is that the redesign of both general and special education programs can link and integrate curricula to better prepare all teachers by providing a solid foundation for teaching all children. A second assumption holds that there is a distinct and value-added role for special educators that requires additional preparation beyond the improved foundation in general education. A third assumption is that it is the faculty's responsibility to help students make connections between courses and programs (Blanton & Pugach, 2011).

**Merged models.** At the opposite end of the continuum from discrete models are merged programs in which a single preservice curriculum is designed for all teacher education candidates across general and special education (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). A fully coordinated curriculum leads all candidates to initial licensure in both general education and special education. This level of collaboration begins to break down the dichotomy between general and special education teachers and assumes that graduates will be prepared to take on either role (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). There is no intention for teachers to identify with either a special or a general education teaching identity alone. Deliberate blurring of boundaries between the roles of general and special educators exists. However, the differentiation between special and general education may not be fully articulated (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). The core assumption is that the same body of knowledge is required for special and general education teachers. A second assumption holds that there is sufficient program space to adequately prepare candidates

for both roles. A third assumption is that every graduate will be willing and interested in taking on either role (Blanton & Pugach, 2011).

Description of a teacher preparation program using any one of these models along the continuum may or may not be related to the types of initial licensure a graduate ultimately obtains (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). At any point on this continuum it may be possible for a candidate to obtain either a general education license and/or a special education license. Therefore, the nature of the licensure available to graduates upon completion of a program is not a meaningful measure of the degree of collaboration. Instead, it is the program dimensions manifested in each model that help delineate and describe a program (Pugach & Blanton, 2009).

**Program dimensions: Common study variables.** Additionally, the Pugach and Blanton (2009) framework promotes the use of five program dimensions as common study variables to enhance broad discussions pertaining to collaborative teacher education in the literature. These are: (1) curricular coherence; (2) faculty collaboration; (3) depth of knowledge; (4) performance/portfolio assessments; and (5) PK-12 partnerships.

***Curricular coherence.*** A key tenet of collaborative teacher education is a notion of preservice curriculum that is connected and aligned with and builds upon all other prior courses/experiences. In an ideal situation, this would extend to all aspects of an initial preparation program including special, general, multicultural, and foundational education (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). The presence of coherent preservice curriculum is recognized as one of the most important features of quality teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Howey, 1996). In such a context, faculty have awareness

Table 2.1  
Indicators of models of collaborative teacher education.

Program Parameters	Discrete Models	Integrated Models	Merged Models
Program Structure	Separate degree programs.	General and special education faculty purposely redesign their respective programs.	Complete integration of course and field work that prepares all candidates in a single preservice curriculum designed to meet the needs of all children (with and without disabilities).
Coordination across programs.	General and special education programs are independent of each other except for isolated service courses. Faculty unlikely to be familiar with content of courses offered from other departments. Service courses not linked to other components of the main program.	Intentional and coordinated program-level efforts are employed to accomplish a significant degree of curricular overlap. Curricula reflect faculty collaboration to enhance the preparation of all teachers for diverse settings.	Extensive collaboration between general and special education faculty. Faculty working as a collective, modeling collaboration and inclusive practice.
Program Outcomes	Separate licensure (general vs. special). No option for dual licensure unless a candidate were to complete both programs.	There is no intention for every graduate to receive two or more licenses upon graduation. However, curricular redesign facilitates obtaining a second license for students who chose to do so through additional experiences which build on the foundation through specialized curricula.	Single preparation program with the same degree and licensure outcomes for all students.

of all components of a program and intentionally work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is delivered in a meaningful, relevant way (Pugach & Blanton, 2009).

***Faculty collaboration.*** A second program dimension is related to the degree to which faculty engage in collaboration in terms of frequency and purpose of shared work (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Of note in this dimension is the nature of administrative and other structures created and implemented to support true collaboration and engagement of faculty.

***Depth of knowledge.*** The third program dimension, depth of knowledge, illustrates the nature of knowledge expectations for graduates (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Specifically, this dimension refers to what content is seen as crucial and how much content from either discipline (i.e., special or general education) is required of graduates and in turn needed to be included in the teacher preparation program.

***Performance/portfolio assessments.*** This dimension is related to the type of assessments used to measure graduates' knowledge, skills and dispositions for teaching (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). The specific requirements to detail adequate preparation across special and general education, as well as how to evaluate such preparation, are of particular importance in collaborative models (Pugach & Blanton, 2009).

***PK-12 Partnerships.*** This final dimension refers to how clinical experiences are conceptualized in collaborative programs of teacher education as well as how colleges and universities work in PK-12 partnerships to build greater capacity to develop high quality field sites in the schools (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). The availability of quality field placements and the degree to which teacher and district practice in the field match what preservice students are learning, is a consistent challenge in teacher education (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). This is of particular importance in regards to preparing teachers for inclusive contexts. Research into



collaborative models of teacher education should investigate how such programs identify and develop field placements to support the development of their graduates as inclusive teachers. The degree to which programs have access to sites where collaboration among general and special education teachers is practiced is of particular importance (Pugach & Blanton, 2009).

### **The Development of Collaborative Teacher Education in Early Childhood**

As inclusion in early childhood settings increased, several scholars (e.g., Buysse & Wesley, 1993; Stayton & Bruder, 1999) argued that there was a need for clarification and redevelopment of roles for early childhood special education (ECSE) practitioners. Indeed, many ECSE teachers experienced an identity crisis as the field evolved toward increased inclusive practice (Buysse & Wesley, 1993). This identity crisis was sparked by the fact that traditional frameworks for understanding the roles of early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) professionals were based on the direct service component of an EI/ECSE professional's role which was increasingly only one small aspect of their work (Buysse & Wesley, 1993). The responsibility to educate and care for children with disabilities became more and more the duty of the early childhood education (ECE) classroom teacher (Chang, et al., 2005), yet ECE teachers lacked confidence in their ability to work with young children with special needs (Chang et al., 2005; Miller & Losardo, 2002). This need to examine the roles and responsibilities of both ECSE and ECE teachers created a strong impetus for development of collaborative teacher education models.

In the early childhood context, collaborative teacher education is often described as “unified” (Stayton & McCollum, 2002), “integrated” (Piper, 2007), or “blended” (Hyson, 2003). Miller and Stayton (1998) defined unified programs as those that combine both ECE and ECSE personnel standards into a newly conceptualized curriculum. Further, unified programs have

been described as: “designed specifically for the degree program; derived from professional unification and intentional blending of philosophy and content from early childhood education (ECE) and early childhood special education (ECSE); produced as a newly conceptualized curriculum, and above all else; one that is developed, implemented, and evaluated by an interdisciplinary team of faculty from essential disciplines” (Miller & Stayton, 2006, p. 57).

Given these definitions, it is important to consider that collaborative models of early childhood teacher education must be designed to meet requirements from both fields. However, general and special education have historically been based on dissimilar theoretical foundations and have relied on different sets of recommended practices and personnel preparation standards. This has complicated efforts to increase collaboration across the fields at times. Traditionally, preparation programs for special and general education have mirrored the landscape of schools, and therefore, have existed as independent systems in colleges and universities (Heston, Raschke, Kliever, Fitzgerald, & Edmiaston, 1998). As the two fields developed, they did so from different yet overlapping theoretical foundations. Currently, the seemingly incompatible theories across the fields are seen to interact and complement each other (Odom & Wolery, 2003). The following section will detail the historical theoretical foundations and recommended practices for each field with a discussion of commonalities across the two in terms of practice following. The standards for personnel preparation for ECE, EI/ECSE, and unified models will then be detailed.

**Theoretical foundations in early childhood education (ECE).** General early childhood education has historically been grounded in a constructivist perspective on teaching and learning and has held the belief that learning is achieved as teachers respond to children’s interests and developmental needs (DeVries, Zan, Hildebrandt, Edmiaston, & Sales, 2002; Edwards, 2007).

Constructivist teachers recognize that learning occurs within the contextual environment and a teacher's purpose is to engage children in meaningful, authentic tasks with the belief that children can therefore construct the knowledge required to reach the teacher's objectives (Branscombe, Castle, Dorsey, Surbeck, & Taylor, 2000). DeVries, and Kohlberg (1990) suggest that teacher candidates' development can also be understood through a constructivist perspective and that they too construct knowledge regarding teaching with a constructivist framework which should guide teacher education programs. Constructivist notions framing child growth and development as holistic and requiring authentic hands-on experiences have historically driven the provision of early childhood education programs.

**Recommended practices in ECE.** Developmental and constructivist theories are the foundation for the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) in early childhood education, proffered by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the prominent early childhood resource. Now in its third edition and edited by Copple and Bredekamp (2009), it includes the following key messages:

- Developmentally appropriate practice requires both meeting children where they are—which means that teachers must get to know them well—and enabling them to reach goals that are both challenging and achievable.
- All teaching practices should be appropriate to children's age and developmental status, attuned to them as unique individuals, and responsive to the social and cultural contexts in which they live.
- Developmentally appropriate practice does not mean making things easier for children. Rather, it means ensuring that goals and experiences are suited to their

learning and development and challenging enough to promote their progress and interest.

- Best practice is based on knowledge—not on assumptions—of how children learn and develop. The research base yields major principles in human development and learning (this position statement articulates 12 such principles). Those principles, along with evidence about curriculum and teaching effectiveness, form a solid basis for decision making in early care and education (p. xii).

### **Theoretical foundations in early intervention/early childhood special education**

**(EI/ECSE).** The field of early intervention/early childhood special education has historical roots in the broader field of special education (Safford, Sargent, & Cook, 1994) but also shares several of the theoretical underpinnings of ECE (Odom & Wolery, 2003). Odom and Wolery (2003) assert that EI/ECSE practice is grounded in the traditional behaviorist theories of Skinner and Pavlov (Strain, McConnell, Carta, Fowler, Neisworth, & Wolery, 1992), the cognitive-behavioral tradition of Bandura (1976), and the neobehavioral blending of contextualism and behavior analysis (Odom & Haring, 1994). ECSE practices, such as functional assessment, incidental teaching, positive behavior supports, and systematic instruction, have a strong empirical base generated through research from these perspectives (Odom & Wolery, 2003).

As with early childhood education, Odom and Wolery (2003) profess that early childhood special education is also influenced by constructivist theory which is based on the work of Piaget (1963) and Vygotsky (1978); the educational philosophy of Dewey; and the sociocultural work of Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, and Goldsmith (1995). As noted above, constructivist theory is the foundation for guidelines pertaining to DAP in early childhood education, as described by NAEYC (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). These perspectives make

major contributions to ECSE as well including: understanding of the context of children's development; an appreciation of the importance of children's self-initiated actions on and interactions with the environment; and recognition of the critical role adults play as mediators of children's learning (Odom & Wolery, 2003).

**Recommended practices in EI/ECSE.** The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices in EI/ECSE was first published in 1993 and revised seven years later (Sandall, McLean, & Smith, 2000). This resource has continually offered the field of EI/ECSE guidance in the areas of assessment, child-focused intervention, family-based practice, teaming, technology, policies, procedures, systems change, and personnel preparation. Currently, work is underway to update the DEC Recommended Practices (DEC, 2012).

**Commonalities and differences across ECE and ECSE practice.** Examination and comparison of practice in both ECE and ECSE ensued in a relevant historical debate sparked by the onset of the Developmentally Appropriate Practices which were initially seen by some as incompatible with ECSE. This debate exposed the different theoretical orientations as the fields moved toward greater integration. Scholars began to note similarities across ECE and ECSE in terms of practice and in turn in regards to theoretical underpinnings. For example, in a study of DEC and NAEYC members pertaining to perceived importance of practices for children with and without disabilities, Kilgo et al., (1999) found that few differences existed between the two professional groups' perceptions of the importance of 14 identified practices included in the study. Therefore, results of this study suggested that professionals from the two fields have more beliefs in common than in contrast. In another study, Carta, Schwartz, Atwater, & McConnell (1991) demonstrated that both DAP and ECSE tenets valued individualization, the importance of

the use of naturalistic learning and instructional opportunities, and the use of child-initiated activities.

As noted, ECSE developed from historical roots in the special education field (Safford et al., 1994) but also adopted blended instructional methodology in accord with the early childhood education field (Wolery & Bredekamp, 1994). Early childhood special education practices draw from both professional literatures and research (Odom & Wolery, 2003). It is notable that the perspectives of constructivism and behaviorism are often considered to be incompatible (Odom & Wolery, 2003). This perceived incompatibility was at the heart of initial opinions against unification of the two fields. Yet, the work of Bandura (1976) who asserts that individuals have some level of control over their behavior seems to rectify this apparent disconnect by allowing for individual constructions of behavior and response, thereby combining construction of behavior or knowledge with the more traditional notions of behaviorism (Odom & Wolery, 2003).

Collaboration across the two fields has continued as evidenced by recent joint efforts between the relative professional organizations, namely NAEYC and DEC. Pertinent examples of such collaborative efforts include the joint position statement on inclusion and the recent position statement related to Response to Intervention (RTI) in early childhood detailed in chapter one. Further, as noted, the standards for personnel preparation respective to each field have been recently aligned through collaborative efforts by CEC/DEC and NAEYC.

**Standards for personnel preparation in early childhood.** Standards for personnel development have been developed in both fields and certainly influence teacher education programs whether they are collaborative models or not. Higher education programs seek accreditation through the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

NCATE's standards for all professional education "units" (colleges, schools, departments of education) require that "candidates" (future education professionals) demonstrate competence in their identified content areas (Hyson et al, 2003). Accordingly, the standards serve as a guide in the development and evaluation of preparation programs. A brief discussion of personnel preparation standards for each field as well as for collaborative/unified programs follows.

*Personnel preparation standards in ECE.* Early childhood education personnel preparation programs observe the professional development standards set forth by NAEYC. The NAEYC personnel standards are grounded in a developmental-constructionist view of quality teaching. In 1985, the first NAEYC guidelines for the preparation of early childhood teachers were published (NAEYC, 2009). The 1985 guidelines were revised in 1996, 2001-2003, and again in 2009 (NAEYC, 2009). Therefore, the current 2009 guidelines represent the third revision to NAEYC's 1982 Early Childhood Teacher Education Guidelines for Four and Five-Year Programs and 1985 Guidelines for Early Childhood Education Programs in Associate Degree Granting (NAEYC, 2009). The purpose of the standards is multifaceted and they are designed to influence specific and critical policy structures, including state and national early childhood teacher credentialing, national accreditation of professional early childhood preparation programs, state approval of early childhood teacher education programs, and articulation agreements between various levels and types of professional development programs (NAEYC, 2009).

The first version of DAP did not mention disability. Neither did the first 1985 NAEYC personnel standards. This changed over time with the subsequent revisions increasingly addressing issues of diversity including disability. The 2009 revision included a significant wording change to better reflect the integration of inclusion and diversity as themes across all

standards (NAEYC, 2009). The words “all children,” used in the version prior to this revision, were changed to “each child” or “every child” and in some instances the phrase “each child” was added to a key element of a standard (NAEYC, 2009).

The landscape of early childhood education is complex with a wide variety of settings and roles for practitioners. The NAEYC personnel preparation standards are intended to apply across these roles and settings and are designed for the early childhood education profession as a whole (NAEYC, 2009). They encompass the following unifying themes:

- Shared professional values, including a commitment to diversity and inclusion; respect for family, community, and cultural contexts; respect for evidence as a guide to professional decisions; and reliance on guiding principles of child development and learning.
- Inclusion of the broad range of ages and settings encompassed in early childhood professional preparation. NAEYC defines early childhood as the years from birth through age 8. These standards are meant to support professional preparation across diverse work settings, including infants and toddlers, primary grades, family child care, early intervention, government and private agencies, higher education institutions, and organizations that advocate on behalf of young children and their families.
- A shared set of outcomes for early childhood professional preparation. These core standards outline a set of common expectations for professional knowledge, skills and dispositions in six core areas. They express what tomorrow’s early childhood professionals should know and be able to do.



- A multidisciplinary approach with an emphasis on assessment of outcomes and balanced attention to knowledge, skills, and dispositions (p 3).

These unifying themes were developed to relate to all early childhood professionals regardless of role or setting. Many programs of preparation seek to obtain accreditation from either NAEYC Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation (ECADA) or NAEYC recognition of baccalaureate and graduate degrees as part of the NCATE accreditation process. Both of these accreditation systems follow these professional development standards (NAEYC, 2009).

*Personnel preparation standards in EI/ECSE.* Early childhood personnel preparation is guided by the CEC/DEC personnel preparation standards of which the first edition was published in 1989 (McCollum, McLean, McCartan, Odom, & Kaiser, 1989). In 1993, the original DEC recommended personnel preparation standards were revised through collaboration between DEC, NAEYC, and the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) (Sandall et al., 2000). Stayton, Miller, & Dinnebeil (2003) list the tenets of DEC personnel preparation recommended practices as:

- Families are involved in learning activities;
- Learning activities are interdisciplinary and interagency;
- Learning activities are systematically designed and sequenced;
- Learning activities include study of cultural and linguistic diversity;
- Field experiences are systematically designed and supervised;
- Faculty and other personnel trainers are qualified and well prepared for their role in personnel preparation; and
- Professional development activities are systematically designed and implemented (p. 7-8).

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Division of Early Childhood (DEC) recently collaborated to revise the EI/ECSE personnel standards to be used as part of educational accountability systems and in teacher personnel preparation program accreditation (Cochran, Gallagher, Stayton, Dinnebeil, Lifter, Chandler, & Christensen, 2012). These personnel standards were oriented to the DEC and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) jointly issued position statement on early childhood inclusion discussed in chapter one.

At the onset of the revision process the CEC and DEC personnel preparation standards were not aligned (Lifter, Chandler, Cochran, Dinnebeil, Gallagher, Christensen, & Stayton, 2012). The revision process sought to reduce confusion caused by the discrepancy and developed a shared set of standards (Lifter et al., 2012). As noted above, personnel preparation standards serve as guidelines for the development of higher education teacher education programs as well as other aspects of professional development (Cochran et al., 2012). The standards were developed at two levels: initial or those programs preparing individuals for their first teacher license; and advanced which represent programs at the post-baccalaureate level focused on continuing education for teachers or the preparation of other school professionals (CEC, 2010; Cochran et al., 2012).

The CEC standards are comprised of common core standards that are intended to represent the knowledge and skills required of all candidates across all of special education (Chandler, et al., 2012). There are several specialized area standards of which DEC is one, that build on these common core standards and differentiate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of the professionals in those specialized areas (Cochran et al., 2012). There are 10 standards at the initial level which are: Foundations; Development and characteristics of learners;

Individual learning differences; Instructional strategies; Learning environments and social interactions; Language; Instructional planning; Assessment; Professional and ethical practice; and Collaboration (CEC, 2009). These standards are delineated for initial content standards and then expanded for EI/ECSE in the knowledge and skill set pertaining to early childhood special education/early intervention, birth to eight years (CEC, 2009). There are also advanced standards for which there are six content or common core standards as follows: Leadership and policy; Program development and organization; Research and inquiry; Individual and program evaluation; Professional development and ethical practice; and Collaboration. The advanced knowledge of skill sets include a specialized area titled Special Education Early Childhood Specialists in Early Childhood Special Education/Early Intervention (birth to eight) (CEC, 2009).

*Standards for blended or unified ECE/ECSE programs.* NCATE's approval of blended or unified ECE and ECSE programs requires adherence to personnel standards from the CEC Common Core standards, DEC personnel standards, and NAEYC standards (Miller & Losardo, 2002; Hyson, 2003). According to Hyson (2003), blended early childhood professional preparation programs combine all the elements called for in NAEYC's early childhood standards and those in CEC's early childhood special education standards in a curriculum that is planned, implemented, and evaluated by an interdisciplinary group of faculty and other individuals. Blended programs may request review under a joint process involving both NAEYC and CEC-trained reviewers that recognizes their distinctive nature.

The recent alignment of the CEC/ECSE/EI and NAEYC standards and elements conducted by Chandler et al. (2012) identified areas of convergence and divergence across the two sets of standards. Specifically, findings illustrated full alignment across the content standard areas with some differences across the elements within content standards. The authors noted that

areas of divergence represent specialized knowledge and skills within the disciplines of special education, early childhood special education and early intervention, and early childhood education. This standards alignment is specifically intended to be used by states and personnel preparation programs to develop blended early childhood programs (Chandler et al., 2012).

Despite disparate historical backgrounds in terms of theoretical foundations, recommended practices, and standards for professional development, collaboration between the fields of ECE and EI/ECSE is now fully embraced. Further, it is now commonly believed that educators need knowledge and skills in both disciplines in order to meet a range of abilities and needs (Bredekamp, 1995; Miller & Stayton, 1998; Piper, 2007). The call for unification of the two fields has come from both NAEYC and CEC/DEC (Piper, 2007). Both fields have recognized that they have more similarities than differences (Burton, Hains, Hanline, McLean, & McCormick, 1992; Miller, 1992; Stayton & Bruder, 1999; Stayton & Miller, 1993) and the recommended best practices in both professions have been found to be less divergent in their philosophical and theoretical backgrounds as had been previously thought (Piper, 2007). Indeed, similarities across both fields include similar ideas on the need for multidisciplinary, collaborative, family focused, and comprehensive delivery of EC services (Burton et al., 1992; Stayton & Bruder, 1999).

Increasingly, early childhood teacher education programs have embraced these notions, and as noted, collaborative models of teacher education have flourished in early childhood contexts. The efforts to align the standards for personnel preparation described above are indicative of this current perspective on the level of similarity between the two fields. As collaborative models have been developed in teacher education and work has continued to align

their foundations, research has accumulated. The following section will detail aspects of the literature base pertaining to collaborative models specific to early childhood teacher education.

### **Analysis of the Current Literature Base Regarding Collaborative Early Childhood Teacher Education.**

This section presents results from literature review as to what is currently known regarding the state of the literature base for collaborative models of early childhood teacher education. The design, implementation and assessment of collaborative programs were explored aspects. First a description of the literature base will be shared which will be followed by results of the literature review leading to a discussion of implications for teacher preparation and further research.

A comprehensive search of the literature was conducted first of computer databases (Education Full Text and Google Scholar) followed by a hand search of reference lists of pertinent articles. All relevant articles were considered regardless of publication date and selected based on abstract review and conclusion that the article addressed the rationale, design, implementation, and/or assessment of collaborative models of early childhood teacher education. Conceptual pieces, literature reviews, and empirical studies were included. Keywords consisted of terms such as “early childhood,” “early childhood special education,” “teacher preparation,” “teacher education,” “collaborative,” “inclusion,” “blended,” “unification,” “unified,” and “integration.” This literature review focused on developing a comprehensive description of the state of the literature base regarding collaborative or unified models of early childhood teacher education. Fifty-one articles (n=51) were selected to help develop this description as well as to begin to synthesize the lessons that have been learned since the inception of the movement toward unification began.

**Description of the literature base.** Of the 51 articles included in this review, 20 (39%) were found to be conceptual in nature in that they presented rationale, policy overviews, or position statements. An additional 27 (53%) articles were descriptive in that they detailed descriptive accounts and/or studies of individual programs or the broader field of unified early childhood teacher education. Six (12%) articles discussed assessment or evaluative studies of programs. Two articles (4%) were literature reviews focused on unified/integrated early childhood teacher education models. Four articles were placed in two categories as they fulfilled the parameters of each equally. Upon examining the sample regarding empirical versus conceptual literature it was found that 16 (31%) studies provided empirical research while 35 (69%) were conceptual and/or descriptive. Empirical articles were those reporting quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods research studies. Conceptual pieces included description of programs and/or the field, rationale for unification, position papers, and policy overviews.

**Findings.** The literature examined for this review can be categorized into three sections: (1) support or rationale for collaboration and/or unification; (2) descriptions of programs and/or the field; and (3) details of assessment or evaluation of program aspects and outcomes. Additionally, scholars (Pugach & Blanton, 2009; Blanton & Pugach, 2011) have recently proposed a classification model to help describe and differentiate types of collaborative models. A summary of the findings in each of these categories will be shared followed by a concluding discussion of implications.

***Rationale for collaboration/unification.*** A strong case has been made in favor of collaboration and unification of early childhood and early childhood special education for decades. In fact, the vast majority of the literature on the topic is conceptual and descriptive in nature and seeks to specifically justify the practice and philosophy. The literature includes

discussions of the social, moral, legal and educational benefits of inclusive services for all children (e.g., Bailey et al., 1998; Jones, 1995; Kilgo & Bruder, 1997; Kontos & Diamond, 1997; Odom & Diamond, 1998; Odom, 2011) as well as specific calls for unification given the call for full inclusion of young children with disabilities (e.g., Gargiulo et al., 1997). Indeed some have argued that separate preparation is “immoral and inefficient” as so labeled in a seminal article by Miller (1992, p 39). Additionally, Lim and Able Boone (2005) have argued that issues of diversity and the need to infuse diversity into all aspects of teacher education further supported the notion of unification and Xu, Gelfer, & Filler (2003) call for alternatives to the traditional model for early childhood teacher education based on similar views regarding diversity.

Some scholars argue that there are specific aspects of special education preparation that could be lost with full integration or discuss significant dilemmas that confront programs seeking to fully prepare individuals for effective practice in both fields. For example, Clifford, Macy, Albi, Bricker, & Rahn (2005) stated that early intervention (EI)/early childhood special education (ECSE) comprise a legitimate professional field whose personnel require specialized preparation and licensure. The authors stress the need for ECSE personnel to experience authentic field experiences to acquire clinical intervention skills recognizing that some early childhood special education services remain clinically-based. Recchia and Puig (2012) examined the importance of specific field experience related to children with significant needs and used graduate perceptions to provide rationale for the inclusion of segregated or self-contained practica sites for candidates as important for their development as special educators. Ryndak et al. (2001) also expressed concern over the preparation of teachers to work with children with severe disabilities and documented the lack of empirical information available regarding related skills and experiences. In describing a master’s level teacher preparation program, Ryndak et al.,

(2001) identified critical aspects of preparation and expertise for work with children with severe disabilities. Many of these aspects (e.g., quality inclusive field settings that serve children with severe disabilities) are simply not available to general or collaborative teacher preparation programs. Ryndak et al., (2001) also suggest that not all expertise, experience, and content critical to quality service provision for children with severe needs can be embedded or infused into unified teacher education programs and further that not all teachers need this specialized knowledge.

The degree of similarity between the fields of ECE and ECSE have also been examined and found to be quite large. One study examined teachers' perceptions of the importance of specific practices and found that both ECE and ECSE teachers had more beliefs in common than in discord (Kilgo, Johnson, LaMontagne, Stayton, Cook, & Cooper, C., 1999). Sexton, Snyder, Lobman, & Daly (2002) found that the beliefs of practitioners across ECE and ECSE settings seemed to parallel the continued efforts to unify the fields. The level of similarity found between the two fields has been used as further support for unification of fields as well as the associated teacher preparation (e.g., Bredekamp, 1993; Burton et al., 1992; Sexton et al., 2002).

Pugach et al. (2011) described historical policy support for unified and collaborative early childhood teacher education. Further, efforts by the respective professional organizations to unify the fields have been documented. Specifically, and most importantly, the alignment of CEC/DEC and NAEYC Personnel Preparation Standards is illustrated in the literature as a strong impetus and support for unification (Chandler, et al., 2012). NAEYC's definition of blended, interdisciplinary teacher preparation for accreditation purposes is consistent with the definition offered by Miller and Stayton (1998) as well as that proffered by Pugach and Blanton (2009).



Further, it establishes the interdisciplinary faculty team as the pivotal element of the program (Hyson, 2003).

Licensing structures have been shown to be both barriers and supports for unification at the higher education level (Piper, 2007; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Licensure in some states has evolved in response to the movement toward unification of ECE and EI/ECSE and the emergence of blended or inclusive teacher licensure meant to encompass knowledge and skills from both early childhood education and early childhood special education has been observed (Stayton & Miller, 1993; Stayton & McCollum, 2003; Piper, 2007). Licensure structure can be a barrier or support to the development and maintenance of collaborative models. For example, when a state does not have a blended licensure, collaborative programs are often charged with meeting the demands of two sets of licensure requirements which can create significant challenges to designing programs that meet candidate needs. Raschke et al., (2001) detail the development of a unified licensure in one state as well as an associated needs assessment for higher education faculty. Their findings illustrate the support lent to the development of a unified program by the presence of a unified license and also indicate that faculty roles and responsibilities also need to change and that faculty have specific professional development needs when programs strive for unification.

***Description of unified programs and/or the field: Development and implementation.***

Arguably, consensus exists across the early childhood community as to what constitutes quality inclusion and some have suggested that this information be used to inform teacher education for inclusion (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009). As noted above DEC and NAEYC issued a joint position statement on inclusion demonstrating this consensus. Given inclusive contexts, needs assessments of practitioners have been conducted through survey research to contribute

additional guidance as to the design and implementation of collaborative programs (Gettinger, Callan, Stoiber, Goetz, & Caspe, 1999). This has also been used to bolster the rationale for collaboration/unification.

By far the most attention in the literature to date has been on providing conceptual descriptions of the design and implementation of unified preparation programs. Some studies have examined the broader landscape at either the state or national level. For example, the extent to which EC teacher education incorporates ECSE content and experiences at 2 and 4 year Institutes of Higher Education was studied with results showing a high level of variability in amount of coursework and practicum experience (Chang et al., 2005). Mellin and Winton (2003) conducted a study looking at the degree of collaboration among faculty members and found a dearth of interdisciplinary practice. The quality of the work environment was seen to be the biggest hindrance while the level of value faculty placed on interdisciplinary work was seen as the greatest facilitator.

Further, broad characteristics of existing unified programs across the country have also been documented. For example, Fader-Dunne (2002) described characteristics of both unified ECE-ECSE and separate ECSE teacher education programs. Findings revealed that unified programs and separate ECSE programs provided a better balance of ECE and ECSE course content than separate ECE programs (Fader-Dunne, 2002). Further, unified and separate ECSE programs were more likely to include field experiences with children with and without disabilities in diverse settings. On the contrary, separate ECE programs were found to include minimal attention related to ECSE course content, and few, if any, field experiences with children with disabilities (Fader-Dunne, 2002). Fader-Dunne (2002) asserted that state

certification and program specific administrative structures were found to impact faculty members' abilities to collaborate with other departments.

In a 1998 national study, Miller and Stayton delineated the characteristics of unified programs in existence at the time. The authors developed a questionnaire that was mailed to 96 potential participants identified using a criterion-based selection procedure in collaboration with state 619 coordinators. The return rate was 51% ( $n = 49$ ). The majority ( $n = 37$ , 90%) of respondents were from public institutions of higher education. Quantitative and qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics and content analysis procedures respectively. Results were organized around the program characteristics of: rationale for the program; general descriptors of the programs; characteristics that identify a program as interdisciplinary; interdisciplinary team involvement in the program development; curriculum foundation; field experiences; and changes in team focus after 2 years (Miller & Stayton, 1998). The study also garnered recommendations from participants who were faculty in blended interdisciplinary models regarding teaming practices. Table 2.2, reproduced from Miller and Stayton (1998), depicts a summary of these recommendations.

In 2006, Miller and Stayton added to the descriptive literature base by detailing the characteristics of interdisciplinary teaming in teacher preparation in a second national study. Purposeful sampling was utilized to identify a national sample ( $n=55$ ) of programs that met a specific definition of the blended approach to teacher preparation. All identified participants received a mailed survey with a response rate of 60% ( $n =33$ ). The final participants consisted of 24 initial teacher education programs in 12 states. Data was analyzed through simple descriptive statistics and narrative analysis. Results revealed that characteristics and practices of teams

remained consistent since their previous work. Recommendations made of participants in this later study are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.2  
Summary of Teaming Practices Recommended by Participants

**Interpersonal Practices (79% of responses)**

- Work together on course and curriculum development.
- Spend lots of time together.
- Jointly develop and revisit a common conceptual and philosophical framework.
- Develop a formal, systematic teaming process.
- Build equality of commitment/investment in membership.
- Share and review routinely.
- Use a broad approach to membership across disciplines and community.
- Develop co- and team-teaching methods.
- Rotate team leadership.
- Meet regularly and frequently, even after program implementation.
- Collaborate on research, writing, and presentations.
- Seek members who have common goals and philosophy.
- Use team members for field supervision.

**Administrative Practices (17% of responses)**

- Develop strategies to increase understanding of interdisciplinary program development in administrators.
  - Build knowledge and support in administration, starting at the top.
  - Consider joint appointments.
  - Bring administrators into the team as active or passive members.
  - Restructure patterns for interdisciplinary faculty assignments.
  - Build system for credit or rewards for interdisciplinary program development (p.54).
-

Table 2.3

Recommendations from participants regarding characteristics of interdisciplinary teaming in teacher preparation. (Miller & Stayton, 2006, p. 63)

- 
- meet frequently according to a preset schedule in order to insure frequent communication among members;
  - establish a common knowledge and philosophical base;
  - publicize the program at all levels of administration and program;
  - seek administrative support from the beginning at all levels with official recognition of team membership;
  - select a strong team coordinator;
  - adopt a team approach to instructional design;
  - include only members who are committed to inclusive education;
  - clarify member responsibilities from the start;
  - hire qualified faculty for the program, and
  - advise students as a team
- 

The authors noted that these recommendations were generally consistent with those of the 1998 study but reflected more concern related to administration aspects than to the nature of interpersonal developments (Miller & Stayton, 2006). Miller and Stayton (2006) also assert that while there is scarce research available on blended, interdisciplinary teacher preparation preliminary data point to the interdisciplinary faculty team as the key to effectiveness of these programs. However, little is known about how these teams should function. Certainly, these results are indicative of the realization of practical issues in terms of barriers and supports as programs moved forward through reforms. Pugach et al. (2011) have characterized this trend in collaboration within teacher education as marked by both moral and practical discourse.

Hartle, Jones, Rapport, Kemple and Correa (1997) specifically addressed the systems change process experienced through the creation of one unified program. Using the change process characterized by Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) as a framework, the authors describe their perspectives of the systems change process that led to an institutionalized program of study in early childhood teacher education at one university (Hartle et al., 1997). Their reflections identified key aspects needed for successful systems change. First, the authors assert that the change process requires a considerable amount of time which had implications of faculty, particularly junior faculty still pursuing tenure. Further, understanding the micro-politics of the university was seen as critical in moving proactively through the system. Licensure requirements were also seen as a support in this particular case as ECSE certifications were newly embedded into existing PreK/Primary and Preschool certificates. Logistically speaking, benefits were observed in terms of administrative and sequential aspects of the program (Hartle et al., 1997). This paper exposes the importance of anticipating the time and energy required, and for knowledge of departmental, college, and university systems to the initiation and successful fulfillment of a change process when developing collaborative models of teacher education.

The culture of higher education and its impact on barriers and supports for unification has also been discussed (e.g., Miller & Stayton, 1999). Miller and Stayton (1999) conducted interviews of respondents from a previous national study (i.e., Miller & Stayton, 1998) to examine supports and barriers to interdisciplinary work in higher education settings. Participants included 5 department chairs (17%), 5 program coordinators (17%), and 19 faculty members (66%) and represented the disciplines of child and family development, early childhood education, special education, elementary education, educational leadership, and early childhood special education (Miller & Stayton, 1999). Interview transcripts were analyzed

qualitatively using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify patterns and themes in the data. Findings indicated that the culture of higher education settings did indeed create significant barriers for all participants. Further, nearly all the participants reported that they did not feel their interdisciplinary efforts were supported by the environment and consequently were experiencing feelings of discouragement and frustration (Miller & Stayton, 1999). Participants identified barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration in teacher education as being primarily administrative and social in nature creating a climate where faculty who do choose to engage in systems change toward increased collaboration do so at their own risk and on their own time (Miller & Stayton, 1999). Findings also illustrated that structural disincentives, such as lack of alignment between tenure and promotion processes as well as program development or interdisciplinary, cross-departmental work, exist that mitigate against recommended practice (Miller & Stayton, 1999). Miller and Stayton (1999) concluded that the climate and culture of teacher education program must be a point of examination in efforts to initiate and institutionalize collaborative models (Miller & Stayton, 1999).

Individual program development and implementation has been described extensively in the literature (e.g., Hestenes et al., 2009; Heston et al., 1998; Hyun, 2002; Goodwin, Boone, & Wittner, 1994; Kemple et al, 1994, LaMontagne, Johnson, Kilgo, Stayton, Carr, Bauer, & Carpenter, 2002; Marchel & Keenan, 2005; Silverman, Hong, & Trepanier-Street, 2010; Stayton & Miller, 1993). Many researchers shared lessons learned from their efforts which can be used by programs looking to embark on a journey toward unification or greater collaboration (e.g., Hestenes et al, 2009; Kemple et al, 1994). Data in one study describing the development and implementation of a unified program by LaMontagne et al (2002), for example, indicated that providing a unified vision of early childhood education is an on-going process and commitment

and collaboration were critical to success. One study addressed a unique induction program in the form of a yearlong residency used to support and mentor graduates of a unified program and suggested mentoring of new teachers be considered a vital component of teacher education (McCormick & Brennan, 2001). Another highlighted the need for a focus on culture, race and ability diversity as a crucial foundation of collaborative programs (Xu et al., 2003).

Some literature stressed the need for interdisciplinary (e.g., Stayton, Whittaker, Jones & Kersting, 2001) and transdisciplinary practice (Silverman et al, 2010) illuminating the complexity of the professional workforce involved in early childhood inclusive settings. While these descriptive studies offer a window into the development and process of unification, they lack empirical rigor as they primarily represent conceptual descriptions of program initiation and/or change from the perspectives of faculty-authors and or other program participants rather than systematic investigation into the program design, implementation, or effectiveness. As noted above, broad, multisite studies (see Fader-Dunne, 2002; Miller & Stayton, 2006 as examples) have also recorded characteristics of unified programs that might help the field begin to development a shared vocabulary to support further empirical research that may help illuminate the outcomes and assessing the quality of associated efforts.

*Assessment of unified programs.* There continues to be limited empirical studies that provide an analysis of outcomes of program unification. However, some studies were identified which have begun to examine this important aspect of unified programs. Graduates' self-perceptions of their pre-service exposure to and postgraduate use of targeted interdisciplinary and family-centered practices were examined in a study utilizing self-evaluation survey methodology by Crais, Able-Boone, Harrison, Freund, Downing, and West (2004). A self-evaluation survey was created by the authors to determine the graduates' perceived opportunities



to implement interdisciplinary and family-centered strategies in their work settings and their perceived competence in utilizing these strategies (Crais et al., 2004). The survey was administered to 44 graduates including: 18 speech language pathologists, 11 early childhood special educators, 7 occupational therapists, 6 school psychologists, and 2 audiologists (Crais et al., 2004). Descriptive statistics of survey results were generated to analyze results. Further, to compare the graduates' perceived opportunity with their perceived competence for identified interdisciplinary practices, each associated opportunity rating and competence rating were submitted to a paired sample *t* test. Findings detailed that graduates' perceived competence for implementing identified practices was significantly higher than their perceived opportunity to implement the practices (Crais et al., 2004). Findings also suggested that graduates perceived their preparation programs to have modeled interdisciplinary practice and that they felt confident in implementing similar practice themselves (Crais et al., 2004). This study provides some empirical support for the belief expressed by others (i.e., Kilgo & Bruder, 1997; McCollum & Stayton, 1996; Mellon & Winton, 2003) that faculty modeling of interdisciplinary collaborative practices is a critical element to the implementation of interdisciplinary preparation.

Graduate perceptions have also been examined in regards to the knowledge base gained from their preparation (i.e., LaMontagne, et al, 2002; Miller & Losardo, 2002). LaMontagne and colleagues (2002) examined two complimentary data sets to illuminate aspects of unified early childhood (EC) and early childhood special education (ECSE) programs. One data set included interview data from university faculty members (n=28) who were instrumental members of unified programs and the other data set was comprised of self-ratings regarding graduate perceptions (n=42) from unified, dual, ECE, or ECSE master degree programs (LaMontagne, et al., 2002). Faculty interviews focused on the development and characteristics of unified EC and

ECSE programs while graduate interviews examined graduate perceptions regarding the knowledge base gained from their program of study (LaMontagne, et al., 2002). Findings suggested that the trend towards unifying ECE and ECSE teacher preparation programs may have some perceived benefits over other program formats (dual or separate ECE or ECSE). Specifically, graduates of unified programs in this study appeared to have more extensive knowledge related to teaming and collaboration as well as for working with families from both the perception of faculty and that of graduates (LaMontagne, et al., 2002). Findings from the LaMontagne (2002) study also indicated that graduates of unified programs were exposed to a broader set of competencies to address a more diverse group of children and families.

Miller and Losardo (2002) mailed surveys to graduates (n=91) from seven state and NCATE approved unified early childhood teacher education programs during the first year of their employment post-graduation. Participants were asked to rate their preparation in state licensure competencies. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis procedures were used to analyze the survey data. Results indicated perceived strengths in graduates from unified programs were higher in areas of general early childhood and child development than in areas specific to early childhood special education. Further, graduates reported a need for more content and application in areas including working with families, behavior analysis, and working with children who have moderate to severe disabilities (Miller & Losardo, 2002).

Analysis of student perceptions of their preparation for inclusive contexts was also analyzed in a study by Able-Boone, Harrison, and West (2002). The authors first provide a description of the collaborative interdisciplinary program targeted in the study focusing on components of the program including (a) interdisciplinary course work, (b) competency-based seminars, and (c) an interdisciplinary practicum providing opportunities for students to

implement inclusion focused knowledge and skills. Their findings regarding outcomes of that program are presented in the form of self-report survey data that utilized a Likert scale format to elicit pre and post program data. The pre and post measures examined students' self-perceived competencies in interdisciplinary teaming, social inclusion practices, and family centered interventions. Post-graduation results demonstrated that mean competencies had risen suggesting program effectiveness in fostered said competencies (Able-Boone et al., 2002). Findings also indicated that graduates held extremely positive views of interactions with professionals and candidates from other disciplines (Able-Boone, et al., 2002). Additionally, findings indicated that graduates perceived that the program provided realistic views of aspects such as coordination, communication, and interpersonal relationships through seminar and field experiences which they perceived as helping them to learn strategies for overcoming barriers to interdisciplinary team collaboration. (Able-Boone et al., 2002). Able-Boone et al. (2002) detailed that graduates identified a need for more specific strategies for facilitating inclusion, more time, particularly for interdisciplinary work, and scheduling issues as major challenges during their preparation (Able-Boone, et al., 2002).

### **Implications**

Regardless of field of preparation, all teachers who work with young children need foundational knowledge in early child development and learning (Hyson, 2003; Sandall et al., 2000) as well as for working with children with special needs (Blanton et al., 2011). There is a long history of attempts to ensure both sets of professionals are well prepared to work with children of varying ability and other forms of diversity. The process of collaborating at the higher education level to prepare teachers from both special and general education perspectives continues to garner interest and research. Indeed, collaboration within teacher education is

undoubtedly a historical and increasing trend in initial preparation of teachers (Pugach, et al., 2011). This trend has produced research focused on the development, rationale, and design of such programs (Piper, 2007; Pugach, et al., 2011; Stayton & McCollum, 2002).

Examination of the literature pertaining to collaborative models of teacher education in ECE/EI/ECSE revealed a continued paucity of empirical research on unified models, particularly in regards to the outcomes of unification for teachers, children and their families. The majority (69%) of literature included in this review was found to be non-empirical in nature and only 12% (n=6) of the reviewed articles involved an evaluative aspect. By far the most prevalent literature was found to be descriptive in nature and provides information regarding the development of unified models of early childhood teacher education from the perspectives of those developing them, primarily from the early 1990s when the first programs were initiated. In these descriptions, designers of teacher education programs describe detailed accounts of program design, implementation, anticipated benefits, and barriers encountered by the fledgling programs (Piper, 2007; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). The argument for unification or integration of early childhood and early childhood special education appears centered on a social justice perspective for inclusive services (Piper, 2007) and the well-documented inadequacy in general early childhood education to prepare graduates for diverse, inclusive contexts (Stayton & McCollum, 2002).

There is also an emergent data base on the perceptions of graduates of programs that provides some information regarding the outcomes of unified programs. For example, graduates appear to have more extensive knowledge related to teaming, collaboration, interdisciplinary practice, and for working with families (Crais et al., 2004). Major challenges identified by graduates included a need for more specific strategies for facilitating inclusion, more time,

particularly for interdisciplinary work, and scheduling issues (Able-Boone, et al., 2002).

Findings from this small body of research seem to suggest that unifying ECE and ECSE teacher preparation programs may have some benefits over other program formats (dual or separate ECE or ECSE).

However, what it is not represented in the literature are studies of collaborative teacher education programs conducted by individuals outside the program and those that examine how programs operate from a holistic standpoint to ensure that graduating teachers are competent. Studies that provide insight into how a collaborative program operates as a system (i.e., the elements, interaction, coherence) to prepare teachers who can support the learning of all children are important to the larger enterprise of research on collaborative teacher education programs. Research on collaborative models has increasingly focused on analysis of implementation of program components (e.g. course or practicum format) and lacks information regarding outcomes, effectiveness, or how programs are conceptualized and operationalized as whole systems (Brownell, Griffin, Leko, & Stephens, 2011; Pugach et al., in press).

Blanton and Pugach (2011) assert that increased focus on more complex analyses of collaborative models of teacher education might help the field better understand their relative effectiveness and therefore maximize their potential as the practice rapidly increases. By doing such research, the authors posit collaborative teacher education can be repositioned as a “transformative opportunity, leading to a thoughtful, well-crafted redefinition of the roles of general and special educators within the context of the snowballing changes that are impacting teacher education today” (Blanton & Pugach, 2011, p. 231).

In the following sections, the notion of promoting a more complex analysis of collaborative teacher education by examining programs as holistic systems will be explored. As

the research base pertaining to collaborative models of teacher education does not include examples of such analysis, relevant elements from the broader teacher education reform literature will first be described. Subsequently, a research framework proposed by Pugach and Blanton (2009) coupled with its application as a classification system pertaining to collaborative models of teacher education (Blanton & Pugach, 2011) will be presented. This literature provides guidance for the framework of the proposed study.

### **Studying Teacher Education Programs as Systems**

The broader teacher education literature provides relevant insight into elements considered to be hallmarks of quality, effective teacher education. Indeed, much progress has been documented in terms of teacher education reform, particularly as an outcome of increased focus on and development of professional development standards (Darling-Hammond, 2010). This work has shown promise as there is burgeoning evidence that graduates of programs that have applied such an increased focus to the redesign of curricula perceive themselves as better prepared, are rated as more effective than other graduates by their supervisors, and contribute more to student learning (Boyd et al., 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2006a; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In regards to collaborative models of teacher education, the literature does not offer the same evidence of effectiveness or quality. In fact, the literature lacks empirical evidence in support or of validation of such models and little is known as to the ways in which they may improve the preparation of inclusive teachers (Brownell, et al., 2010; Piper, 2007; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Through examination of what is known about quality, effective teacher education programs in general, elements pertinent to the design of research into collaborative programs can be ascertained. The following section will discuss relevant elements from the

broader teacher education literature that will be used to frame this study of a collaborative program.

**Critical teacher education components.** The development of collaborative teacher education programs has occurred during a time marked by focused effort on understanding what constitutes effective, preservice education. The findings from these investigations provide important insights about the critical components of teacher education programs. Darling-Hammond (2006) and Zeichner, 1993) have conducted case studies of effective programs and found that effective teacher education programs have strong clinical and didactic curricula that support candidates to link theory to practice by applying what is learned in performance assessments organized around teaching standards. Further, candidates' experiences are accompanied by extensive feedback and opportunities to continually practice and reflect (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Some studies have indicated that certification is a significant predictor of student achievement but noted that the value-added learning gains of students were differentiated among preparation programs (e.g., Boyd et al., 2008; Noell, Porter, Patt, & Dahir, 2008). Boyd et al., (2008) have found that programs associated with greater teacher value-added gains tended to have the following characteristics:

- programs' careful oversight of the quality of student teaching experiences;
- the match between the context of student teaching and candidates' later teaching assignments, in terms of grade levels, subject matter, and type of students;
- the amount of coursework in reading and mathematics content and methods of teaching;
- a focus in courses on helping candidates learn to use specific practices and tools that are then applied in their clinical experiences;

- candidates' opportunities to study the local district curriculum;
- a capstone project (typically a portfolio of work done in classrooms with students);
- programs' percentage of tenure-line faculty, which the researchers viewed as a possible proxy for institutional investment and program stability.

These findings are in agreement with those of other studies including the aforementioned case studies of exemplary programs (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Specifically, Darling-Hammond's (2006c) analysis of seven exemplary programs found that they shared the following characteristics:

- a common, clear vision of good teaching that permeates all course work and clinical experiences, creating a coherent set of learning experiences;
- well-defined standards of professional practice and performance that are used to guide and evaluate course work and clinical work;
- a strong core curriculum taught in the context of practice and grounded in knowledge of child and adolescent development and learning, an understanding of social and cultural contexts, curriculum, assessment, and subject matter pedagogy;
- extended clinical experiences—at least 30 weeks of supervised practicum and student teaching opportunities in each program—that are carefully chosen to support the ideas presented in simultaneous, closely interwoven course work;
- extensive use of case methods, teacher research, performance assessments, and portfolio evaluation that apply learning to real problems of practice;
- explicit strategies to help students to confront their own deep-seated beliefs and assumptions about learning and students and to learn about the experiences of people different from themselves;



- strong relationships, common knowledge, and shared beliefs among school- and university-based faculty jointly engaged in transforming teaching, schooling, and teacher education (p.82-83).

Darling-Hammond (2006b) stresses the importance of organizing program components and experiences so that candidates learn to integrate and apply their knowledge effectively in practice. She further asserts that teacher educators must attend to not only what to teach but also how to teach if efforts to impact graduates' knowledge for teaching practice and continual learning are to be successful (Darling-Hammond, 2006b). In describing how teacher education programs can achieve this, Darling-Hammond (2006b) details three critical components from the current literature base on high quality, effective teacher education: 1) coherence and integration among courses and between courses and field experiences; 2) extensive, well-supervised clinical experiences integrated with courses and with pedagogy that provides clear linkages between theory and practice; and 3) new visions of closer, proactive relationships with field sites. Each of these critical components of quality, effective teacher education will be briefly discussed.

***Coherence.*** Programs with a high level of coherence are marked by coursework which is carefully sequenced and based on a strong theory of learning to teach (Darling-Hammond, 2006b). Moreover, courses are purposely interactive with each other and organized into an explicit context which includes advisement and teacher candidates' work in partner schools. Within these interrelated courses, content knowledge is well-connected to content pedagogy and addressed in tandem. Looking across a program, the sequencing helps create links among courses and experiences and faculty plan and design the program collaboratively. Further, these closely interrelated courses involve applications in classrooms where observations of student teaching occur.

In some programs the same faculty who teach courses also supervise and advise teacher candidates and sometimes even teach children and teachers in placement schools, bringing together these disparate program elements (Darling-Hammond, 2006b) and working to promote simultaneous renewal of both schools and teacher education (Goodlad, 1990). This high level of coherence promotes reiteration of core concepts as well as consistency in theoretical frameworks across programs. Howey and Zimpher (1989) posit that these frameworks “explicate, justify, and build consensus on such fundamental conceptions as the *role* of the teacher, the *nature* of teaching and learning, and the *mission* of the school in this democracy,” enabling “*shared* faculty leadership by underscoring collective roles as well as individual course responsibilities” (p. 242, emphasis in original). In contrast, programs lacking this coherence have been found to lack effectiveness (Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

***Clinical preparation.*** The clinical component of teacher education is vital to the coherence of preparation in that it is novices’ opportunity to learn through direct practice of skills and application of knowledge gained through theoretical coursework. In review of literature pertaining to special education teacher preparation, Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, and Murphy (2012) concluded that researchers have begun to demonstrate the effectiveness, and therefore importance, of pairing coursework and field experiences to build teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge. Darling-Hammond (2006b) indicates that effective teacher education is characterized by extensive clinical work, intensive supervision, expert modeling of practice, and diverse students. These elements are necessary to create opportunities for candidates to learn to practice in authentic contexts (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

In a report commissioned in 2010, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) added further recommendations regarding the critical clinical component of

teacher education. The report identified ten design principles for strong clinically-based programs as well as a comprehensive series of strategies for the evolution of teacher preparation. These design principals support five key areas in which teacher preparation must evolve. First, all teacher education programs need to be held to higher accountability in regards to how they address the needs of schools and impact P-12 student learning (NCATE, 2010). The current context described above marked by accountability and standards based reform necessitates such focus in efforts to define and develop “highly qualified” and “highly effective” teachers. PK-12 student learning should be the focus of clinical aspects of teacher preparation as well as the assessment of new teachers and the programs which have prepared them. This can further support the notion of simultaneous renewal where both teacher education and schools see improvement (Goodlad, 1990).

Second, NCATE (2010) calls for improvement in candidate selection and placement. The report recommends that clinical internships take place in school settings structured to support teacher learning and student achievement and requires that teacher candidates be supported by clinical faculty drawn from higher education and the P-12 arena. Third, the structure of colleges of education and their curricula must be redesigned so that faculty who work to develop the relationships with schools required for strong clinical preparation are rewarded for the efforts in the tenure track. Additionally, the role of clinical faculty needs to be legitimized and rigorous criteria for preparation, selection, and certification of clinical faculty must be developed (NCATE, 2010). Teacher education curricula must be improved to ensure that faculty demonstrate integration of practice, content theory, and pedagogy while modeling appropriate assessment for continuous improvement.

Fourth, NCATE (2010) calls for support from state systems to strengthen partnerships between universities and school districts. Additionally, university systems are charged with ensuring that colleges of education receive appropriate levels of funding to support the development of these relationships and in turn high quality clinically based programs. Lastly, the report implores the research community to improve the literature base related to the specific elements that make clinical preparation most effective in order to inform policy and practice (NCAYE, 2010).

*New relationships with schools.* In order for programs to reach the goals of coherence and clinically rich preparation program, a major reform of traditional relationships between clinical sites and university programs is necessary (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The power exerted by clinical settings cannot be overshadowed by coursework, no matter how robust (Darling-Hammond, 2006). However, clinical settings that promote highly effective teacher education as described here are few in number (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The NCATE (2010) Blue Ribbon report detailed above helps to move the field toward the establishment of high quality clinical settings and support faculty who conduct the important work entailed. There are examples of partnerships that have been seen to promote the type of relationship required. Some programs have been found to use professional development schools, lab school and school reform networks that provide quality models of practice and environments that promote effective teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2006b). In these rich clinical settings, teacher candidate learning is situated in shared cultural norms and practices and afford a context to make explicit connections between theory and practice, coursework and fieldwork.

The features of effective teacher education described above transcend the general and special education dichotomy and can be applied to any level (e.g., early childhood or K-12).

Taken together, these three critical elements can help support examination of teacher education programs as integrated, holistic systems. This approach will be discussed more in detail in the next section and in chapter three which describes the methodology for this study.

### **Considering Teacher Education Programs as Systems**

Teacher education is comprised of many elements (i.e., curricula, field experiences, faculty, and student characteristics) that are organized into a program where they interact in pursuit of the program's goals, mission and vision. With this view, a teacher education program can be considered a system. A system is "an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something" (p. 11) and must contain three aspects: elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose (Meadows, 2008). Systems can either be marked by coherence or disjointedness, or to as tightly or loosely coupled. Research has evidenced the importance of program coherence to the effectiveness of teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006b; Leko et al., 2012).

Accordingly, alignment within collaborative models which attempt to blend the knowledge base, practices, and theoretical foundations of both general and special education is of great importance to the fulfillment of their purpose. Brownell et al., (2011) add that making linkages between theory, practice, and context seems applicable for designing research on collaborative teacher education and has been advocated in the professional development research (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2006; Desimone, 2009; Wayne, Kwang, Pei, Cronen, & Garet, 2008). Analysis of collaborative teacher education programs as holistic, comprehensive systems can expose such linkages as well as other aspects of program coherence and effectiveness thereby helping the field take an important step toward understanding the process of measuring program outcomes.

## Summary and Implications

This chapter has described the trend of collaborative models of teacher education which has been seen in response to increased prevalence and preference for inclusive models of service delivery within PK-12 education. As services for young children became more comprehensive and inclusive, it became evident that professionals would have to rethink their roles and responsibilities (Stayton & Bruder, 1999). Collaborative models of teacher education emerged from this context with a desire to better prepare all teachers for this new reality. While collaboration in teacher education programs has existed for decades, such program models have not been developed or examined sufficiently (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) as the literature is deficient of systematic study of these models beyond descriptions (Brownell et al., 2011; Piper, 2007; Pugach, 2005; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). Indeed, scholars (i.e., Brownell et al., 2011; Pugach et al., in press; Piper, 2007; Stayton & McCollum, 2002) have indicated that collaborative models of teacher education lack a strong empirical literature base. Research is needed in terms of how such programs function holistically, their outcomes, efficacy, benefit, and future needs. Further, the field will benefit from empirical research on these programs to support the conceptual rationale for unification that was established long ago.

The broader teacher education literature provides important insight into what constitutes effective, quality teacher education from a holistic, program-level standpoint. This information can be applied to the study of collaborative models of teacher education and can support analysis of such programs as holistic systems. Further, Pugach and Blanton (2009) have proposed a research framework to promote consistency in language and research purpose in an effort to propel and organize the field. The use and promotion of such a framework is imperative to advancing research on collaborative models as it supports the development of common research

agendas, a shared language, and common research instruments and methodological and theoretical tools, all seen as critical “common tools for inquiry” (Grossman & McDonald, 2008, p. 198) for progress in the field.

Research examining these programs as holistic, comprehensive systems can help the field ascertain whether and how this movement is representing or affecting teacher education reform. Grossman and McDonald (2008) assert in-depth examination of teacher education from a systems perspective is necessary for reform efforts to move forward. Without examining programs as holistic, comprehensive systems, the field is at a loss when trying to ascertain their impact on overall teacher education reform related to the shifting roles and responsibilities of all teachers in light of the diversifying educational context. Use of the Pugach and Blanton (2009) framework in tandem with what is known from the broader literature base on quality, effective teacher education can further support systems analysis of teacher education programs. This study strives to contribute a holistic analysis of an instance of early childhood collaborative teacher education and is anticipated to provide critical insights that will contribute to discussion regarding related teacher education reform efforts. The next chapter will detail the specific research design.

## Chapter Three

### **Methodology**

In an effort to inform broader teacher education reform efforts, the purpose of this qualitative, instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) was to describe and analyze how a collaborative early childhood teacher education program functions as a system to promote its desired outcomes. This chapter details the methodology of the study starting with the research questions, followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework. Application of case study methodology as defined by Stake (1999; 2010) and the conceptual framework that provided structure and guidance are then described.

### **The Research Questions**

While the movement toward collaborative teacher education now has a significant history and continues to grow (Piper, 2007; Pugach et al., 2011; Stayton & McCollum, 2002), there is little research on how collaborative teacher education programs function as systems in pursuit of their goals. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How does a collaborative early childhood teacher education program operate as a system to promote the social-construction of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for inclusive, collaborative teaching?
  - a. How and why does an early childhood teacher education program articulate/define the intentions, philosophies and assumptions driving the program?



- i. How do the philosophies, intentions and assumptions inform the program structure, content, field sites, sequence, delivery etc.?
  - ii. What are the defining characteristics?
- b. How do faculty enact the philosophy and approach of an early childhood teacher education program?
  - i. How is the program enactment perceived by faculty, candidates, and graduates?
  - ii. How do participants describe the program in terms of its ability to promote inclusive practice?
- c. To what extent do the components represent program congruence (Darling-Hammond, 2006)?
  - i. How do the characteristics of the program (espoused and perceived) compare to the current literature on collaborative teacher education?
  - ii. How do perceived characteristics of the program compare to the espoused program?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Diverse perspectives or paradigms for research result from differences in perspective or approach to a given inquiry, which are derived from different notions of “truth” (Glesne, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Mayan, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Paul, 2005). Variation among paradigms is due to different interpretations of key constructs including ontology, epistemology, methodology, and philosophy or values (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2002; Paul 2005). The specific inquiry paradigm a researcher embraces is of importance for many reasons. Perhaps most notably, it is important due to the role the researcher has within the

process of research. The paradigm from which this study was framed is marked by an ontology that recognized multiple realities and an epistemology that embraced subjectivity--characteristics which led to an interpretive, naturalistic stance associated with the qualitative paradigm of research. The purposes of research in an interpretivist approach are to contextualize, understand, and interpret and the researcher is recognized as the primary instrument of inductive, descriptive study (Glesne, 2011; Schram, 2006). Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe the researcher as a "passionate participant" (p. 196) in the generation and interpretation of data and findings, a stance which was embraced in this study.

The research questions sought understanding of a collaborative teacher education program as a comprehensive whole or system. This system and its various participants were seen as engaged in a social process, namely the preparation of teacher candidates. Research questions pertaining to understanding a social process are well-aligned with a naturalistic, interpretivist approach to research, as both align with the ontological belief that reality is socially constructed and marked by variables that are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure (Glesne, 2011). The theoretical framework for this particular study was grounded in constructivism as well as cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). Each will be described next.

**Constructivism.** The research questions in this study reflected an interest in the espoused and enacted program design as understood by the individuals that experienced it. Therefore, examination centered on how participants interpreted and made meaning of their experiences within the program, which compelled a constructivist paradigm of research. Many scholars use the terms constructionism and constructivism interchangeably (Patton, 2002). Crotty (1998) delineates constructionism as having a focus on "the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning" (p. 58) and constructivism as related to the epistemological considerations of the

“meaning making of the individual mind” (p. 58). Both phenomena are at play within the process of teacher education as individuals construct meaning individually as well as in the social context per Vygotskian (1978) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) theories. The process or activity of teacher education can thereby be considered the collective generation and transmission of meaning in regards to teaching and learning to teach. This can be understood as a social process and therefore social-construction of knowledge as defined by Crotty (1998). Constructivism was seen as guiding the meaning making process of individual participants as well as the approach of the researcher when this process was analyzed and thereby meaning was made of collected data.

**Cultural-historical activity theory.** While constructivism helped to characterize the function of the teacher education program as a social process and framed the research methodology, cultural-historical activity systems theory, or CHAT (Engeström, 1987; 1999; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010), was used to understand the teacher education program as a system through a sociocultural lens. While some systems-based approaches are most applicable to the physical world, CHAT, developed by cognitive psychologists, focuses on how people develop understandings of reality (Williams, 2004). Williams (2004) asserts that CHAT helps illuminate “mental models” by analyzing how individuals and groups “develop understandings of the real world, draw meanings from that understanding, create learnings from those meanings and are motivated to respond to those learnings” (p. 2).

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, or simply Activity Theory, a commonly accepted name for the associated line of theorizing and research, grew out of the work of L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leont’ev, and A.R. Luria, founders of the cultural-historical school of Russian psychology in the 1920s and 1930s, whose work has been expanded by numerous contemporary scholars throughout the world (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999). Engeström (1999) details three stages, or

generations, of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). In the first stage, the work of Vygotsky developed the concept of mediation, which he illustrated in a triangular model of “a complex, mediated act” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 40, as quoted in Engeström, 1999, p. 5). This model is displayed in Figure 3.1. In this diagram, *subject* refers to the individual or individuals engaged in the activity while *object* refers to goal of the activity and *mediated artifact/tool* relates to artifacts, social others, and prior knowledge that mediate the subject’s experience of the activity (Yagamata-Lynch, 2010).

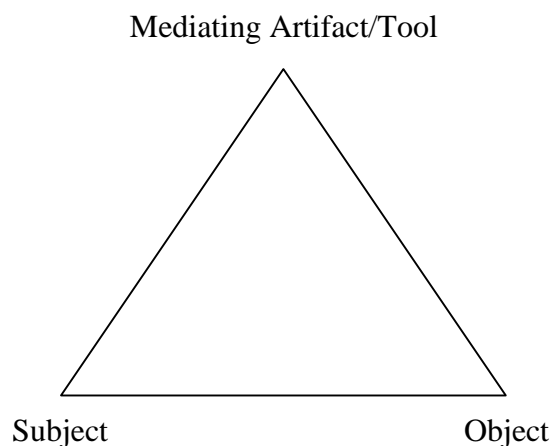


Figure 3.1. Mediated Action. Vygotsky’s graphical representation of mediated action (adapted from Cole & Engeström (1993) as presented in Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 17)).

The notion of mediated or cultural artifacts as central to understanding human action was groundbreaking as it meant that the “individual could no longer be understood without his or her cultural means; and the society could no longer be understood without the agency of individuals who use and produce artifacts” (Engeström, 2001, p. 134). This moved psychology away from Piagetian views of objects as “raw material for the formation of the subject” to objects being considered “cultural entities with the object-orientedness of action becoming the key to

understanding human psyche” (Engeström, 1999, p. 5). Towards the end of this first stage, criticism of the model included the limitation of using an individual as the unit of analysis when examining social activity.

In the second stage, the unit of analysis was expanded, largely through the work of Leont’ev, which helped illuminate the difference between an individual action and a collective activity (Engeström, 1999). Yamagata-Lynch (2010) adds that Leont’ev’s work focused the second generation of activity theory on the collective nature of human activity and identified the unit of analysis as object-oriented activity, rather than the individual subject. Leont’ev (1974, p. 10, as quoted in Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 21) defined object-oriented activity as,

... a unit of life mediated by mental reflection while real function is to orient the subject to the world of objects. Activity is thus not a reaction or a totality of reactions, but rather a system possessing structure, inner transformations, conversations, and development.

This systems view of activity recognizes that an activity is comprised of events and consequences experienced by participants that can qualitatively alter the participant, the goals, the motives, the environment, and the activity itself (Rogoff, 1995).

Therefore, activity theory holds that human activity is a reciprocal and transformational process (Rogoff, 1995). Engeström and Miettinen (1999) assert that the activity itself is therefore cultural and as specific activities among participants become institutionalized, they evolve into enduring tools within the culture of participants (Cole & Engeström, 1993). Therefore, tools can be transformed into ‘cultural’ tools by the way the subject of the activity decides to use, discontinue use, and/or share them (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In sum, cultural tools are artifacts that over time have gained value and become institutionalized.



The utility of Activity Theory in this particular study is in its ability to provide a sociocultural lens through which to view the collaborative teacher education program as a system. Through this lens, teacher education can be considered a complex process which takes place within an intricate social setting and therefore an activity system.

In sum, the theoretical framework supported the investigation into the research questions through a constructivist and social-cultural lens. This supported the conception of the program as a system engaged in the social process of teacher education and an understanding of this process was pursued through the perceptions of participants. The selection of appropriate methodology must take into account the specific issue of interest, research questions, and theoretical framework. Given the theoretical perspectives from which this research was approached, coupled with the interest in understanding a program as a system, qualitative case study as described by Merriam (2009) and Stake (1995) was chosen.

### **Case Study Methodology**

Stake (1995) approaches case study from an interpretive and emergent perspective, recognizing that the case is highly influenced by the surrounding environment, which is in line with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this study. Both Merriam (1997) and Stake (2005) assert that case study permits examination of a process with each case being a complex, historical, and contextual entity. The purpose of case study research is to focus on providing a “thick” description by presenting “holistic description and explanation” (Merriam, p. 29).

This interpretive research is concerned with examination of a bounded case, specifically, an instance of collaborative, early childhood teacher education as represented by a single program. The need for intense investigation into one unique program to generate “thick” description with the purpose of informing broader collaborative teacher education efforts

suggests the worth of a qualitative case study, and in particular an instrumental case study (Stake,1995). Stake (1995) defines an instrumental case study as appropriate when a research question or need for general understanding for which insight can be garnered by studying a particular case or instance of the phenomenon exists. This is in contrast to an intrinsic case study, which Stake (1995) describes as a study that illuminates a particular case without a purpose of learning about other cases or some general problem.

This study was not one of evaluation or of comparison. Rather, this study developed description which is intended to inform teacher education practice and reform as opposed to generate or test specific theories about its development, design, enactment, or outcomes. Participants' viewpoints were illuminated using multiple sources of data (Tellis, 1997) to elucidate the meaning of the issue and promote the “discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known” (Merriam, p. 30).

Regardless of how a case is conceptualized, it is considered to have boundaries and working parts and in this way it can be considered “an integrated system” (Stake, 1995, p. 2). As Merriam (2009) highlights, the case can be considered a bounded system per Smith (1978) and adds that the case is “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can fence in what I am going to study” (Merriam, 1997, p. 27). As Stake (2010) suggests, a case can be understood in terms of the domains or topics inherent to the case, research methods, data-gathering activities, conceptual territory (the research questions and related research base), as well as the contexts relevant to the study. The following sections describe the case by discussing: (1) the selection of the research site, (2) selection and introduction of the participants; and the (3) organization of the case study data collection and purpose.



**Selection of a Research Site.** Following in the interpretive, qualitative approach of this instrumental case study (Stake, 2005), selection of a research site entailed identification of a case that could be “examined mainly to provide insight into an issue...The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (Stake, 2005, p. 437). The issue of interest in this case study was collaborative early childhood teacher education. Therefore, selection of a specific case for this project proceeded through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) using the following criteria:

- The program had to conduct early childhood teacher education in a collaborative manner characterized by formal relationships (conceptual and/or structural) across at minimum the two disciplines of early childhood education and early childhood special education.
- The program had to possess a core goal of promoting inclusive practice through its collaborative design as evidenced through the program mission statement and stated purpose.
- The program had to have a long enough history as a collaborative model to have graduates who were in at minimum their second year of professional work.

Investigation into the appropriateness of a particular early childhood education graduate level teacher education program was initiated after the program was brought to my attention by a colleague. This program is located at a public, state university in an urban area within the southwest region of the United States. To protect the confidentiality of the University and the study participants, the University will be referred “the university” and the program will be referred to as “the program” hereafter. Description gathered during an initial conversation with one of the current full time faculty members of the program, coupled with review of public

information on the University website, confirmed that the above selection criteria were met by the program. Specifically, the program is active; therefore, current candidates and faculty are engaged. The program is conceptualized as a collaborative model by members as it offers an early childhood teacher education program that offers shared coursework across different program outcomes related to the fields of ECE and ECSE. Expertise and professional standards from both early childhood education and early childhood special education were employed in the design and enactment of the program. The program embraces a core philosophy of inclusive practice, which was evident in the program mission statements and declaration of program philosophy found within the program handbook. This program originally adopted a collaborative design in the early 1990s and continues to be characterized as a collaborative model by members. Therefore, the presence of graduates who would be in at least their second year of post-program employment was assured. The program will be described in depth in the findings reported in chapter four.

**Selection of participants.** Interview participants in this study included: faculty, current teacher candidates, and recent graduates of the program. The program is administered by two full time program faculty along with a number of adjunct faculty. One full time faculty member, who will be referred to as Gina hereafter, served as a primary liaison and facilitated the process of this study. Through collaborative discussion with Gina regarding the study, other faculty participants were targeted including Mary, the other program faculty member, and two adjunct faculty, who will be referred to as Abby and Betty. Gina guided the selection of these two particular adjuncts as they were seen as the primary adjuncts within the program and had significant knowledge of the program due to the duration and nature of their involvement. These individuals were recruited via email communication for interviews and all agreed to participate. Mary has been

with the program since 1994 and is currently a clinical professor and practicum coordinator.

Abby recently joined the program as an adjunct course instructor and part time co-coordinator of the practica. She is also a former graduate of the program. Betty has served as an adjunct course instructor since the early 1990s.

The term 'program faculty' is used here to denote faculty members working full time for the program as academic faculty members of the university. The label 'adjunct faculty' refers to individuals hired part-time for specific contracted work such as the delivery of a course. Other individuals are also members of the program staff. These include 'field supervisors' who serve as mentors to candidates during practicum and as liaisons between the Program and the school and community sites in which practica occur. Individuals employed by the school and community sites who welcome candidates into their practice for practicum courses, are referred to as 'site supervisors.' They fill the role commonly referred to as cooperating or collaborating teachers.

Two additional adjunct faculty were recruited via email communication specific to course delivery observation as they were the instructors of the two traditional courses in session during the data collection period. Both agreed to allow me to observe course delivery. Unsuccessful attempts were made to recruit the current Dean and Associate Dean of the College of Education that houses the program. Additionally, attempts were made to recruit two former faculty members who had personal knowledge of the original design and rationale for the collaborative model after a publication describing the redesign of the program was identified through the data collection process. One such faculty member, who was with the program from 1990 until her retirement in 2007, agreed to participate. She will be referred to as Barbara hereafter.

Current teacher candidates, university students currently enrolled in the program, were also recruited for participation. Contact information for current students was requested via Gina

who initially provided email addresses for a selection of nineteen current students. When asked of her selection criteria, she stated they were considered to be students demonstrating “good grades, organization skills, and high engagement in courses” and therefore potential quality informants. These students were thereby sent recruitment materials via email. To target the entire current student population, and therefore a broader range of perspectives, the recruitment materials were posted to the student list serve, which reaches all current students, on my behalf. Additionally, I made personal presentations regarding the study within the context of two class sessions active during the data collection period and distributed recruitment flyers to all students in attendance, approximately 20-25 in each class session with some overlap. One additional current student expressed interest during a site observation. Potential participants were asked to contact me directly with interest and questions. Several follow up emails were sent in an effort to recruit as many participants as possible with a target of 6-8 individuals. A total of ten current students initially expressed interest and seven, some but not all of whom were members of the group initially recommended by Gina, agreed to participate.

Regarding graduates, associated contact information was also requested from Gina and Mary. Mary and the academic advisor for the program each provided the names and emails of six potential graduate participants who had completed the program in 2010. Through collaborative discussion with Gina, it was determined that it may be prudent to include some graduates who had experienced her as an instructor. Therefore, Gina provided emails for six additional, more recent graduates as she started with the program in 2010. In response to a request for more potential participants, the academic advisor also provided email addresses and program exit data for all twenty-five individuals who completed the program in 2010, which allowed for recruitment to be attempted for a wider range of individuals. Additionally, one further graduate

was recruited verbally during an observation of a field site. A total of thirty-one graduates were therefore sent recruitment materials via email. Several follow up email messages were sent in an attempt to recruit as many participants as possible with a target of 6-8 individuals. Seven individuals expressed interest and all agreed to participate. Table 3.1 summarizes the participants. Table 3.1 summarizes the interview participants.

Table 3.1  
Interview participants and terminology. \*Note. These individuals fill dual roles within the program are therefore not representative of additional participants.

Type of Participant	Description	Number of Participants
Program faculty	Faculty members working full time for the program as academic faculty members of the university.	2
Adjunct faculty	Individuals hired part-time for specific contracted work such as the delivery of a course.	2
Retired Faculty	Academic faculty member who had served the program for 17 years and was part of the original faculty team that redesigned the program as collaborative.	1
Candidates	Teacher candidates/university students currently enrolled in the program	6
Graduates	Individuals who completed the program within the last three years, preferably in their second year of employment post completion.	7
Field Supervisors	Individuals who support candidates in practicum and serve as liaison between the program and clinical settings	2*
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>18</b>

**Organization of the case.** The case or unit of analysis in this study was one particular early childhood teacher education program, therefore a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). This program is intrinsically bounded by nature of being a specific, individual program and per case study methodology, this study was concerned with situating and describing this particular case in its specific context. The working parts within the case were seen as the components of that teacher education program (e.g., curricula, mission, vision, theoretical and philosophical

underpinnings, course/program delivery, nature of field sites, the relationship between field sites and the program, faculty and candidate characteristics, licensing and accreditation requirements, etc.).

The case study was further bounded by time as it was concerned with generating thick description of the program as it currently exists. Therefore, the study focused on the present and sought to capture current functioning of the program as opposed to a historical study of the program or its evolutionary change process. Further, data collection was limited to one academic semester (spring semester of the 2012-2013 schools year). Selected documents were limited to the current version in use such as the current mission or vision statement, as opposed to a collection of historical iterations. Observational data collected during this semester (meetings, course delivery, etc.) was considered to be representational of other periods of the recent functioning of the program. However, since the study sought to understand the program comprehensively, data were gathered through other means (i.e., document analysis, interview) to ascertain characteristics of other time periods across the complete program of study required of candidates. Resources and sources for data also formed boundaries of the case in that resources were limited to those contained in the selected program and made available to the researcher by the study participants or which were publicly available. Of particular impact, the study was primarily supported by one faculty member who served as the main conduit through which I gained access to the program. These issues limited the types and quantities of data available.

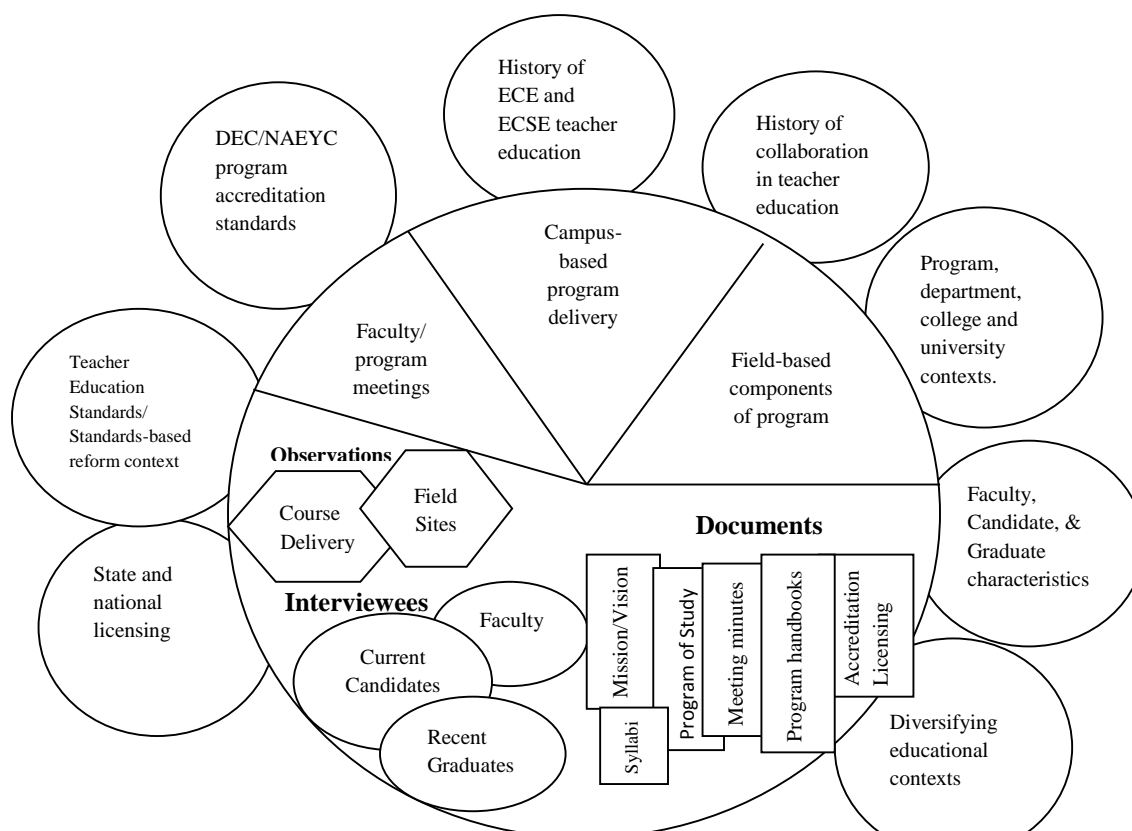
Adapting the work of Stake (1999; 2010), the design of this case study is depicted in Figure 3.3. The graphic displays the elements of the research endeavor, including the related issues, research questions, information needed, various data-collecting activities, associated activities of the program that were targets for data collection, and the contexts in which the case

exists and is influenced by (Stake, 2010). The largest circle represents the case or the teacher education program. The smaller circles around the edges indicate various contexts influencing the case. The sections within the top section of the large circle are indicative of the specific activities or elements of the teacher education program that were foci of data collection. The bottom half of the large circle contains other phenomena and sources intrinsic to data collection, specifically interviews and documents. The issue and research questions outlined previously are summarized at the bottom alongside types of key information that were gathered.

As noted, the theoretical framework guiding this study is marked by activity theory as a means to consider the teacher education program as an activity system. By nature, an activity system is a bounded system in that the system operates within a social environment marked by interrelated object-oriented activities and goal-directed actions, which are influenced by other contextual elements (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). To describe the relationships between the activities and the social environment, activity settings must be identified through an interpretive process (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). While he did not situate case study within activity theory, Stake (2010) recommended the identification of activities central to the case as well. These activity settings help define the boundaries of the system and therefore of the case. To further define the approach and parameters of the study, a conceptual framework was developed.

### **Conceptual Framework: Teacher Education as a System**

The teacher education program of interest to this study was understood through the following conceptual framework as an activity system per activity theory (Engeström, 1987:1999) and further as an instance of collaborative teacher education (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). The program components (e.g., curricula, mission, vision, theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, course/program delivery, nature of field sites, the relationship between field sites

**ISSUES:**

The movement toward collaborative or blended models of teacher education now has a significant history and continues to grow particularly at the early childhood level (Piper, 2007; Pugach, Blanton, & Correa, 2011; Stayton & McCollum). Yet, this movement lacks an empirical foundation informing the field as to how such programs can function as systems to represent and impact major reform of teacher education for both general and special education. In an effort to inform broader teacher education reform efforts, this study will describe and analyze how the design and enactment of a blended early childhood teacher education program functions as a system to promote its desired outcomes related to preparing teachers for inclusive practice.

**RESEARCH QUESTION:**

How does a collaborative early childhood teacher education program operate as a system to promote the social-construction of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for inclusive, collaborative teaching?

**INFORMATION NEEDED:**

- Documents related to program design, development, and enactment.
- Intentions, philosophies and assumptions driving design and enactment
- Defining characteristics of program design and of program enactment.
- Characteristics of various stakeholders (faculty, candidates, graduates)
- Responsibilities of various stakeholders
- Mission and vision statements
- Rationale of program design, development, and enactment
- Program & individual definitions of effective inclusive teaching (conception of required knowledge, skills, and dispositions)
- Program & individual definitions of collaborative teacher education
- Perceptions of program design and enactment from participants (faculty, current candidates, graduates)
- Observational data of program delivery/enactment/planning
- Course selection, sequencing, formats, materials.
- Characteristics of field sites preferred and available for clinical aspects of the program. Nature of relationships.
- Accreditation & licensing materials/documents

Figure 3.3. The Case. Graphic conceptualization of the case study, modified from Stake (2010).



and the program, faculty and candidate characteristics, licensing and accreditation requirements, etc.) were therefore analyzed in relation to the parameters of practice within an activity system per activity systems analysis (Engeström, 1987; 1999; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) and the program dimensions of collaborative teacher education models per Pugach and Blanton (2009). Therefore, case study investigation of the function of the program as a system was supported and bounded by the conceptual framework.

Specifically, defining the parameters of practice within the activity system helped determine the boundaries of the case both in terms of the sociocultural context and the conceptual interest of teacher education. The Pugach/Blanton (2009) research framework also represented a conceptual boundary by focusing the examination of the program on aspects of collaborative teacher education as opposed to teacher education in general. Therefore, while case study as described by Stake (1995; 2010) was adopted as the methodology for this study, the supporting conceptual framework derived from activity theory with consideration of activity system analysis (Engeström 1987; 1999; Yagamata-Lynch, 2010) and the Pugach/Blanton (2009) framework were seen as harmonious.

In sum, activity theory supported the view of the teacher education program as a system and helped define the components of interest within that system. The Pugach and Blanton (2009) framework further focused the study specifically on the practice of collaborative teacher education, as opposed to teacher education in general, by directing the activity systems analysis to attend to the five dimensions of collaborative teacher education as constructs to be explored. The combination of these two frameworks supported the qualitative, case study analysis of a collaborative teacher education program as a system. Each will be described followed by an overall description of the conceptual framework.

**Activity theory and activity systems analysis.** As a commonly embraced research methodology among CHAT scholars working with data associated with complex learning environments (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010), activity systems analysis provides a framework based on CHAT to guide inquiry. Yamagata-Lynch (2010) defines complex learning environments as “situations in natural settings where multiple individuals are involved in shared activities within a single or multi-organization context” (p. vii). Yamagata-Lynch (2010) identifies several examples of activity systems analysis in qualitative research as “a descriptive tool to (a) capture the processes involved in organizational change (Barab et al., 2004; Engeström, 1993; 2000; Yamagata-Lynch & Smaldina, 2007); (b) identify guidelines for designing constructivist learning environments (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999); (c) identify systemic contradictions and tensions that shape developments in educational settings (Barab et al., 2002; Roth & Tobin, 2002); and (d) demonstrate historical developments in organizational learning (Yamagata-Lynch, 2003)” (p. x)

Specifically, activity systems theory provided a framework in this study to investigate, interpret, and report thick description of the teacher education program. Further, the framework provided opportunities to identify systemic implications, understand systemic contradictions and tensions, and communicate findings, all of which have been identified as benefits of applying activity systems analysis to qualitative research (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Therefore, activity systems theory contributed to addressing the research questions as it supported the understanding of how the teacher education program operates as a system in pursuit of its goals. Consequently, the program was considered the *subject* of an activity system and the program was further described and analyzed by examining the associated elements (i.e., object/outcome, tools, rules, community, and division of labor) from an activity theory perspective.

### **A research framework for inquiry into collaborative models of teacher education.**

To more specifically center the inquiry on the collaborative nature of the teacher education program, the Pugach/Blanton (2009) research framework outlined in chapter two was combined with activity theory to complete the conceptual framework. This research framework directed the research process to attend to the particular program elements specifically relevant to understanding the collaborative nature of the program and therefore position the study to discuss findings within the greater landscape of collaborative teacher education.

The activity system is comprised of six interacting components or parameters of practice (Peck & McDonald, in press). The parameters of practice within the activity system include the *subject* which in this case is an early childhood collaborative teacher education program. The general *object* of a teacher education program can be considered the production of qualified early childhood educators with the collaborative nature adding a focus on preparation for inclusive practice. The literature details that many collaborative teacher education programs engage in their work in pursuit of promoting inclusive practice, which can be seen as a general *outcome* with the activity system. Common tools used by an early childhood collaborative teacher education program might include material tools such as syllabi, field supervision protocols, assessments, and conceptual tools such as philosophies of inclusion and developmentally appropriate practice.

The three remaining parameters of practice help identify contextual issues and internal workings of the system. *Rules* are formal or informal regulations that affect how the activity takes place to varying degrees and examples include local, state and national policies, licensure regulations and professional standards. The parameter of *community* represents the social group that the subject belongs to while engaged in the activity, which is often comprised of individuals

and groups such as program and adjunct faculty, field sites, students, community stakeholders, advisory boards, and other university staff. Finally, *division of labor* examines how tasks are shared among the members of the community and dictate the roles and responsibilities regarding course and program design, program delivery, field coordination, and field supervision. All of these parameters of practice have interactive relationships. Therefore, much overlap and influence is inherent between them in this conceptual framework.

The five program dimensions, proposed as common study variables within the Pugach/Blanton (2009) framework, are seen as central elements within and throughout the activity system; the dimensions were used to help understand each of the six parameters of practice as applied to the teacher education program from the viewpoint of collaborative teacher education. Therefore, the study used both activity systems theory and the collaborative teacher education program research framework to guide the development of rich description of how the teacher education program operates as a system. The resulting conceptual framework can be seen in Figure 3.4.

By developing analytic description of each of the parameters of practice within the activity system through the lens of the collaborative teacher education program dimensions, and considering both the espoused program design and the enactment of program, the operation of the program as a system of collaborative teacher education was illuminated. Further, tensions, harmonies, and cultural tools related to the program as an activity system of collaborative teacher education were identified which helped in overall analysis of program congruence.

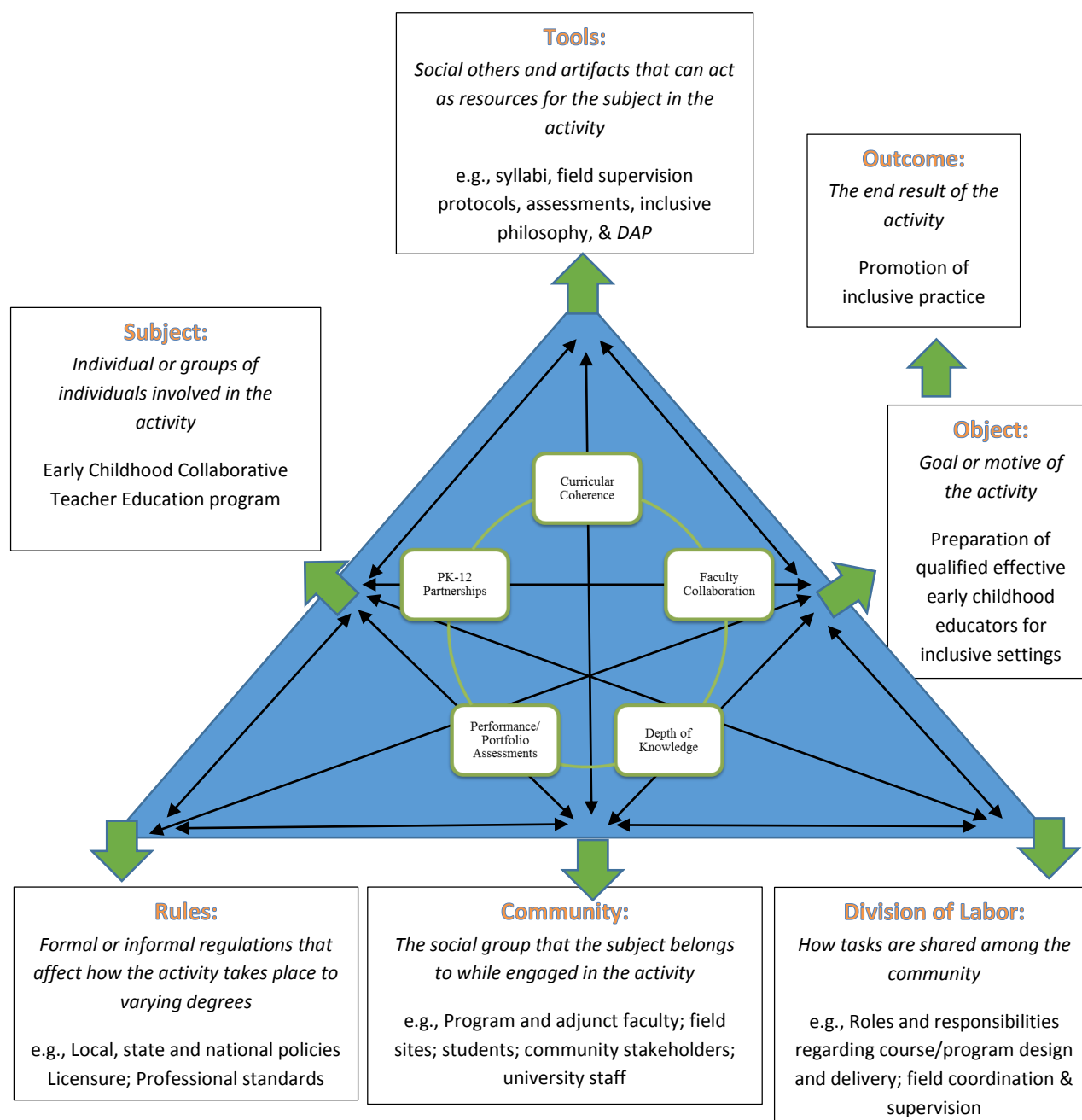


Figure 3.4. Conceptual Framework: A teacher education program as an activity system (Engeström, 1987; 1999; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) including the five collaborative teacher education program dimensions (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). The teacher education program as depicted as a system through CHAT and activity systems analysis. The subject of the system is the teacher education program. That program can be understood as a system through examination of six interacting parameters of practice (i.e., subject, object/outcome, tools, rules, community, and division of labor). Since this particular study is concerned with the function of a program from the perspective of collaboration teacher education, the five program dimensions derived from Pugach and Blanton (2009) are embedded as a lens through which to consider each of the parameters of practice.

As noted in chapter two, scholars have argued for the importance of program coherence for the effectiveness of teacher education programs. The conceptual framework helped to examine the coherence within the program as well as between the program and the broader literature on collaborative models of teacher education. Further analysis helped identify aspects relating to coherence observed within the enactment of the program as well. These findings will be discussed in chapters four and five.

The research design necessitated data generation across multiple sources, perspectives, and settings. Using the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, the case study was organized, as previously described in Figure 3.3, and data sources were identified. The following section will detail the data generation process

### **Data Generation.**

The study included the collection of a variety of data, which were grouped into the broad categories of participant perceptions, researcher observation, and documents. Throughout data collection, the researcher remained open to the data honoring the emergent design flexibility inherent to this interpretative study. This allowed the researcher to include data not previously identified that emerged as relevant in the course of the study. Data were organized throughout the study into what Patton (2002) calls the case record, which compiled and organized the case data into a comprehensive package. The case record was organized according to type of data source (e.g., faculty interviews, current student interviews, site observations, course delivery observations, documents pertaining to program, etc.). Each element of the research process was carefully documented chronologically as a means of recording an audit trail (Merriam, 2009) to ensure findings could be traced through the knowledge production process. The following

sections offer details pertaining to selection and collection within each of the categories of data: participant perceptions, observations, and document analysis.

**Participant perceptions.** Participant perceptions of the program design and enactment were obtained through formal interviews and informal communication with faculty, current students, and recent graduates. The interview process was guided by semi-structured interview protocols (see Appendix B-F) and a conversational tone was adopted in implementation with the purpose being to establish rapport and to produce knowledge regarding the case through the relationship and dialogue of the researcher and participants (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Interview questions were derived from the Pugach and Blanton (2009) research framework, particularly the descriptions provided of the five program dimensions presented as common study variables in research into collaborative models of teacher education. The semi-structured nature of the protocols helped focus the conversations on the dimensions of collaborative teacher education while allowing the interview to remain interactive and emergent. Further, ongoing informal communication both in person and via email with both program faculty members ensued throughout the study process.

Condensed field notes (Spradley, 1979:1980) were conducted during the interview process and during informal communication. The knowledge production process continued through expanded field notes, transcription, and analysis of the original interviews (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Expanded field notes (Spradley, 1979; 1980) were created as soon as possible after each interview or discussion in the form of entries in the researcher's reflective journal. These expanded field notes added details and allowed the analysis and interpretation to deepen through reflection (Janesick, 2011).

Individual interviews were targeted. However, due to preferences and concern for convenience of participants, two current students, and two graduates were interviewed in two joint interviews. Additionally, the initial interview of Gina and Mary was conducted jointly to maximize the initial process of social-construction of knowledge regarding the espoused program at the onset of the data collection period. All other interviews were individual meetings with each of the participants. Eleven of the eighteen total interviews were conducted in person and seven were conducted over the telephone. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to transform the data for further analysis. Transcriptions and associated questions, that had surfaced during the creation of expanded field notes and the transcription process, were sent via email to each participant for their review to allow an opportunity to clarify, correct, and/or elaborate on any content regarding accuracy. One individual provided minor clarification related to one transcript, which was accommodated and responses to questions received from participants were added to the researcher's reflective journal. The following sections will discuss specifics regarding interviews and will address observations.

*Interviews.* Therefore, a total of four formal interviews were conducted with program faculty and enhanced by ongoing communication. In addition to the initial formal joint interview and continuous informal communication, the faculty liaison was also formally interviewed independently on two occasions, and the other program faculty member was interviewed independently on one separate occasion. The two adjunct faculty who had agreed to participate, were each interviewed once. One individual met with me in person and the other spoke with me over the telephone. The retired faculty member who had been recruited was interviewed once over the telephone. In addition, while not formal interviews, after course delivery observation, informal debriefing conversations also took place with the instructors of those classes which



contributed to expanded field notes (Spradley, 1979; 1980). Each current student and graduate participant was formally interviewed once. A total of ten current students initially expressed interest and five total interviews were conducted of six current students, with two individuals being jointly interviewed due to scheduling needs and preferences of those individuals. All but one of these interviews was conducted in person. The fifth was conducted over the telephone. The seven graduates who agreed to participate were interviewed across six interviews with two individuals interviewed jointly. Three of these interviews were conducted in person and three were conducted via the telephone. Table 3.2 provides a summary of interview data sources.

Interviews were divided by purpose in that the initial joint interview with the program faculty and that of the former faculty member focused on the development, design and rationale of the program as a collaborative program, in other words the espoused program. Later interviews with program faculty and other participants allowed for clarification regarding the espoused program, but focused more on the enactment of the program. Interviews across participants as well as follow up informal communication allowed for continuous data collection and member checking until themes emerged and a point of saturation had been reached marked by the observance that further interviews and contact yielded little new information regarding those themes (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

***Researcher observation.*** Researcher observation also generated data. Merriam (2009) describes several stances to the relationship between the researcher and the participants or the observer and the observed. These range along a continuum of participation from the researcher being a complete participant of what is being observed to the researcher being a spectator

Table 3.2  
Interviews.

SOURCE TYPE Participant classification	Number and characteristics of Participants	Number of interviews	Approximate length of interview/audio recordings
Current Program Faculty	2 full time faculty members <i>1 tenure track, with program since 2010</i>  <i>1 Clinical faculty with program since 1993</i>	1 joint 3 individual  (Plus ongoing informal communication via in person discussion, phone, and email)	4 hours
Retired Faculty	1 retired faculty with program from 1990 - 2007	1 individual	1.5 hours
Adjunct Faculty	2 Adjunct faculty <i>1 long-term, SLP background</i> <i>1 last 2 years, OT &amp; ECSE background. Past graduate of the program &amp; currently serves as co- coordinator for practica experiences.</i>	2 individual	2.5 hours
Current Students	6 current students <i>4 in their last semester</i> <i>2 in first year of program</i>	4 individual 1 jointly	5.75 hours
Graduates	7 Graduates <i>6 from 2010</i> <i>1 from 2011</i>	5 individual 1 jointly	6.5
TOTALS Interviews	18 participants	18 interviews	20.25 hours

(Merriam, 2009). For the purposes of this study, the “observer as participant” stance (Merriam, 2009, p.124) was embraced to allow the observation of the program design and enactment to take precedence over any sort of participation. This also acknowledged that the presence and purpose of the researcher will be known to participants which in turn undoubtedly influenced the activities observed as believed through the interpretative, constructivist theoretical lens from which this study was conducted.

Observation targets included an array of program components to assist the researcher in constructing thick descriptions of the nature of program delivery format, content, and settings and to observe a holistic picture of the program. These included faculty/program meetings, course delivery, and site visitations at commonly used field sites with which the university had partnerships. Observation targeted faculty meetings that specifically pertained to program or course planning or overall program functioning. Only one such meeting was accessible during the data collection period and meeting notes were gathered pertaining to past meetings. Two traditional courses were in-session during the data collection period and two total class sessions (one of each class) were observed. Debriefing conversations ensued with the instructors after each observation, which contributed to expanded field notes in the researcher’s reflective journal. Online components of the two courses were also reviewed as part of document analysis, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Observational visits to three field sites commonly used for clinical aspects of the program were also conducted with each lasting approximately two hours. Site visits included observation as well as guided tours of the facilities and informal discussions with directors and other staff. The faculty liaison attended the site visitation at Site A and the other full time faculty member was present for a small portion of the observation at Site B. The observation at Site C was

independent of any university faculty and facilitated by a director of the program who was also a current student of the University Program.

Regarding selection of field sites for site visitation/observation, the two program faculty participants arranged for observations at three of the most commonly utilized community sites for practicum placements. These sites were chosen after collaborative discussion to ascertain the parameters of the study and selection was based partly on the fact that both were convenient and accessible due to the longstanding relationships between them and the faculty. Additionally, these sites were considered to be representative of a wide range of practicum experiences available to the program including elements described as both ideal and negative by the program faculty. Further, according to the program faculty all three sites were seen as demonstrating inclusive models closest to the desired or ideal model of the program relative to the greater early childhood landscape surrounding the University. The directors at the three sites all agreed to facilitate site visitations/observations. Details regarding these field sites will be presented in chapter five.

Detailed field notes during course delivery and field observations were completed in the form of anecdotal jottings to document the characteristics and activities observed during each observation. A semi-structured observation protocol (see Appendix A) was used to guide the data collection process during observations to capture elements relating to the five program dimensions of the Pugach and Blanton (2009) research framework. Initial field notes collected during field observations included anecdotal notes coupled with initial analysis and interpretation and provided condensed accounts of the observations (Spradley, 1980). Anecdotal notes and initial jottings were formally expanded (Spradley, 1979; 1980) immediately after each observation and continually throughout the research process, adding details and allowing the

analysis and interpretation to deepen through reflection (Janesick, 2011). These condensed and expanded field notes were entered into the researcher's reflective journal (Janesick, 2011). Table 3.3 contains a summary of observational data sources.

Table 3.3

## Observational Data Summary.

Observation Type	Number and characteristics of settings/individuals	Number of observations	Approximate length of observations
Field Site observations/tours	3 local sites	3	6 hours One, 2-hr observation/tour at each site
Field supervision discussion	1 faculty member/Field Supervisor 1 current student	30 min	½ hour
Course Delivery	2 courses, 1 session of each	2	7 hours
TOTAL		6	21 hours

**Documents.** Documents related to the design and enactment of the teacher education program were also collected and assisted in developing thick description of the espoused and enacted program. The term *documents* refers to a wide array of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study and research questions (Merriam, 2009). These were limited to records and documentation regarding the program that were available to the public, such as the mission statement and programs of study, as well as internal program documents made available to the researcher through collaboration with the research participants.

Selection of particular documents was concerned with those deemed most relevant to the research questions. Since the study was concerned with the functioning of the program as a system and specifically as a collaborative program, documents particularly related to overall program function (e.g., design, enactment) and collaboration (e.g., across ECE and ECSE, as well as with field sites) were targeted. Mining of document sources focused on those that reflected elements of the program design and enactment including: vision/mission statements; course sequence/program of study materials; course syllabi; accreditation documents; licensure requirements; and other pertinent information. Archives of program planning and development in the forms of documents and meeting meetings were gathered as well with the assistance of participant faculty. The authenticity and accuracy of documents selected for use in the study was pursued through discussion with the program faculty in an effort to address inherent limitations of using documents as data in research.

A total of 87 documents were selected for review within this study. This included course syllabi; online course shells; the program student handbook, the program practicum handbooks (4 total), practicum supervision agreement; practicum observation protocol; program marketing materials (website and brochures); published articles by program faculty related to the program;

program planning meeting minutes; faculty workload documentation; faculty and adjunct faculty curriculum vitae; programs of study; state licensure standards; public materials regarding the early childhood education context within which the University functions (i.e., local and state preschool programs, State Early Learning Framework, State Early Learning Professional Development Plan, State Early Intervention program brochure); and student exit surveys. Table 3.4 displays a summary of documents collected and analyzed.

**Researcher's reflective journal.** A researcher's reflective journal was completed throughout the research process to carefully document a log of the research timeline and events. It also served to support the research process as a whole (Janesick, 2011), helping me recognize the researcher as the primary instrument of inquiry. This writing process served to aid in reflecting further on data and coming to an awareness of participant and researcher perspectives. This journal included entries during data collection that highlighted my ongoing thought process and included condensed and expanded field notes from observations, interviews, and document analysis. Initial entries, or condensed field notes were completed in the context of data collection and consisted of anecdotal notes coupled with initial reflections of analysis and interpretation. As noted previously, expanded field notes (Spradley, 1979; 1980) were completed as soon as possible after data collection and added details as well as additional reflection and analysis of the data to the condensed record. Throughout, care was taken to highlight aspects of the program that directly related to research questions as well as to conceptual framework guiding the study. In sum, the researcher's reflective journal provided a data set of the researchers' reflections on the research act and served to address the researcher's self as the research instrument (Janesick, 2011).

Table 3.4.

Document Summary		Quantity
Document/Category	Types	
Public Program Documents	University, School of Edu., and Program websites.	3
	Program Brochure	1
	Job posting for lecturer in the program	1
	ECE Application Checklist	1
Internal Program Documents	Program Planning Meeting Minutes;	13
	Faculty Work Distribution (Program Coordination Responsibilities & Practicum Coordination Tasks)	2
	Materials for orienting adjunct faculty	1
	Accreditation Reports and materials	6
Program Delivery Materials	ECE Student Handbook	1
	Programs of Study	4
	Practicum Handbooks	4
	Practicum supervision agreement;	1
	Field Supervisor and Candidate Responsibilities	1
	Practicum observation protocol;	1
	Course Syllabi	13
	Online Course Shells	5
Participant Data	Faculty Vitae	3
	Student Exit Surveys	4
	Graduate Employment data	1
	Current demographic data	1
Local and State Level Context	Local and state websites (general context).	1
	State Licensure Website	1
	Early Childhood Special Education Specialist Licensing Matrix	1
	Websites pertaining to the local and state preschool programs.	
	Websites pertaining to:	2
	State Early Learning Framework;	
	State Early Learning Professional Development Plan;	1
	State Early Intervention program brochure	1
	Practicum sites visited	1
		3
Field site Documents	Site brochures	3
	Site Websites	3
Faculty Publications	1994 (Original design of collaborative program)	3
	2007 (K-12 teacher education collaborative program development)	
	2008 (Performance Based Assessments in the ECE program)	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>87</b>



## Data Analysis

Data analysis was initiated simultaneously with data collection and occurred continuously throughout the study to support an inductive approach and the emergent study design relevant to naturalistic, qualitative inquiry. Qualitative analysis and data management was facilitated through the use of Atlas.ti®, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. The next section will provide a general discussion of Wolcott's (1994) approach to data analysis and how elements of this approach were used in this study across three phases of data collection and analysis. Then, data analysis employed pertaining to each type of data collected in this study will be detailed followed by a discussion of how a focus on emic and etic perspectives transcended all types and phases. Finally, a presentation of details pertaining to each of the three phases within this study will follow

**Wolcott's approach to data analysis.** Wolcott (1994) suggests that there are three major ways qualitative researchers “do something” (p. 10) with descriptive data collected from participant observation, interviewing, and studying materials prepared by others. These are describe, analyze, and interpret. Wolcott (1994) defines these as follows:

*Description* addresses the question, “What is going on here?” Data consist of observations made by the researcher and/or reported to the researcher by others.

*Analysis* addresses the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships among them – in short, how things work. In terms of stated objectives, analysis also may be employed evaluatively to address questions of why a system is not working or how it might be made to work “better.”

*Interpretation* addresses processual questions of meaning and contexts: “How does it all mean?” “What is to be made of it all?” (p. 12, emphasis in original)

Wolcott (1994) presents several ways to organize and present *description* within qualitative research. The method of relevance to this study is what Wolcott calls “following an analytic framework” (p. 20-21). Adopting an analytic framework imposes structure on the description and helps ensure the description includes the details necessary for subsequent analysis. As described in the conceptual framework, CHAT/activity systems analysis and the Pugach/Blanton (2009) research framework were combined and served as the analytic framework in this study. Further, the use of the analytic framework described in the conceptual framework, recognized the importance of a common language within research into collaborative models of teacher education to propel advancement of understanding within and across programs in an effort to further related reform efforts. Organizing the descriptive analysis in this way supported later interpretation of results, which will be described in chapter six.

In *analysis* from this approach, the goal is to “flesh out whatever analytical framework guided the data collection” (p. 33). Alignment to the suggested research framework helped to structure the thick description of the espoused and enacted program and supported subsequent analysis of congruence within the program. A second approach to *analysis* posited by Wolcott (1994) is that of contextualizing in a broader analytical framework. This was utilized when the descriptions of the program were compared to the Pugach/Blanton (2009) research framework and to the literature on collaborative models of teacher education. Finally, *interpretation* was approached through what Wolcott (1994) calls, “Mark and then make the leap” (p. 40). Review of the study findings coupled with revisiting the literature helped identify implications for early childhood collaborative teacher education practice and reform efforts garnered through this analysis of one program. Further, this inductive reasoning led to inferences regarding needs for future research. Therefore, remaining and developed questions were explored.

**Analysis of observational and interview data.** As noted, the analysis process began concurrently with data collection in the form of condensed and expanded field notes and the researcher's reflective journal. As interviews were conducted, transcription was also initiated. Completed transcriptions of interviews were sent to individual participants for their review in an effort to invite clarification, expansion, and correction. Transcriptions and some expanded field notes were transferred to Atlas.ti®, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, to assist in analysis and data management. The data were analyzed through the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in search of patterns in the data. Open and descriptive coding (Saldana, 2009) was initially used to generate a preliminary set of 163 codes, which were further analyzed into 29 categories using focused coding (Saldana, 2009). The analytical framework (i.e., the conceptual framework) was then applied through selective or theoretical coding (Saldana, 2009; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) to compare and organize these categories according to the elements of the conceptual framework. In particular, the parameters of practice derived from CHAT/activity systems analysis as well as the five program dimensions from Pugach/Blanton (2009) were used as themes to further organize the data as a means to generate the thick description of the program. Categories from the initial open coding process that did not initially appear to align with the elements of the framework were investigated further as potential additional parameters or dimensions. Analytical memos (Saldana, 2009) were developed throughout the initial and secondary coding processes as a means of extending the researcher's reflective journal process and assuring the inclusion of all condensed and expanded field notes in the overall analysis.

**Analysis of documents.** Miller (1997) asserts that documents or texts are “one aspect of the sense making activities through which we reconstruct, sustain, contest, and change our sense

of social reality” (p 498). In this way, analysis of program documents assisted in the generation of the social reality that is the espoused and enacted design of the Program. Documents were examined in this study through a form of content analysis described by Merriam (2009) and Patton (2002). For the purposes of this study, documents were also transferred to Atlas.ti®. content analysis was conducted deductively using the conceptual framework as an analytical guide. In other words, as in the application of the analytical framework to the observational and interview data above, the particular components of the conceptual framework (i.e., CHAT parameters of practice and five program dimensions of collaborative teacher education) were used as a priori as themes or categories through which to examine the data. However, inductive analysis (Patton, 2002) occurred concurrently to ensure the possibility of the emergence of additional themes as the analysis progressed.

### **Pulling it All Together: The Research Process**

The research process proceeded through three phases of data collection and analysis from a fluid and iterative approach. Phase 1 was concerned with the first subquestion, which was: How and why does an early childhood teacher education program articulate/define the intentions, philosophies and assumptions driving the program? Additionally, there were two related questions to be addressed in this phase. These were: 1) How do the philosophies, intentions, and assumptions inform the program structure content, field sites, sequence, delivery, etc.?; and 2) To what extent do the components represent program congruence (Darling-Hammond, 2006b)? This phase was considered to be characteristic of Wolcott’s (1994) description. The focus within Phase 1 was on the development of thick description of the espoused design of the program- Additionally, the conceptual framework provided a structure to generate thick description pertaining to the *subject*, *object*, and *outcome* of the program.

Phase 2 described the enactment of the program through researcher observation coupled with participant perspectives. As noted, interviews were designed to ascertain the perceptions of participants (faculty, candidates, and graduates) of the design and enactment of the program using the definition of the 5 program dimensions within the research framework on collaborative models of teacher education provided by Pugach and Blanton (2009). Therefore, phase 2 addressed the second sub-question which was: How do faculty enact the philosophy and approach of an early childhood teacher education program. Further, this phase identified the defining characteristics of this enactment and generated thick description of the perceptions of participants of the enactment broadly as well as pertaining to the program's ability to promote inclusive practice. Like phase 1, this phase was considered to be characterized as description per Wolcott (1994). The thick description generated in this phase was guided by the analytic framework (Wolcott, 1994) as represented by the conceptual framework as in phase 1, and developed understandings of the remaining parameters of practice (i.e., tools, rules, community, and division of practice).

The third and final stage consisted of two steps. First, the thick descriptions developed in phase 1 (espoused program) and phase 2 (enacted program) were compiled to create a complete description of the program as an activity system. Issues of congruence and harmony from the perspective of the conceptual framework including across the espoused and enacted aspects of the program were examined to identify elements of congruence or harmony as well as "tensions" (Engeström, 1987; 1999). This represented analysis per Wolcott (1994) and contextualized the case in the broader analytical framework (Wolcott, 1994). The analysis turned to theory as suggested by Wolcott (1994), namely activity theory and a theory of collaborative teacher education represented by the Pugach/Blanton (2009) framework and other related literature to

contribute to the production of a rich description of the various components of the case and how they work together as a system (Patton, 2002). Further, analysis investigated the congruence between the program and the current literature base pertaining to collaborative models of teacher education.

Interpretation as described by Wolcott (1994) characterized the second step of phase three and implications to the broader context of teacher education and teacher education reform were identified. Therefore the overall purpose of this study was addressed. Inferences were outlined from the findings through inductive reasoning (Wolcott, 1994). Interpretation also analyzed the interpretive process itself and interpreted the analysis process employed with the data (Wolcott, 1994). These actions led to identification of limitations of the study, needs for future research, and implications for the field. The overall research process is depicted in Figure 3.5.

### **Issues of Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Issues of credibility and trustworthiness of the data and analysis within the qualitative paradigm are related to the level of rigor employed in the research methods, data collection, and the quality of the researcher (Patton, 2002). In an effort to document and ensure rigor, an audit trail was carefully documented to provide a chronological log of the research endeavor and to ensure that the process leading to findings was transparent (Merriam, 2009). The reflective journal employed throughout the study provided documentation of the evolution of data collection and analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As noted previously, the journal included condensed and expanded field notes constructed during the data collection period as well as researcher reflections throughout the study that highlighted my ongoing thought process and

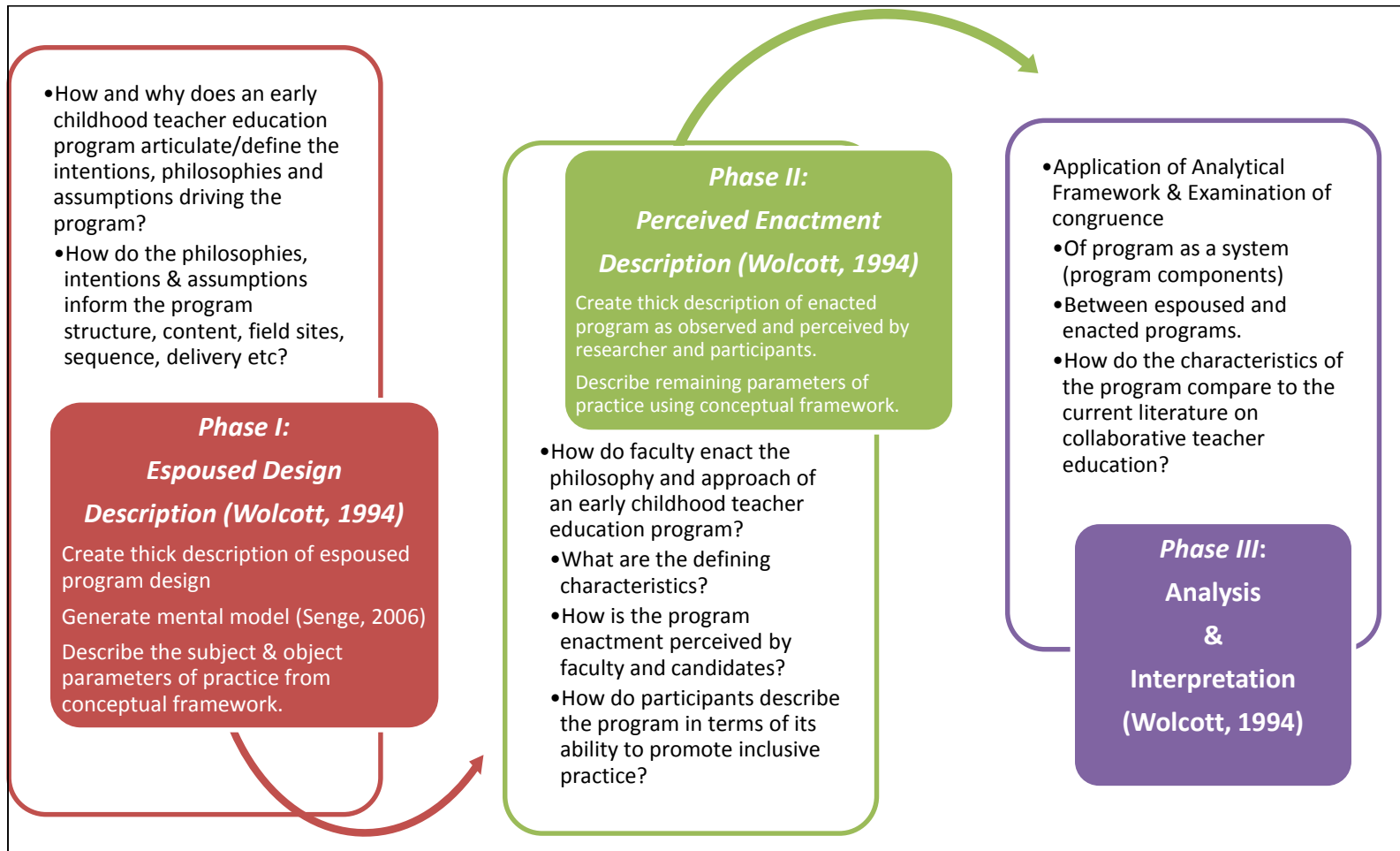


Figure 3.5. Visual depiction of the research process. This visual display represents the three phases within this research endeavor. The first phase being “Espoused Design” and the second phase being called “Perceived Enactment.” Both of these phases are characterized as descriptive in analytic focus (Wolcott, 1994). The third and final phase is “Analysis.” and is comprised of two steps, the first being characterized as analysis (Wolcott, 1994) where comparisons are made and the second being interpretation (Wolcott, 1994) where implications are explored.

employment of the constant comparative method of data analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and application of the analytical framework (Wolcott, 1994).

Credibility and trustworthiness of the data were also addressed through the use of triangulation (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Triangulation is a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the case is perceived (Stake, 2005). Triangulation occurred through the following processes. First, the observations and interviews of candidates, faculty, and graduates were combined with researcher observation to develop the description of the program as an activity system. By doing so, the multiple perspectives of all the stakeholders were honored and represented. Further, triangulation across the multiple sources of data (observations, interviews, documents) allowed me to check for consistency across sources, which has been identified as a support to credibility within qualitative research (Patton, 2002).

Member checks or participant review of data in raw form as well as during and after it was analyzed also helped ensure that the results describe their experiences and perspectives accurately (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). Formal follow up interviews coupled with ongoing informal communication with participants provided an opportunity to clarify interpretations and lack of understanding. Therefore, both served as a means to engage in member validation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) to ensure trustworthiness of the data and initial analysis. It also provided a means to search for alternative explanations (Merriam, 2009) and disconfirming evidence (Patton, 2002). Interviews were also adapted as the study progressed and as initial interpretations were developed, questions were generated and added to subsequent follow up interviews and/or discussions. Further, transcriptions were sent in raw form to interview participants to allow for opportunities to clarify or expand on the data. Clarification regarding names of an individual discussed and a textbook was requested by one participant and changes were made to the



transcription. All other participants who responded indicated that transcriptions were accurate and complete. Finally, as analysis led to descriptions of the program and program elements, these descriptions were shared with participants on an ongoing basis via email and phone communication to solicit feedback, clarify, expand, and correct any inconsistencies or inaccuracies. A final list of key tenets and characteristics generated from the data to describe the overall program was emailed to all program and adjunct faculty who had participated to garner further feedback. Gina, the only participant who responded, added elements of clarification and indicated that the list was an “excellent summary” of the program and our collaborative inquiry.

In addition to the triangulation methods described above, expert review (Patton, 2002) also provided a form of triangulation and addressed the credibility of the researcher as instrument. This was in the form of review and oversight of the research process by the examining doctoral committee members, specifically the two co-major professors. Finally, throughout the analysis process, I took care to search for rival and confirming cases in the search for patterns in the data (Patton, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Negative instances were examined to ascertain how they influenced analysis as well.

### **Limitations**

The data generation period for this study spanned nine months and consisted of extensive conversations with the faculty liaison and collection of documents prior to the on-site two – week observation period. Further ongoing communication with the study participants continued to occur after the onsite engagement through the data analysis process. Prolonged field engagement is seen as necessary to produce a rich description of the case (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 2009). The limited on-site engagement posed a potential limitation and was addressed through careful attention to

issues of credibility, particularly through ongoing member validation with participants as data generation and analysis ensued, the use and attention to the audit trail, and triangulation as previously mentioned.

Interview data were somewhat limited due to the fact that only two persons serve as full-time faculty; however, both provided extensive discussion. I was able to contact all current students, but access to graduates was limited to those nominated by the faculty participants. The same was true of adjunct faculty and field sites. This potential limitation was addressed as selection of potential candidates evolved out of my collaborative discussions with the study liaison and through opportunity sampling (Patton, 2002) in the case of graduates when meeting graduates in the field. Additionally, I was able to obtain contact information for all graduates from one calendar year and subsequently recruitment was successfully attempted for that entire groups which broadened the potential pool of graduate participants.

From the onset of this work, I took great care to establish rapport with study participants. Rapport refers to the establishment of a harmonious relationship between the researcher and participant, and the process of building rapport is situation and culturally specific (Spradley, 1979). Therefore, I worked to be observant and to demonstrate transparency, lack of judgment, confidentiality, and respect in the hope that participants would feel comfortable to engage fully and openly with me. By working to establish a sense of trust, I hoped to allow for a free-flow of information in support of the research process (Spradley, 1979). I feel that the vast majority of my efforts were successful and my perception is that participants came to enjoy our discussions regarding the program and their experiences. Attention to the developing relationships also afforded an opportunity to stay vigilant of issues of emic and etic perspectives as well as to support collaboration with the participants as co-researchers and opportunities to disclose and

explain my own purpose and role (Patton, 2002). Further, the ongoing relationships provided a means to search for confirming and disconfirming evidence (Patton, 2002) as well as alternative explanations (Merriam, 2009) as findings emerged through initial and later analysis.

It should be noted, that an additional limitation existed in that Gina served as the primary conduit through which I gained access to the program and therefore as a gatekeeper (Wanat, 2008) through which I gained access to the program. Therefore, it is possible that the nature of that access was influenced by her perspective. However, access to other perspectives seemed to be more hindered by the variable willingness of other participants to fully participate than by any issue with initial access to participants, and further in terms of other faculty, it appeared that the facilitation of the study was considered by all to be the responsibility of Gina. Throughout, Gina remained quite open and forthcoming with information about all aspects, including ongoing challenges, of the program.

Other voices are missing from this study. For example, formal interviews did not occur of cooperating teachers nor of individuals who serve the program solely as field supervisors. However, two participants, Mary and Abby, maintain multifaceted roles across course delivery, practicum coordination, and field supervision. Therefore their interviews contained information from the perspective of the role of field supervisor. In terms of site supervisors, conversations with site directors during the three site observations included discussions regarding the relationships between the sites and the Program as well as the nature of the supervision and mentoring of the candidates. Through these discussions I was able to gather some information regarding the nature of a candidate's experience within each site. I also discussed support and mentorship as well as the roles and responsibilities of field and site supervisors with all participants. Additional missing voices include members of the greater school of education,

administration, and University community. Further, voices from families of children who engage with candidates and graduates of the program were not included. While these voices could certainly aid in deeper understanding of the program, the central research question pertained to the inner workings of the program as a system. Therefore, the voices that are included, those who are deeply engaged in the program, were seen as the most salient.

The selection of field observation sites also posed a potential limitation for two reasons. One, access to sites was limited to those selected by the faculty participants, which might not have provided an opportunity to understand the full range of field sites employed by the program as selection criteria may have reflected the personal bias of the faculty. This was addressed through the process of using follow up informal communication with the faculty to contextualize the sites observed within the broader early childhood landscape as well as to compare and contrast the sites with other field sites used by the program. The second limitation related to these observations is related to the fact that a faculty participant was present for the totality of one of the observations. This may have altered how the program director presented and/or described the programs as well as their relationship with the faculty and University. This was addressed through related follow up interview with a staff member of that program who also served as a graduate participant. A faculty participant was also present for a small portion of a second field site observation. However, while her presence on site may have influenced the presentation of the program, I joined two parents for a tour of the facility, which constituted the majority of the visit and did not include the faculty member. Therefore, I was afforded a view of the program from that perspective. Finally, analysis of the nature of the field sites was drawn not just from the observational data but also from publicly available materials such as the program websites. Adjunct, current student, and graduate interview data also included descriptions of

filed sites from a wide range of perspective and personal experiences. Therefore, a broader understanding of the field sites used by the program was possible.

A limitation related to selection of the particular early childhood teacher education program chosen for the study also became apparent after the study commenced. Despite the fact that the site met the selection criteria, the nature of implementation and interpretation of collaborative teacher education as well as the program's issues with capacity to fully implement the program as espoused, impacted what was able to be learned from the study. This was further impacted by the fact that the program is a graduate level program, and therefore not a traditional initial teacher education program. This limited the study's ability to provide insight to broader issues of collaborative teacher education.

Finally, the selected data collection strategies also pose limitations. First, interviews by nature could have led to distortions of the data due to participant bias, researcher bias, anxiety, or politics (Patton, 2002). Observations provided a comparison to look for consistency and credibility of interview data through triangulation as described above, but were inherently limited themselves. For example, my presence likely altered the environment. Documents also provide a means of triangulating data, but present limitations as well in that they may be inaccurate or incomplete (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). As noted above, authenticity and accuracy of documents were investigated through collaborative discussion with program faculty throughout the study. Access to documents as well as to an understanding of how and why particular documents were produced can also pose specific challenges in research (Patton, 2002). Linking documents to other sources of data, including interviews and observations can also be problematic (Patton, 2002). Participant involvement in selection and triangulation across data types and sources assisted in addressing and minimizing these limitations.

## **Personal Perspective**

In designing a research endeavor it is also imperative to examine the personal perspective of the researcher, as that will contribute to developing the design process as well as the implementation of the study. As noted above, individual researchers are often committed to a particular paradigm and/or method that inevitably shapes the particular questions they ask and the ways they approach any given inquiry. Through self-reflection a researcher can ascertain their particular perspectives, values, and bias and better understand their personal commitments, biases, and preferences pertaining to any research endeavor.

As with any individual, my past personal and professional experiences shape my views on the world, truth, and research. These beliefs and values are fueled by my identities as an early childhood special educator and niece of an individual with significant disabilities along with the experiences, both personal and professional, that those identities have afforded me. I am concerned with the well-being, inclusion, and value of individuals with disabilities both in educational settings and social communities. I strive to work from a social justice perspective that is concerned with not only professional and ecological aspects of quality education and life for individuals with disabilities but also in the voice and perspectives of those individuals themselves.

Professionally, as an early childhood special educator, I was trained in the traditional theories of Vygotsky's (1978) Social-Constructivism and Piaget's (1963) Constructivism, as well as Skinner's (1953) behaviorism, and Bandura's (1969) Cognitive-Behaviorism. As described in chapter two, early childhood special education has historical roots in the special education field (Safford et al., 1994) but because it has also adopted blended instructional methodology in accord with the early childhood education field (Wolery & Bredekamp, 1994), early childhood

special education practices draw from both professional literatures and research (Odom & Wolery, 2003).

While I was not prepared in a blended or collaborative teacher education program, my perception of my personal preparation as an early childhood special educator is reflective of both fields. I believe this contributes to shaping my approach to research, and to this study in particular, in many ways. Most importantly, my preparation across theoretical and discipline boundaries has served to provide a lens through which I interpret reality that lends itself to seeing comprehensive, complex, and ecological aspects of situations. Due to my own personal experience, I am interested in the nature of teacher preparation models that work across these same boundaries.

I have worked in early intervention and inclusive early childhood educational contexts in many roles. Some include early childhood special educator, early interventionist, consultant, parent education provider, classroom teacher, service coordinator, and faculty member. Perhaps most importantly, I have served as a member of dynamic inter- and trans-disciplinary teams with a wide variety of other professionals, as well as children and families in urban and rural settings. Interdisciplinary teaming is identified as the core element of blended teacher preparation (Mellin & Winton, 2003; Miller & Stayton, 1998, 2006). My personal positive experiences with multiple roles and as a member of inter and trans-disciplinary teams taught me the value of collaborative, inter- and trans-disciplinary work, and undoubtedly influences my work throughout this study as it has been a central driving force in my personal interest in collaborative models of teacher education.

I believe strongly in the social construction of reality and of knowledge and that teaching and learning are interactive, individual, and highly contextual processes. In my experience,

interdisciplinary teaming has supported the social-construction of knowledge around learning as well as around supporting children and families. Inter- and trans-disciplinary work affords individuals the opportunities to broaden their skill sets and knowledge base as they are exposed to a wider range of information within a team of individuals from varying backgrounds and theoretical foundations. This, I believe, occurs through modeling and discourse both of which are aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) social-constructivism and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. These two theories form the primary foundation of my own theoretical lens.

In terms of research paradigms, I recognize the highly contextual aspects of phenomena and believe in the importance of gathering multiple perspectives to understand experience. I am interested in the construction of knowledge within specific social contexts and how we make meaning of events as well as learn from them as individuals and as interactive groups.

Accordingly, my value of the contextual aspects of understanding and development is also highly influenced by ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Taken together, these experiences and values create my personal ontology, which is marked by acknowledgment of multiple realities that reflect relativism and an epistemology that can be described as one that embraces subjectivity. These qualities draw me to a naturalistic research paradigm, and specifically to constructivism, where local and multiple realities are constructed and interpreted (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Embracing a constructivist stance, I viewed myself as a participant in this research and recognized that my presence and subjective bias will influence all stages of the research endeavor. I saw myself, the researcher, as the primary instrument of the research process and recognized that my personal interpretation was the conduit through which knowledge of the phenomenon was achieved. Through my initial conversation with Gina, she expressed interest in



the study and expressed that she felt it would be of benefit to the program itself. The study was therefore supported by the selection of a program that not only met the selection criteria but which with faculty who were also interested and open to engaged, collaborative participation.

Early on, I became aware of potential researcher bias. First, as someone with an early childhood special education background, and therefore more personally familiar with related preparation than that of early childhood education, I realized that I may be more easily aware of early childhood special education aspects of the preparation program. Further, as someone who believes in and values collaborative models of teacher education, I recognized that I might be drawn to stories of success and would need to be sure to look at the program in a balanced way in order to capture both strengths and challenges and stay true to the analytical framework I adopted through the conceptual framework guiding this study. I made a determination to continually explore these potential biases and look for others as I continued in an effort to be open to how they may have influenced my data collection and interpretation.

## Chapter 4

### **How Can the Program be Characterized and What Does it Try to Achieve?**

Chapters four and five present this case study of the collaborative early childhood teacher education program introduced in chapter three. The presentation of the case is comprised of analytic description organized around the parameters of practice derived from activity theory (Engeström, 1987; 1999; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010) using the Pugach/Blanton (2009) dimensions of collaborative teacher education as a framework of understanding. While this arrangement will discuss each parameter in a separate section, all are highly influenced by the others in a nonlinear fashion. Therefore, parameters interact with and complement each other to complete the full description of the program. It is within these interactions and influences that elements of harmony and tension exist for the program. These are key features of the operation of the program as a system and will be discussed in chapter six. Chapter four provides thick description of the *subject*, *object*, and *outcome* parameters which characterize the program and its core goals and outcomes.

### **The Program as the Subject**

To begin presentation of the case, the program must be characterized as a *subject* within an activity system. Per activity theory (Engeström, 1987; 1999), the *subject* of an activity system is defined as the individual, the group of individuals, or the organization involved in the activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The program exists within a University which in turn is situated within its greater community and state. First, the university and the surrounding community will be

described followed by details pertaining to the School of Education within which the program operates. Finally, the program itself will be described.

**The university and surrounding community.** The University is a large, urban research university located in the southwest region of the United States. The University serves a diverse, non-traditional student population, with more than one-third of undergraduates being first-generation students, one-third being students of color, and also including international students from around the world (University website, 2008). The community surrounding the university can be characterized as a large, urban metropolitan area. It is the largest city in the state with a rapidly diversifying population currently estimated at 2.88 million for the greater metropolitan area. Of that population, 66.6% are white, 4.9% are African American, 0.5% are Native American or Alaska native, 3.8% are Asian, 22.1% are Hispanic or Latino, and 2.0% are two or more ethnicities.

Gina and Mary helped characterize the broader early childhood education context within which the program operates by describing the nature of local and state early childhood education settings in regards to the inclusion of children with disabilities. They described the preschool context as variable in terms of the quality of inclusive practice but marked by progress toward more inclusive options both in the number of inclusive programs and in the quality of practice within respective programs. One reason attributed to this increase in inclusive options was the onset of state and local preschool programs available to children considered to be at risk or to have disabilities. These preschool programs were described as similar to Head Start Programs with the primary population within those programs considered “at risk.” Gina added that children seen as typically developing can attend with tuition. This demographic composition was seen as complicating inclusive practice and definition in these settings. Also, while 4-year-old

kindergarten or other preschool programs through the school districts are not common in the state, Gina reported that some districts do offer inclusive preschool options.

Despite the presence of inclusive options, the nature of inclusion in many regional settings is often defined simply by the presence of children with and without disabilities and proportions of children with disabilities are often higher than would occur naturally. Researcher observations of practicum sites and interviews with other participants confirmed this. For example, two of the three sites visited indicated proportions of approximately 50% children with disabilities and 50% without. Debate surrounding the definition of quality inclusion has long focused on the ratio of children with and without special needs (Odom, 2000). Some definitions of inclusion call for a ratio reflecting that of the natural population and others describing quality, meaningful inclusion in settings where 30% of the population have disabilities (Odom, 2000). Odom (2000) asserts that while many professionals agree that the central dimension of inclusion is that children with disabilities are cared for and educated as members of the same setting as typically developing children, others stress that there needs to be a critical mass of typically developing children in order to make the classroom something different from a traditional special education classroom.

The broader PK-12 educational context was also described as variable in regards to inclusive practice. Gina shared that in her experience most children go to their neighborhood schools and only a few places separate children with special needs based on disability label or category. There is also a lottery or choice program available. In terms of primary education, both Mary and Gina indicated that there are very few examples of what they would call quality inclusion and that service delivery often employs "pull out" models and some instances of "push

in” models.” Gina shared this has made finding quality inclusive settings for practicum “nearly impossible.”

**The school of education.** The early childhood teacher education program is situated within a college of education and human development. Associated teacher education programs prepare candidates in general and special education for elementary and secondary settings. The K-12 teacher education program at the university has been focused on clinically rich teacher education for some time. It embraces a professional development school model and currently partners with more than 20 schools in several metropolitan school districts which serve students from ethnically diverse and lower economic backgrounds (University website, 2008). In a 2007 publication, members of the K-12 faculty program expressed a strong emphasis on urban, public school education and declared a teacher education structure designed to support simultaneous renewal of the K-12 education and that of teacher education.

Further, the K-12 program embraces what appears to be an integrated program design (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) across general and special education as a dual certification option exists as one option for candidates should they choose to complete additional coursework in special education. This integrated design was first pursued in response to state licensure changes in 2000 which called for performance-based assessment, an increase in required field hours, and other changes (Faculty publication, 2007). Of interest in relation to the wide nomenclature used to describe collaborative models of teacher education, that program is described as “merged” and “infused” within this publication and on the University website, not as integrated (2008). Further work to redesign the K-12 teacher education programs was supported through a 325T grant starting in 2007 (TADNET.org) from the Office of Special Education Program (OSEP), a grant program described in chapter two. The focus of that work was on integrating content and

learning experiences that support the needs of students with high-incidence disabilities who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse (TADNET.org).

**The early childhood teacher education program.** The early childhood teacher education program is currently a graduate level teacher education program. While the University does not offer an undergraduate program in ECE or ECSE at this time, Gina and Mary shared that development of such a program is underway. This new program is slated to be collaborative in the sense that content from both ECE and ECSE will be included in a blended approach. However, in terms of outcomes, it will only focus on ECE and prepare candidates for a bachelor's degree in ECE coupled with an initial state ECE teaching license. Gina shared that the new program is intended to serve as a feeder program for the existing graduate level ECE/ECSE program. The current graduate program has an online option that is cohort based and reserved for candidates who live more than 60 miles from the campus. This is separate from the main, on-campus, traditional model that is not cohort based, meaning that it accepts new students each semester. This study focused on the traditional model. Demographics of the candidate population will be discussed followed by an overview of the program's structure.

**Demographics.** The traditional program currently (Spring 2013) has 170 candidates and graduates approximately 20 candidates each year. Mary shared that for any given semester there are approximately 30 -35 candidates in the four practica. Lecture courses were observed to include approximately 25-30 candidates each. According to Mary and Gina, most of the candidates are working full time in various early childhood roles and settings. Given the graduate nature of the program, most candidates enter the program in pursuit of an ECSE license and/or to advance their ECE careers into leadership roles such as administration or community college instruction. Many enter the program on temporary teaching licenses, having already secured

employment in ECSE. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 display recent demographics of the candidate population across both the traditional and online program structures including age, gender, and ethnicity.

Table 4.1

Candidate Demographics: Gender by age. NOTE. Approximately 24 of the total candidate population are enrolled in the online version of the program.

Gender	Fall 2011					Fall 2012				
	Enrolled	Mean Age	Median Age	Min Age	Max Age	Enrolled	Mean Age	Median Age	Min Age	Max Age
Female	166	32	29	22	64	188	35	32	23	65
Male	5	30	28	25	40	6	30	29	25	41
Grand Total	171	32	29	22	64	194	34	32	23	65

Table 4.2

Candidate Demographics: Ethnicity by age. NOTE. Approximately 24 of the total candidate population are enrolled in the online version of the program.

Ethnicity	Fall 2011					Fall 2012				
	Enrolled	Mean Age	Median Age	Min Age	Max Age	Enrolled	Mean Age	Median Age	Min Age	Max Age
American Indian						2	28	28	28	28
Asian	4	32	32	28	36	2	36	35.5	29	42
Black	3	32	34	28	34	1	28	28	28	28
Hispanic	11	35	31	22	57	13	35	32	23	58
International	7	27	27	25	34	5	27	28	24	29
Unknown	33	31	29	26	54	37	32	30	24	55
White	113	33	29	23	64	134	36	33	23	65
Grand Total	171	32	29	22	64	194	34	32	23	65

As can be seen in the tables, the majority of the candidates enrolled are white and female demonstrating a common characteristic in teacher populations (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005a). This is of particular interest given the increasing aspects of diversity seen in children and families. While some studies have shown teacher gender to not be significantly related to student achievement, research on the impact of race and ethnicity have mixed findings (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005b). As noted in chapter two, some scholars assert that cultural differences are at play

in systemic issues such as overrepresentation of minorities in special education (Artiles, 2003; Delpit, 2006; Harry & Klingner, 2006).

***Program Structure.*** The Program is a graduate level teacher education program that tailored to individuals who are currently working full time. Therefore, the Program employs a delivery format including night and weekend classes with a traditional lecture format. These are supported with online course components. The Program also embraces a commitment to individualization for candidates and includes five outcome options in terms of degrees and teaching license. These include MA in ECE only, ECSE license only, ECSE endorsement only, MA in ECE and Licensure in ECSE; and MA in ECE and endorsement in ECSE. Several areas of specialization have also been developed. These are optional aspects beyond the scope of the program. However, their presence does serve to enhance the program options for candidates. Some candidates may choose to use a related course as an elective while others take enough additional courses to obtain additional certification. Certification options include: Early Childhood Coaching, Early Childhood Leadership, Infant Toddler Autism, Applied Behavior Analysis, and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Review of the program handbook revealed that the program has five different outcome options relating to whether a candidate pursues a Master's Degree in ECE, an ECSE license, an ECSE endorsement, or the Master's degree in ECE with either the ECSE license or endorsement. Follow up discussion with Gina and Mary confirmed these. Gina and Mary indicated that approximately 70% of the teacher candidates pursue the dual program, resulting in both the master's degree in ECE and a license or endorsement in ECSE. They also shared that they encourage candidates to pursue the dual program.



While these various outcome options exist and graduates fill a variety of roles across a variety of settings, review of the associated programs of study, coupled with interview data from discussions with the core faculty, current students, and graduates, confirmed that each program of study consists of coursework that is common to all candidates. This represents a core curriculum that is designed to include knowledge, skills, and dispositions from both fields. Candidates pursuing both the MA in ECE and the ECSE license take a total of 13 classes and three practica. Those pursuing the MA alone take all but two of those same classes. Those pursuing the ECSE license only complete all but two of the same classes, and those pursuing the endorsement only, take 6 of the 13 courses (ECE Student Handbook, 2012). The related programs of study can be found in Appendix G with the shared courses in bold face type. The core courses shared across these programs of study are also displayed in Table 4.3 in the sequence recommended by the program.

Table 4.3.

Core Program of Study. Note. Courses, listed in recommended sequence, which are shared across program outcome options.

<b>Core Program of Study: Courses Shared Across Program Outcome Options</b>
Advanced Child Growth and Development
Medical and Physiological Aspects of Developmental Disabilities
Approaches to Young Children's Learning
Language and Literacy in Young Children
Curriculum and Program Development in ECE
Administrative Seminar
Working with Parents and Families
Social Competence and Classroom Supports
Literacy and Mathematics in K-2

Practicum requirements also differ depending on program option. Candidates pursuing only a Master's degree in ECE complete an individualized practicum according to NAEYC standards which requires contact hours with at least two age groups (i.e., infant/toddler, preschool, and/or primary). All other programs of study require candidates to complete three practica which meet state licensure requirements for ECSE. Each focuses on one of the age ranges within the birth to eight year old early childhood context as the license in this state covers birth to age eight.

*Who are the faculty?* The program is currently administered by two full time or program faculty: Gina and Mary. A number of adjunct faculty assist with the delivery of the program included those designated as adjunct and as field supervisors. Review of faculty vitae coupled with interview data helped describe the nature of the current faculty expertise and experience.

*Program faculty.* Review of vitae revealed that Mary has been with the program since 1994 when she began as an assistant research professor. Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Science degree in Child Development and Family Relationships with a specialization in early childhood education and families, as well as a Masters of Arts degree in developmental psychology specializing in early applied developmental psychology. Her early work experience has included positions working with children with and without special needs as director of early care and education settings, parent counselor and early childhood consultant, child development specialist, lead and master teacher, and a position as an adjunct instructor at the community college level in psychology.

Mary's experience as a master teacher at a college early childhood lab school fostered her interest in teaching and mentoring adult students to become early childhood professionals. She earned her doctorate in Administration, Curriculum, and Supervision with a specialization in

supervision / early childhood curriculum from the University in 1992 and then assumed the role of education coordinator for a large urban Head Start, providing technical supervision, leadership, and training to 224 Head Start teachers and assistants before joining the program. When she began teaching part-time with the program in 1992, she also acted as Principal Investigator for several personnel preparation and early childhood mental health grants. Mary is now a clinical professor and program leader for the Program. Her research interests are primarily related to the link between social/emotional development, behavior, and school success (Program website, 2008).

Gina joined the program in the fall of 2010 as an assistant professor. Before coming to this university, Gina was an assistant professor for three years at a different university well known for its long-term contributions to the field of early childhood special education, specifically early intervention. Her work there included participation in the early childhood special education/early intervention teacher preparation program and serving as the co-director of a state institute for Autism in early childhood. Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Science Degree in Human Development and Family Studies, which included a minor in child development and a Master's of Education in early childhood education. She completed her doctoral degree in special education with a focus on early childhood special education.

Gina currently teaches courses in early childhood special education on evidence-based assessment and intervention practices for young children with special needs and their families. She is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and her professional experience includes work with children and families in homes, schools, and clinics. Gina specializes in the education of young children with developmental disabilities in inclusive and naturalistic settings. Her research interests include early intervention practices for young children with or at-risk for developmental

disabilities and professional development of early childhood practitioners. She regularly provides professional development to programs, school, districts, and states on evidence-based, early intervention practices for young children with special needs and their families (Program website, 2008).

*Adjunct faculty.* I also gathered information about the adjunct instructors with whom I spoke. Abby, who as mentioned previously teaches some classes and co-coordinates the practica, is currently pursuing her doctoral degree at the University. She is also a former graduate of the program having earned both her Masters in ECE and the ECSE endorsement. Prior to that, Abby pursued a career in occupational therapy and expressed that she became increasingly involved with younger children, specifically those with Autism. She became involved with program affiliated with the university for children with Autism and concurrently completed the ECE degree and licensure. She then worked as a co-teacher in the role of an ECSE teacher in an inclusive kindergarten setting out of state. Upon her return to this state she began working in a specialized, non-inclusive setting, which she called an Autism center, through a local school district. In tandem with her current work in the Program, Abby has worked in the early intervention system and has continued her work at the Autism center.

The other participating adjunct, Betty, has been with the program for many years. In fact, my discussions with her as well as Barbara, revealed that she was an active participant in the design of the original blended curriculum. Betty is currently a clinical faculty member at another state university where she directs the clinical component of a speech and language pathology (SLP) preparation program. She herself has a background in speech and language pathology and is still an active SLP practitioner. The current and retired faculty interviews revealed that she is highly regarded for a commitment to family-centered service delivery and she also brings a

wealth of knowledge regarding medical aspects of child development and disability to the program through her courses from her professional experiences with Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and other populations including children with special health care needs.

Gina shared that the program employs “about six adjunct faculty over the course of a year” who are hired to teach specific classes. Mary added that the program also has relationships with approximately 9-10 individuals who serve as field supervisors with 7-8 members of that network used consistently. Each field supervisor works with from one to 5-6 students each semester. Most if not all of these individuals were said to be past graduates of the program. Additionally, practicum candidates are supported in practica sites by cooperating teachers who are employees of the site and welcome the candidates into their practice as cooperating teachers. This network of support has been developed through ongoing relationships with graduates and other ECE/ECSE professionals in the field, In fact, Mary stressed a preference for using graduates in these positions as they are assumed to understand the expectations and philosophy of the program and therefore to strengthen the delivery.

*Interdisciplinary composition.* Discussion with Gina and Mary revealed a value in the interdisciplinary nature of the faculty. As evident here, the faculty delivering the curriculum includes individuals with backgrounds in ECE, ECSE, OT and SLP which represent several of the interdisciplinary roles within the early childhood/early childhood special education context. While the adjuncts are not full-time employees within the program, they were described as well trusted and strongly relied upon as integral members in the program delivery due to the program’s size in relation to the number of program faculty.

Examining the interdisciplinary nature of the faculty helped to describe the depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) afforded to the program through faculty experience and

expertise. The Pugach/Blanton (2009) framework specifically addresses the depth of knowledge across general and special education in regards to knowledge expectations of students. The literature on early childhood models of collaborative teacher education has shown that interdisciplinary faculty work is regarded as a key feature and support to blended (i.e., collaborative) programs (Miller & Stayton, 2006). The fact that this program possesses a faculty with diverse professional backgrounds across not only ECE and ECSE but also related services demonstrates an interdisciplinary depth of knowledge across those fields. This may in turn be reflected in the information and perspectives candidates are made privy to related to working with families and young children with and without disabilities. Having faculty with professional histories and experience marked by these multiple professional designations, which mirror those most commonly working with young children with and without special needs could be a support to the program's efforts to offer depth of knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.

*Who are the candidates and graduates?* Of the six current candidates interviewed, all but two were pursuing both the MA in ECE and either the ECSE licensure or endorsement. Of the two not pursuing the dual option, one was completing the MA in ECE only as she had completed a traditional k-12 special education teacher preparation program and possessed a k-12 teaching license as well as a preschool endorsement from another state. In this particular state, a master's degree is required to be licensed, hence her desire to obtain the master's degree. The other student had completed a traditional teacher education program, also in another state, but many years ago. She already possessed a master's degree and so was pursuing only the ECSE license.

Of the seven graduates interviewed, all but one completed the dual option. During the interview it was discovered that one student had completed an alternative format of the program.

The program has a history of partnerships with some regional private preschools where the degree and licensure options were delivered specifically to a group of preschool staff onsite, separate from the regular university program. This individual had obtained her Master's in ECE while participating in such a program specifically designed and carried out for and at the early childhood program where she worked. While these arrangements are still in existence, they appeared to be an auxiliary aspect rather than central aspect of this program per faculty interview with Gina.

Similarly, however, many of the students were described by faculty or shared with me themselves that their worksites had been the factor that propelled them to enter the program. This relates to understanding the relationships, and therefore partnerships, between the program and community education programs, in other words the dimension of PK-12 partnerships (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). These relationships will be discussed more fully under *community*, however, they are mentioned here as they help to characterize the candidate population, as many candidates learn of the program after starting work in early childhood programs that inform the students of the opportunity. Many of those same sites serve as practicum sites for candidates already employed there and for other candidates as well.

Of importance here is that the vast majority of candidates come to the program already employed in the field of early childhood education in some capacity. However, the depth of prior knowledge and experience in early childhood education or special education varies widely as confirmed through data analysis of interviews and program documents. Entry requirements require candidates interested in the dual or ECSE licensure options to have had a minimum of one year experience working with children with special needs. Those entering the MA degree program only are encouraged to have at least one year of experience with young children.

However, concurrent engagement in an early childhood setting can be initiated at time of application (ECE Student Handbook, 2012).

All candidates are required to have a Bachelor's degree. However, there are no requirements regarding the field associated with that degree. Therefore, many students, in fact most according to Gina and Mary, do not come to the program with previous pedagogical training in early childhood education or special education. Of the 13 candidates and graduates interviewed for this study, five of the seven graduates and three of the six current candidates came to the program with bachelor degrees unrelated to early childhood education/special education. This is an important factor in considering the depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) the program is then responsible for not only across the two fields of ECE and ECSE, but related to teaching in general. According to Gina, the current development of an undergraduate program in ECE is partly out of a desire to create a 'feeder' program for this graduate level program in an effort to remedy this situation.

*How and why did the program embrace a collaborative model in the first place?* While my purpose in this study was to examine how this program was currently operating as a system, it became important to ascertain how and why it became a blended or collaborative model in the first place. Initial interviews with the program faculty indicated that the program has been regarded as a blended or collaborative model since the early 1990s. This is demonstrated by the fact that the program has employed a shared core program of study across the same degree and licensure options since that time. Discussion with faculty, adjuncts, and candidates brought a past faculty member, whom I will call David, to my attention as many of the graduates and a few of the current candidates had had him as an instructor in the program. I was informed that this individual had recently passed away, and it was clear that his presence was mourned. His central



role in the development and long term leadership within the program was expressed. In searching for more information regarding David and his involvement with the program, I identified an article written by David and two of the other program faculty from the early 1990s when the program first changed to a collaborative model.

This article was found to specifically detail the rationale and process of blending the program. After reviewing this article, I solicited participation by the authors via email. Barbara, introduced in chapter three, agreed to participate and we engaged in a phone interview. Barbara was a full time professor in the program from 1990 to her retirement in 2007 and, as noted above, one of the original faculty who redesigned the program as a collaborative model in the early 1990s. Her insight was important to my developing understanding of the program as a system of collaborative teacher education. She confirmed and explained the central role David had played not only in the program but in the move toward a blended nature.

...I wish you could talk to him...his name was [David] and he died 2 years ago. He was the heart and soul of the early childhood education program. There was a culture of valuing early childhood education [at the university]. We had EdPsych, ECE, and ECSE all together in one division. And that's primarily because of [David] because he had a background in Ed Pysch, School Psych, and ECE and he had been at [the university] for a number of years. I think he was particularly responsible for the hiring of an EC special educator for the program.

Barbara also indicated that there were other factors at play that supported the change to a collaborative model from a systems perspective. For example, in the quote above she referenced the interdisciplinary nature of the program and division. She also stated that the program “was its own department within the school of education and it was separate from the elementary and high

school preparation programs.” Further, she shared that this independent identity was a support to the change process as it afforded autonomy.

We had our own identity which I think was very important in terms of why we were able to make some of the changes that we did. I know that is not always the case in a school of education that early childhood education is given so much prominence and freedom.

This sense of freedom and autonomy appeared to have fostered a sense of empowerment as well.

As Barbara indicated,

Early childhood special education and early childhood education were recognized as valid, credible, programs that could stand alone. We fought for our independence from the elementary school program. We really had some struggles along the way but we really fought for that identity. In fact we even wrote a declaration of independence for early childhood when the dean wanted to merge early childhood education with elementary and high school! So, yeah, so there is a strong foundation for early childhood education.

As can be seen in Barbara’s description, the original context which fueled the move toward a collaborative design in the early childhood teacher education program was not only marked by work to blend the fields of early childhood education and special education, it was also focused on establishing both fields as important and unique in the greater PK-12 educational landscape. This helped to clarify the historical nature of the relationship between the early childhood program and the greater school of education. The current relationship shares elements of this sense of independence and will be discussed under community in chapter five.

Being that Barbara had been an active collaborator in the work to develop the original blended design, further discussion with her illuminated the original rationale and process that

went into this shift. Barbara indicated that numerous local, state, and national factors fueled the program's desire to evolve into a blended design. Most importantly, the 1986 reauthorization of IDEA had granted FAPE to preschoolers as discussed in chapter two. Barbara described this as a catalyst that changed the entire early childhood education enterprise. In response to the federal legislative changes, increasing numbers of community and school district programs were including more and more children with special needs. This created a need for qualified staff, particularly staff with expertise from both ECE and ECSE perspectives.

Barbara described the rationale for redesigning the program as rooted in recognition of this community need for such professionals, specifically those who could enter leadership roles to guide the field. Further, the state offered ECSE licensure at the graduate level as opposed to the undergraduate level which also led the program to this focus not only on preparing teachers, but on preparing leaders. As Barbara noted,

More of the early childhood preschool programs [in the community] were becoming inclusive. Our early childhood program offered a license in ECSE and a masters in ECE. That combination made them strong leaders in the field...change agents...leaders in the community. Many were the administrators of these inclusive settings and so they needed both perspectives to make it work. So our program was responding to a need that the community had for professionals who knew both fields very well.

These foci of being responsive to community needs as service delivery evolved and that of producing change agents to propel such changes were seen as central aspects to the original blended design. This relates to the dimension of PK-12 partnerships (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Although the program did not have formal relationships with these programs, it demonstrates a

level of relationship and interrelatedness which might make deeper relationships possible. These elements are clearly present in the espoused design of the present day program as well.

Barbara indicated that many other factors also contributed to this movement, including licensure changes and recommendations from the national professional organizations, namely CEC/DEC and NAEYC. Efforts within CEC/DEC and NAEYC produced guidance for personnel preparation targeting increasing collaboration across the two fields. Licensure across the country therefore responded and many states explored merged licensure structures for early childhood. Licensure plays a significant role with any personnel preparation endeavor as licensure requirements are used to help guide and structure preparation programs. For example, Barbara indicated how state licensing was a topic of much interest and attention in this state at this time.

The [state] Department of Education was such a strong factor in what was happening in the state and with our program as there were some incredible people there who valued and promoted early childhood education. The Department brought professionals from across the city and the state together to talk about early childhood education issues which was important as they were influencing the licensing.

Barbara added that while a group within the state lobbied for the creation of a blended licensure option in early childhood as some other states were adopting at the time, that effort was unsuccessful. However, what did transpire was that there was an increase in attention and discussion at the state level that brought issues of collaboration across ECE and ECSE to the forefront. Barbara describes this flurry of activity as follows.

In the early 1990s there were separate licenses for ECSE and ECE and ECSE was only at the graduate level. As we moved through the 1990s we tried to create a combined license at the state level. However, we were not successful as there were still some strong

conservative leaders at the Department of Education that were against it. But what we did though and the [state] Department of Education worked closely with us, we actually brought in some professionals from around the state to talk about what it would mean to combine those licenses. And then we worked toward that when developing the licensure standards ...I think that's key.

While this state was not successful in changing the licensure structure to a blended model, the discussion and activity around the idea sparked innovation and helped the state identify how to develop licensure standards and the program consider how to meet licensure standards from both fields.

Blended or merged models of licensure have been declared as supports to collaborative models of teacher education, as discussed in chapter two (e.g., Hartle et al., 1997; Raschke et al., 2001). This program was not afforded that support from state licensure. However, as noted a great deal of attention was apparently given to the notion statewide and therefore standards from both fields were considered in the original blended design of the program. Those standards were concurrently under review as NAEYC and CEC/DEC were increasingly collaborating around personnel preparation issues and discussion arose around the compatibility and similarities across the two fields. Barbara indicated that the actions and recommendations of the national professional organizations were influential in the rationale undergirding the continued development of the program as a collaborative program as the faculty “gradually moved toward being able to apply to NAEYC as a combined program.” Therefore, that state and national conversations around personnel preparation were a support and contributed to a synergy of factors driving the program to explore a more blended or collaborative model of teacher education.

In terms of how the faculty approached the blending of the program, Barbara shared that the group targeted merging ECE and ECSE content at the course level.

I think what we did was move toward our students taking primarily the same courses. We just gradually moved toward all of our students, those getting only the Master's in ECE and those getting the ECSE license, toward taking the same classes. So instead of language development, it became language development and disorders. Social development became social development and disorders. We started changing the content at the course level.

There was also a focus on increasing what was previously considered special education only content into the blended model for all candidates. Barbara shared that they, “also started to require all students to take a course that only ECSE took before on medical and physiological aspects of development.”

Therefore, it is evident that the program worked to blend content previously delegated to each of the fields separately at the course level by merging courses centered on the same content (e.g., language development) into one new blended course. In this way depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) from both fields was incorporated in a merged manner, as opposed to an add-on model of requiring separate courses from each field. However, in the case of content that was not previously addressed by one of the separate programs, such as with the medical course described above, that content was added to the programs of study for all students regardless of outcome path.

To summarize her description of the original blended design of the program, Barbara and I collaboratively created a list to illustrate the central elements of that original design. This list included:

- an ongoing focus on practical, natural settings which would allow candidates to engage in realistic learning experiences throughout the program
- attention to alignment to the national and state standards for ECE and ECSE
- commitment to fostering relationships between the faculty and the candidates as well as working to be very individualized and responsive to candidate and community needs
- embracing a state wide and a broader overall goal focusing on systems change and producing change agents who would help move the field,
- family and community centered philosophy
- a philosophy that held that all children and families are unique and diverse
- adhering to a strength-based philosophy towards candidates and children as well as a value for children with identified needs
- promoting a value for children with and without special needs being cared for and educated together.

These tenets clearly reflect the literature from both ECE and ECSE around best practice in the care and education of young children as well as for inclusion.

### **What is the Object of the Program?**

The *object* within an activity system is the goal or motive of the activity (Engeström, 1987; 1999; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). In this case study, the general *object* was considered the preparation of early childhood educational leaders as described by the program. The character of that preparation was derived from assumptions and philosophies embraced by the program and faculty. Therefore, to understand how the program views its object, the following section will detail the program mission and philosophy.

**Program mission and philosophy.** Gina shared that she and Mary recently collaborated to revise the student handbook and through doing so had examined the foundational elements on which the program was grounded and that are used to characterize the program. This illustrates an example of faculty collaboration advocated by the Pugach and Blanton (2009) framework and represents a crucial aspect in that the mission and philosophies of a teacher education program are intended to provide a foundation and guidance for all other components. Further, Miller and Stayton (2006) found that recommendations for successful interdisciplinary teaming in blended teacher education strongly suggested such collaborative development of a shared mission and philosophy. Pugach and Blanton (2009) assert that “curricular coherence is driven by a shared view of what is important for preservice students to know and be able to do as a result of their specific teacher preparation programme. Coherence is meant to foster the ‘big picture’ that a programme may be trying to achieve” (p. 579.)

Therefore, the mission statement and corresponding core philosophies are central to overall curricular coherence. Further, true collaboration among faculty at this level of program design is crucial for a collaborative program to be designed effectively and provide adequate depth of knowledge and coherence across the program from both professional perspectives. Whether sufficient curricular coherence and/or adequate depth of knowledge is later enacted in the program starts with attention to it in the very beginning.

The program handbook, which applies to all those engaged in the program, shares the program mission as follows.

To prepare early childhood professional leaders with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of young children and their families within a rapidly changing and diverse society. Our program aims to foster leaders who share a commitment to equity and excellence and



an understanding of the strengths and needs of a diverse student population in order to optimize developmental, academic, and behavioral outcomes for children with and without disabilities from birth to age 8 (Student handbook, p. 4).

The focus on preparing leaders relates to Barbara's assertion that the original collaborative design intended to prepare change agents. This focus has a long history in the Program. On several occasions, Mary stressed that as a graduate level program, a core function was to prepare leaders in the field as with "every mission statement [they've] had for I don't know how long has always talked about the fact that we are preparing leaders because we are a graduate program." Gina added that the primary outcome in terms of professional role or identity for graduates targeted by the program was that of inclusive "classroom teacher or ECSE specialist." She shared that occasionally a graduate will go into an early intervention role or an administrative role. Gina further explained that the graduate level status of the program afforded graduates opportunities to pursue consultative/itinerant roles as well as administrative/leadership roles "out of the classroom."

Gina and Mary shared that the program mission statement and remainder of the program handbook are used in an attempt to promote curricular and philosophical coherence across the program not only in their own work and courses but for adjunct faculty as well. When asked what they do to help promote consistency in philosophy across the various instructors within the program Gina stated,

...we give them the handbook and we definitely share the handbook and like with one adjunct, I met with her and I told her...And another is a graduate of our program...although many years ago... we just tell them. For the most part we if we had new people we would make sure that they share that belief [philosophies of the program].

Therefore, the handbook and contents such as the program mission statement are relied upon to ensure all instructors, adjunct or core, are presenting and representing the core program mission and philosophy. Additionally, the handbook could be considered a first step toward faculty collaboration in preparation for delivering the program and enacting the mission. However, this

The mission statement also demonstrates the program's commitment to attending to issues of diversity and in turn to the knowledge and skills graduates will need to meet the needs of children and families in a "rapidly changing and diverse society." As noted in chapters one and two, a concern for preparing teachers for diverse contexts and populations is one reason given as support for collaborative models of teacher education by some programs and faculty engaged in such work. Additionally, this represents alignment between the EC program and the broader teacher education enterprise at the University.

While inclusion, which is seen as a hallmark rationale of collaborative teacher education design throughout the literature (Gargiulo et al., 1997; Miller, 1992; Piper, 2007; Stayton & McCollum, 2002), is not an explicit component of the mission statement, the ability to understand the strengths and needs of children with and without disabilities is a major component. Therefore, a reference to curricular coherence and depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) applies in that the mission statement's mention of ensuring candidates attain knowledge to work with children with and without disabilities alludes to at least some level of depth of knowledge across the two traditional disciplines. Additionally, some level of coherence across the program in terms of special and general education preparation could be assumed. A full understanding of the depth of knowledge and curricular coherence present in the program across the two fields warranted further investigation into exactly how the program pursues its mission. Results of that investigation will be shared in the next chapter.

The mission statement and overall program were found to draw guidance from a well-developed conceptual framework that is described in detail in the program handbook. This framework explicitly draws from the theoretical foundations of both the ECE and the ECSE fields as demonstrated in the following description from the program handbook.

The ECE Program is grounded in a sound theoretical basis and a commitment to developmentally appropriate, evidence-based practices. The ECE specialization combines a theoretical, research, and clinical base from fields such as early childhood education, psychology, communication disorders and sciences, medicine, sociology, and special education (p. 4).

The term “developmentally appropriate practice” is a hallmark of early childhood education and forms the foundation of recommended practice and personnel standards advocated by NAEYC. It is also a term, as mentioned in chapter two, that initially drew concern from the early childhood special education community, but that has for the most part been accepted as NAEYC and DEC have continued to collaborate and unify standards for both fields. “Evidence-based practice” is a term more often associated with special education but increasing entering conversations within the general (or early childhood) education landscape with the onset of legislative changes related to NCLB that increased focus on the use of evidence-based practices as well as the increased use of structures such as Response to Intervention within educational settings.

Therefore, this first statement introducing the conceptual framework for the program appears to draw from both fields to set the stage for the design and purpose of the program. Further discussion with Gina and Mary indicated that an attitude and philosophy of inclusion has been a sustained, core element of this program for many years. Mary indicated that the program

has long been focused on preparing candidates across the two fields and that “to work with diverse populations of children with and without disabilities has always been a piece of the mission statement.” As noted in Chapter two, a desire to promote inclusive practice is a historically common rationale in the literature for the development of collaborative programs literature (Gargiulo et al., 1997; Miller, 1992; Piper, 2007; Stayton & McCollum, 2002). This lends further evidence for intended curricular coherence and depth of knowledge across special and general education within the structure of the program.

The program handbook further describes the philosophical foundation of the program by identifying key literature from both fields, as well as five fundamental tenets that guide the program. These are listed as follows in the handbook,

- Early childhood education and intervention must be viewed from an **ecological perspective**. The child is an individual developing within a broad ecology including families, professionals, educational settings, and communities (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).
- Early childhood services should be **inclusive**. All children (with and without developmental disabilities) should be placed in community settings that are as natural as possible based on family choice. The same range of care and education options should be available to all children (family child care, center care, preschool, play groups, private schools, and public schools) (Guralnick, 2001).
- Early childhood education and intervention should be **family centered**. Families are acknowledged as the experts regarding their children. Education and intervention planning must be inclusive of and responsive to the family’s unique priorities, resources, and concerns. The early childhood professional’s role is to strengthen and

- support families as they facilitate and nurture their young children's development (Dunst & Trivette, 1990; Dunst, Hamby, Trivette, Raab, & Bruder, 2000; McWilliam, 2005).
- Early childhood service delivery requires **collaboration** and interpersonal skills. Educators must effectively collaborate with families, other educators, related service providers, and personnel from community agencies. Children and families are best served within interdisciplinary and collaborative intervention and service delivery models (Harbin, McWilliam, & Gallagher, 2000; Horn & Jones, 2004; Parlakian & Siebel, 2002).
  - Early childhood services should be **culturally responsive**. Early childhood professionals must possess the awareness, knowledge, and skills to promote early intervention practices that are sensitive and respectful of children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Carlson & Harwood, 2000; Cheatham & Santos, 2009). Program curricula and inter-personal relationships promote **social justice**—all children have the right to mutual respect, fair treatment, equal access to resources and experiences, and experience a willingness to learn about others' perspectives (p. 5, emphasis in original).

As with the mission statement and conceptual framework, these key tenets express foundational aspects from both ECE and ECSE.

Considering the Pugach/Blanton (2009) dimension of depth of knowledge, these core elements show broad knowledge expectations for all candidates across the two fields. Not only do these five core philosophies evidence how the program aspires to best practice related to early childhood education and special education, they also demonstrate the program and school of

education commitment to issues of equity and diversity. Further, they are intended to provide guidance across the entire program and therefore indicate an example of espoused curricular cohesion as defined in the Pugach/Blanton (2009) framework. Mary explained how the identification and attention to these core philosophies help promote connections across the program as the faculty “talk about those principles in every class. So they hear it over and over. There's a trajectory that is clear from the beginning where those things do connect together.”

### **What is the Program’s Espoused Outcome?**

As described in chapter two, the literature indicates that many collaborative teacher education programs engage in their work in pursuit of promoting inclusive practice. The basic purpose of this program is to prepare early childhood educators through the degree and licensure options outlined above. Further, the program’s mission has a central focus on preparing leaders for the field. Examination of the specific learning experiences and the particular objectives program experiences are designed to achieve helped to more specifically characterized and understand the aspirations the program design strives to achieve. When asked to describe the most crucial learning objectives embedded within the program, Gina articulated that they included, “a focus on inclusion, how to set up, design, and provide embedded instructional opportunities for all kids in the classroom, and data based decision making.” Review of the program handbook also revealed that the program has identified specific learning outcomes for all candidates, regardless of the career path they are pursuing.

**Learning outcomes.** Several “learning outcomes” inherent to the mission, philosophy, and curriculum were identified in the Student Handbook listed as follows:

- Successful early childhood educators demonstrate knowledge of child growth and development and individual learning differences between and among young children with and without special needs.
- Successful early childhood educators demonstrate the ability to design and implement developmentally appropriate curricula and create effective learning environments for young children. They understand and are able to implement a repertoire of evidence-based, child-focused, culturally responsive instructional strategies to individualize instruction for all children, including those with special needs and those whose primary language is not English.
- Successful early childhood educators demonstrate the ability to identify and administer culturally relevant formal and informal assessments of behavior, development, achievement, and environments. They use the information gathered from formal and informal assessments to design child-focused learning experiences, modify instruction in response to the ongoing learning process, document child learning and development, and measure the fidelity of intervention implementation.
- Successful early childhood educators know, use, and advocate for ethical guidelines and professional standards related to best practice in early childhood.
- Successful early childhood educators demonstrate leadership in the early childhood field by advocating for child-focused, culturally relevant, evidence-based educational practices and supporting public policies to promote educational equity.
- Successful early childhood educators collaborate with caregivers, families, other educators, related service providers, and personnel from community agencies using

culturally responsive strategies to meet the needs of children and families (ECE Student Handbook, 2012, p. 5-6).

These projected learning outcomes are derived from professional teaching standards from the state as well as national professional organizations (Faculty interview, 2013). They are another example of how the program has approached blending the fields of ECE and ECSE and has attempted to ensure a balanced depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) for all candidates despite the existence of differences pertaining to end results of individuals' learning experiences with the program.

**Graduate and candidate outcomes.** The current program embraces an espoused outcome of preparing leaders in the field of early childhood education as explicated in its mission statement. The focus on graduates being change agents, however, seems to be less of a focus than described by Barbara in the original rationale. The program retains many of the original design features including the use of national and state personnel standards to guide curriculum and program requirements, blending of ECE and ECSE content at the course level, and a focus on preparing candidates for inclusive practice. To examine the realized or enacted *object* and *outcome* of the program it is important to investigate graduate outcomes.

***What do graduates do and where do they work?*** Graduates (n=56) over the last three years have filled professional roles in a variety of early childhood settings including school district ECSE positions, lead and master teachers in community preschool programs, community college instructors, early intervention providers, clinicians, coach and specialist positions, and directors or other administrators of early childhood education/child care centers (Professional Positions for Recent ECSE/ECE Graduates, 2012). Program documentation (Unfunded 325K application, 2012) revealed that of the 56 candidates who have completed the program in the last



two years (2010-2012), 52 (93%) are working full time in early intervention and/or early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) roles within the state. Two individuals did not respond to the survey, one is not currently working, and one graduate is working in an unrelated field. Ten (18%) of the graduates were found to be in leadership positions as directors or coordinators of EI/ECSE programs or districts, 18 (32%) are lead teachers in inclusive preschool classrooms serving high-needs children with disabilities, and 8 (14%) are early interventionists working with infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. In terms of program outcome options, a total of 169 students graduated from the ECE program from 2007-2011 with an MA degree in ECE. Eighty nine (53%) of these students also earned the State ECSE Specialist teaching license. The average time to complete the program was described as about seven semesters for all students (n=169), although most (almost 100%) students attended part-time, while working in full or part time jobs. Figure 4.1 displays the distribution of the professional roles of recent (2010-2012) graduates (Professional Positions of Recent Graduates, 2012). Those fulfilling multiple roles were added to multiple categories. Information was also available regarding the settings in which this same group of graduates were working. This is displayed in Figure 4.2.

The distribution of professional roles of graduates indicates that more graduates work as early childhood special educators than as early childhood general educators, which is indicative of the graduate level nature of the program and licensure structure within the state. First, interviews with Mary and Gina illustrated that candidates not pursuing the licensure are often pursuing the Master's degree to extend their careers out of the classroom and into roles such as that of administrators, directors, community college instructors, or policy makers. Second, the licensure structure in the state requires ECSE to be at the graduate level, which leads many candidates to enter the program specifically to obtain the ECSE license. Of interest in this

distribution of graduate roles is that there are few examples of non-traditional roles or settings, which also might be indicative of the types of roles available to graduates within the greater early childhood landscape. This raises questions as to whether this landscape includes opportunities to develop and pursue reconceptualized roles beyond the traditional discrete roles common to each professional designation.

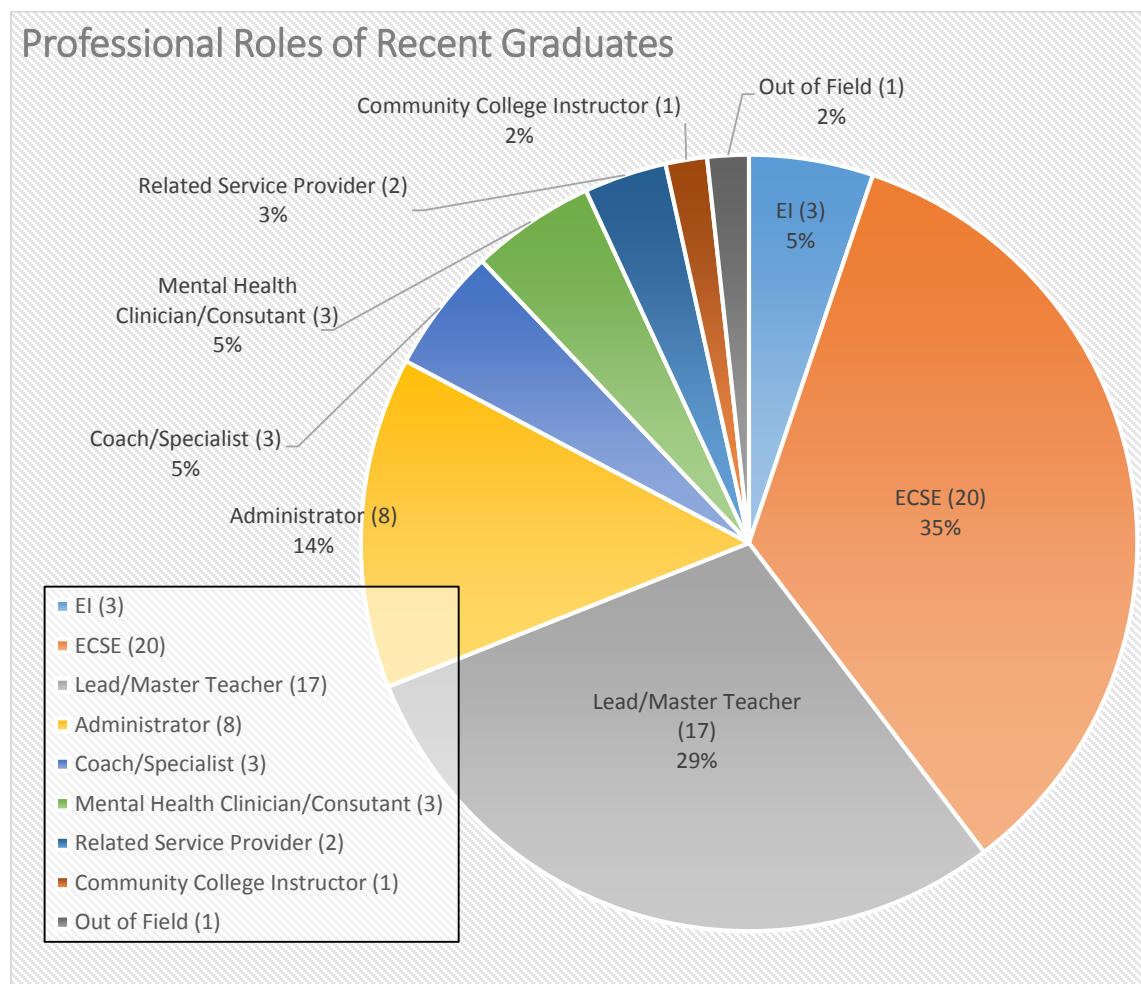


Figure 4.1. Professional Roles of Recent Graduates.

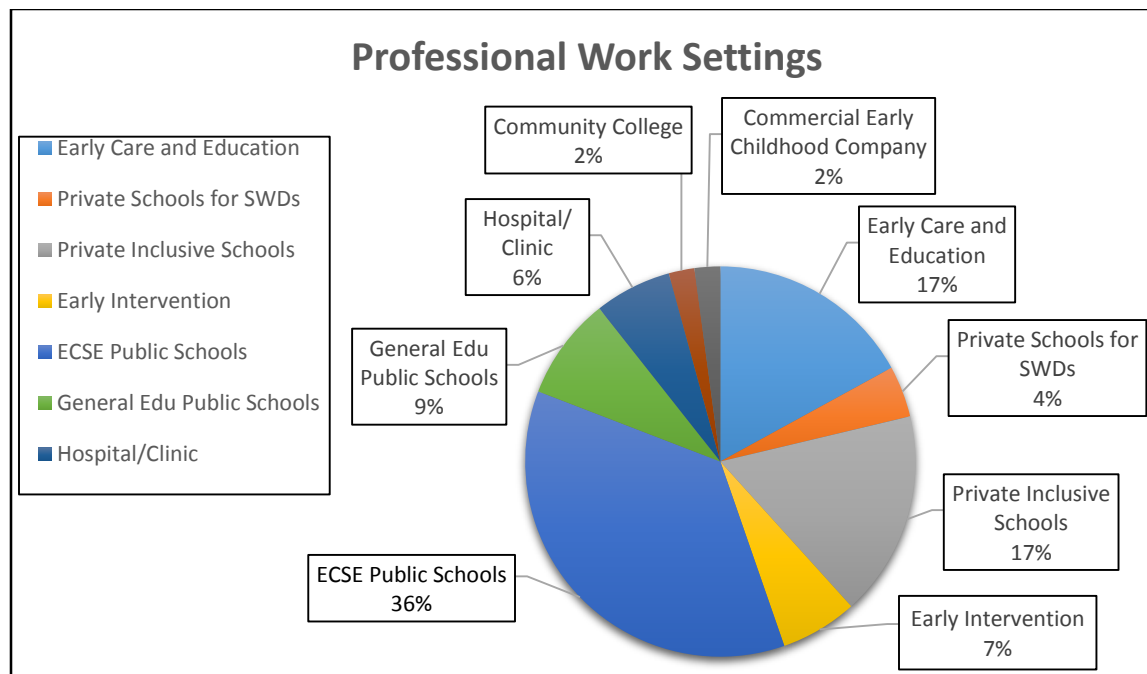


Figure 4.2. Professional Work Settings of Recent Graduates.

Taken together, this examination of the realized outcomes for graduates speaks directly to the espoused object and outcome of the program as a subject of an activity system and helps to illustrate harmony and tension among the various parameters. The program currently operates with a mission to prepare leaders in the field of early childhood and the outcome is to promote inclusive practice for all young children and their families through advocacy and leadership. Several elements of this program when viewed as a system appear to support its progress toward meeting this object and outcome. Examples include the curricular coherence and a focus on developmental, practical, authentic learning experiences centered on a philosophy of inclusive practice and blending of the two fields. These elements represent elements of harmony and tensions within the system and will be explored further in chapters five and six.

### Summary

This chapter described the early childhood teacher education program and its goals through the use of the conceptual framework built from activity theory and the Pugach/Blanton

(2009) research framework for research into collaborative models of teacher education. The identified core philosophies, described as central and embedded throughout the entire program according to the faculty, are combined with these identified key learning outcomes and used to guide the development and enactment of the courses and experiences that make up the program. While the general goal of the program is to ensure candidates meet personnel development standards per accreditation as well as licensure requirements for those pursuing the ECSE license, interviews and document analysis revealed that this particular program has a keen focus on preparing leaders for the early childhood field.

This chapter prepares for further analysis of how the program engages or enacts this espoused design. The next chapter will provide thick description of the enacted program, again through the application of the conceptual framework. In so doing, further analysis from the perspective of the Pugach/Blanton (2009) and activity theory frameworks will complete the analytic description of the program as an activity system. This description will help illuminate elements of harmony and tension within that system as well as its classification along the continuum of collaborative teacher education models (Blanton & Pugach, 2011) which is addressed in chapter six.

## Chapter 5

### **How Does the Program Enact its Design?**

Chapter five presents further analysis from the perspective of the Pugach/Blanton (2009) and CHAT frameworks to complete the description and analysis of the program as a system. As discussed in chapter three, cultural historical activity theory (Engeström, 1987; 1999) holds that the *subject* of an activity system does not operate towards its *object* and *outcome* in isolation. Activity is mediated through *tools* as first described by Vygotsky (1978) and further activity is influenced by the social context in which it occurs hence the expansion of activity theory to include the additional parameters of *community*, and *division of labor, rules* (Engeström, 1987).

Therefore, to fully describe and analyze a system from this perspective it is necessary to go beyond the *subject* and *object-outcome* to the other parameters of practice within Engeström's (1987) conception of an activity system. This chapter provides results of this descriptive analysis to illustrate further aspects of the espoused program, as well as elements of the enacted teacher education program. Therefore, the remaining parameters of practice from the activity theory framework are described. These include: *community, division of labor, tools, and rules*. Through the application of the full conceptual framework, tools that potentially represent *cultural tools* specific to collaborative teacher education within the program were also identified.

#### **Community**

According to activity theory, *community* represents the social group that the subject belongs to while engaged in the activity. As introduced in chapter four, the immediate

*community* of this program is currently comprised of two full-time program faculty, six adjunct faculty, nine to ten field supervisors, 170 current candidates and numerous practitioners and administrators across field sites. Further, the program is situated within the College of Education and Human Development at a large, urban university. To detail the program's community, this section will first detail the program's relationship with the School of Education. Then relationships with the surrounding early childhood community will be discussed including relationships with and availability of field sites, relationships within field supervision, and the nature of field sites available to the program.

**Relationship with the college of education.** As discussed in chapter four, Barbara had described the context in which the program originally moved to a collaborative design as supportive of that effort and change. She stated this was partly due to how the program was situated in the greater school of education. The program operated as an independent entity and had specifically fought for its independence. The historical character of this relationship is important to understanding the current context. When Gina and Mary were asked about supports and barriers from the overall school of education, Mary shared, "I don't think there are really any barriers at the school of education college level. I wouldn't say we get tons of support either, we're pretty independent." Further, Gina added that this relationships can "be good but also can be a barrier. Since we are so independent and unique in many ways we are sometimes either ignored, or put with certain groups, or given requirements that don't make a lot of sense as a program."

These sentiments illustrated that the independent nature of the program within the school of education persists, and it is possible that the history of hard fought independence is still part of the organizational culture. The character of the relationship between the program and the

administrative components of the school of education could be described as relatively neutral based on these comments. This offered important insight into the context within which the early childhood education program operates. When I learned that the university had been awarded a 325T grant, I had become interested in knowing whether the presence of that grant had any impact on the early childhood program given the focus of that grant program on collaborative teacher education. Therefore, during my initial communication with Gina I had asked about this and learned that the faculty felt little connection with or influence from the elementary or secondary teacher education programs. As noted earlier, Mary shared that the program mission has long focused on preparing leaders to work with diverse populations children with and without disabilities. When asked about the relationship between the program's mission and the greater school of education, Mary shared that there was "intentional alignment with the school of education mission and vision." However, she described the interaction and therefore reciprocal influence as minimal in regards to inclusion and diversity as those aspects have "been consistent for 15-20 years and in a way I think that the rest of the school caught up with what we were thinking."

Thus, it appeared as though the faculty perceived the early childhood program to have had an impact of the collaborative nature of other teacher education programs rather than the other way around. As discussed in chapter four, Barbara had described the program as an independent entity within the school of education, which was also expressed by the current faculty. For example, Gina noted that there benefits to that independence such as autonomy but also negatives in relation to organizational structure. Gina and Mary described the program's relationship with the rest of the school of education therefore as separate and neutral overall.

Mary noted, “I don’t think there are really any barriers to our program from the school of education, but I wouldn’t say we get a lot of support either. We’re pretty independent.”

The independent nature of this program does not characterize the other school of education programs. Gina shared that,

some programs are unique like us but other programs interact more with each other. For example, our teacher education programs that have science, math, general education, and special education at both elementary and secondary levels interact with each other much more.

Mary added that those programs, “have instructors from a variety of programs who are delivering coursework across degree and the license programs so that makes sense whereas we don’t.” Therefore, while independence perhaps enabled innovation and the original collaborative design, it may now be more characterized as isolation and therefore a burden.

Since this program is a single program, collaboration across more than one program within the school of education was not necessary as with other programs that draw from general, special, and foundational faculty groups to deliver a blended program. Such faculty collaboration has been identified as important to collaborative models (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). This might pose barriers and supports to faculty collaboration. In one sense, the two faculty work together on a regular basis and therefore the situation supports contact and communication. In another sense, the lack of outside perspectives and expertise might limit collaborative opportunities and depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Rather than draw from other university programs, this program relies on a pool of adjuncts to deliver the program.

**Relationships with the surrounding early childhood community.** The exact make up of this community fluctuates over time with members entering and exiting the community on an



ongoing basis. However, there exists continuity in the program faculty as well as several adjuncts who have been involved with the program for many years, some field supervisors, and some field sites. Although formal agreements do not exist between the program and these practicum sites, the long standing relationships promote a level of interaction and collaboration. Other individuals and groups are also members of the community such as other university faculty and staff, community members, children and families, and recent graduates.

The program has historically employed an advisory board comprised of various members of this community, including families of children with and without disabilities, professionals from community early childhood programs, ECE and/or ECSE coordinators for school districts, graduates, and adjunct faculty. Mary and Gina both shared that the perspective of these various stakeholders was deemed to be of valued importance and used to continually improve the program. Mary described the membership of the board as a “shifting population” and detailed that invitations are sent in an effort to obtain a “balance of community programs that are serving birth to three and then community programs and school district programs that are serving children three to eight. Having a really diverse population for the advisory board is really quite helpful.” Despite the value in the board, Mary shared that it has not been convened for the last few years due to limited time and other resources. Mary indicated that this is something the program is addressing and will use again when able.

Pugach and Blanton (2009) identify PK-Partnerships as an important dimension of collaborative teacher education in terms of how colleges and universities work in PK-12 partnerships to build greater capacity to develop high quality field sites in the schools (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). This section will explore the relationships this program has with field sites pertaining to the clinical aspects of the teacher education program. Ideal settings as well as the

nature of availability of sites will be discussed. Further, relationships surrounding the field supervision process will also be detailed. Finally, the nature of field sites and experiences as seen through participant perception and research observation is discussed.

***Relationships with and availability of field sites.*** The interviews with faculty indicated that ideal practicum sites were those considered to “demonstrate quality inclusion as well as evidence based practice.” Specifically, Gina shared that the best practicum settings would include co-taught, inclusive classrooms, roles as inclusive specialists in coaching or consultative roles, authentic transdisciplinary team experiences, and opportunities to engage in family coaching such as in early intervention. Gina and Mary indicated that few such examples existed in the program’s *community*. Despite having a commitment to using only inclusive sites for practicum and sharing a definition of inclusion that was in contrast to most of the available sites, the program faculty are limited to the type of settings available in the community. The fact that they described longstanding positive relationships with several sites that are commonly used for field experiences was a strength. However, interview data indicated that the specific nature of the inclusiveness of those sites is of variable alignment with their ideal.

As illustrated in the following quote, Mary describes the relationships between the program and local sites as continually changing and unreliable due to field practitioners’ own issues with capacity and perceptions of taking on the responsibility of supporting candidates. She shared that, “finding practicum placements is a continuously evolving process.” This can differ based on the type of setting and age of children. Mary added that the program has significant challenges securing practicum experiences for special education roles with birth to three year old children. She explained that the, “programs that implement Part C pulled back a lot from us a few years ago. I think they were feeling stretched, under resourced.” This created

complications regarding the program's ability to provide candidates with authentic experiences in early intervention, as they had to rely upon center-based rather than home/community based programs, which often do not include special educators.

In contrast, the program's relationships with preschool settings were described as relatively "solid." Mary indicated that the program has "ongoing, steady relationships" with several school districts that continually welcome candidates. She expressed value in this continuity as she shared that "the students that are placed in those districts and specifically with cooperating teachers who have had previous students have better experiences because the cooperating teachers get better at it the more students they host." Therefore, those sites are prioritized and used repeatedly. However, faculty shared that few sites align with the program's ideals regarding best practices around inclusion and evidence-based practice, representing yet another issue with congruence.

Securing quality primary sites (grades 1 – 3), however, is an additional area of challenge. Mary expressed issues regarding relationships with primary settings in regards to reliability and consistency of available field sites and called the availability of appropriate settings, "a little bit sketchy" noting that, "it really depends on who the principals and special educators are." Further, she described inconsistencies that complicate relationships in that the program, "might have a longstanding relationship with a particular site, with a particular school within a school district and if they have a change in principal or change in special educator then all of a sudden they are not willing to take students." Further, as noted in chapter four, Mary and Gina indicated that there are very few examples of what they would call quality inclusion at the primary level and that special education service delivery often employs "pull out" models and few instances of

“push in” models.” They shared that this has made finding quality, inclusive settings for practicum “nearly impossible.”

This reveals a major issue regarding the program’s ability to provide adequate field experiences across the full range of the early childhood context including three very different contexts related to the three distinct age groups. The licensure associated with this program relates to work with children from birth to age eight years. Therefore, it relates to childcare and preschool as well as primary settings. This issue related to adequate depth of coverage and therefore depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) over the entire age span and various roles and responsibilities for which candidates are prepared and licensed for represents a significant challenge and *tension* within the activity system. This *tension* will be addressed in chapter six.

What is of importance to this discussion of *community* is the character of the relationships between the program and the community sites in which candidates complete the clinical component of the programs of study. An additional *tension* is apparent related to the PK-12 partnerships (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) in that the nature and structure of such relationships cannot be characterized as empowering the program or community sites to work together to develop high quality field sites and therefore to promote clinically-rich teacher education or simultaneous renewal of education. This is of particular interest given the faculty’s comments regarding the presence of a disconnect between their ideal sites and those that are available in terms of inclusive practice, since promoting inclusion is central to their espoused program mission. Interview data with program faculty indicated that, out of necessity, other factors such as geographical convenience take precedence over building relationships. For example, in describing the role of the university field supervisor, Mary indicated that the cadre of field

supervisors, “specialize a lot in terms of geographical location so that they are doing less driving for site visits.” Demonstrating the secondary status of building relationships within the current structure, Mary added that, “the collateral result is that they start forming ongoing relationships with certain sites.”

In a discussion with Abby, she also characterized the process of finding and supporting field placements as difficult due to the current nature of relationships between the program and sites. She stated that few sites have a field supervisor formally associated with them and that she feels that the program, “isn’t using the role of the field supervisor effectively.” She stated that, as coordinator, when she can tell a site administrator that she “has this incredible faculty that can support the candidate and cooperating teacher it can be a really good thing” in terms of actually securing a placement. In her opinion, “that makes a huge difference to the administrators as the candidate and cooperating teacher won’t be out there alone.” The literature around field components in teacher education supports collaborative work between members of the triad to produce scaffolded, experiential learning opportunities (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987). Further, the role of the field supervisor role has been identified as important in contributing to worthwhile, successful experiences for student teachers and cooperating teachers ( e.g., Anderson & Cogorno, 2001; Griffin, Barnes, Hughs, O’Neal, Defino, Edwards & Huckill,1983; Koehler, 1984; Zimpher, deVoss & Nott, 1980; Zimpher, 1987).

***Relationships within field supervision.*** The interactions between candidates, their cooperating teachers, and field supervisors are also important aspects of community within the program. While some candidates and graduates shared negative relationships with cooperating teachers, most described relationships with their cooperating teachers as supportive and shared that those individuals were the people who helped them the most with their learning. For

example, one current student who was completing her final practicum reflected on the nature of her relationships with both site and university supervisors.

The field supervisor came once at the beginning of my practicum and she was very available by email to answer my questions but she did not come to observe me when she was supposed to at the end, and when she did come, she came late so she didn't see me when she was supposed to. My cooperating teacher had supervised some other people before and she was fantastic, but the field supervisor had a history of not doing her job very well.

Clearly, this reflects a lack of perceived support for both the cooperating teacher and candidate in this particular situation. This type of interaction was a common message shared by the current candidates and graduates interviewed. For example, one graduate stated,

My cooperating teachers were graduates of the program and were really good. That was great. Mary was my field supervisor for two practica and then I had another field supervisor who didn't show up for our meeting. I think it really depended on who that person was.

This particular comment, coupled with those from faculty and candidates, illustrates a lack congruence and collaboration across the program and faculty related to the current structure of the clinical component of this program.

However, asking more of field supervisors is seen as problematic given the current structure and resources. Indeed, Abby indicated that resource allotment for practicum supervision is a significant factor in the nature of the university-field structure and relationships.

We have such a hard time reimbursing field supervisors, I can't believe anybody does it. It's out of the kindness of their heart, and it is a lot of work to do well! So to require that

a field supervisor does more, which is really what I think probably needs to happen, how do you justify it?

Discussion with Mary revealed that field supervisors receive \$100/credit hour/student and therefore \$200 for each candidate each semester. Each field supervisor works with from one to six candidates a semester. Expectations include attending three program wide practicum meetings/seminars and two onsite visits/observations of each candidate each semester. Cooperating teachers received stipends in the past. However, the university is no longer supporting that form of compensation. Therefore, Gina and Mary indicated they are exploring other ways to compensate that group.

Mary also discussed issues around securing placements related to the willingness and ability of cooperating teachers to assist in the assessment of candidates.

I'm finding that we might have to loosen up a little bit on the responsibilities of the cooperating teachers as I think the responsibilities around reviewing and grading or even rating the practicum portfolios was one of the major hesitations why some providers did not want to be involved. They didn't want to be responsible. So occasionally when we are really struggling to place a student I find that sometimes if I say, 'if you'll just let the student shadow you and do some gradual release of responsibility, you will not be responsible for paper work or rating.' That can sometimes get someone who says, 'no I don't think so' to agree...so there's a little bit of individualization in that.

Of interest, even when cooperating teachers were willing to review and grade the work of candidates, their input was secondary to that of the field supervisors who did not have the opportunity to observe candidates more than one or two times in the field. As Mary noted,

Typically we've had the cooperating teachers grade the performance based assessments and then the field supervisor refers to this but then re-rates everything and is responsible for the actual grade. The university supervisor's ratings trump the cooperating teacher's because they work with students over and over and they know the standards.

This description helps illustrate that the program seems to be at a disadvantage when negotiating placements of students as at times they struggle to find placements. Further, the program appears to have little power to influence the nature of the field sites and is often forced to compromise to secure placements at all.

Taken together, these descriptions illustrated that the relationship between the field supervisors, sites, and candidates is marked by a limited level of interaction and therefore potentially limited ability to impact candidate learning or field site renewal. The relationship between the university practicum faculty, candidates, and cooperating teachers was described as "pretty traditional" by Gina. Each field supervisor independently conducts formal observations and is responsible for the grading of the candidates they are assigned. There are three practicum meetings a semester which are in essence a form of practicum seminar. All candidates currently enrolled in all practica (infant/toddler, preschool, and primary) meet as a large group with the program faculty and the field supervisors. Mary also meets with the field supervisors "about once a year." There are no group meetings for cooperating teachers which limits their awareness of the program philosophy and goals and therefore their ability to fully assist as team members in the preparation of candidates. The literature pertaining to field sites in teacher education indicates that congruence between teaching practices allowed and encouraged in the field and those promoted by university faculty supports teacher educators in helping candidates gain the



knowledge and skills to fully implement them (Clift & Brady, 2005). Without purposeful interactions it is more difficult to achieve such congruence.

*Nature of field sites.* Interviews across study participants provided additional information regarding the nature of field sites which are available to the program. The program prepares candidates across the birth to eight year age span to work with children with and without special needs. While two current student candidates described the program as equally balanced across those age groups, consensus across all other participants was that the program provided the most depth and strongest experiences related to the preschool age group. Also, consensus of the majority of participants was that the role of preschool classroom teacher was the most supported role by the learning experiences provided by the program. For example, Gina shared, “it’s definitely geared toward classroom teaching and preschool. I mean it’s just the way it is.” In another conversation, Gina explained part of the reason behind this phenomenon.

There's the most examples [in preschool classroom settings]...that's just what they see and that's what they get jobs doing without a license...that's what they are most likely to be doing [when they enter the program]...a lot of them are on a temporary license...it's like an emergency license and they can have it for three years but they have to be showing that they are in school and progressing...so that's what they see.

Mary helped illuminate further contextual aspects that influence the focus on preschool and classroom teaching.

Most of our students come in either working at the three to five level or intending to work at the three to five level and that practicum has the most performance based assessments associated with it and it's the most difficult...but again we think there's a reason for it. That's where most of our graduates end up and then because so many of them never

intend to do birth to three or five to eight we have more flexibility in where they're placed and the types of experiences they have and since most of our students work full time, some of them have absolutely no flexibility for time off during the academic school year and there's only one school district in the area that has yearlong school. That means that primary practicum is really hard and sometimes for students who say, "I never intend to apply for a position to be a special educator in K-2 we allow them to do a summer ESY [extended school year] program plus some supplemental experiences. It doesn't really prepare them to be a special educator in an elementary school but they don't want to...and we don't have enough placements at that one school district to accommodate everyone...so there's some flexibility there based upon their career aspirations.

This apparent dominance of preschool and classroom teaching as opposed to other ages and other settings/roles was also expressed by current candidates and graduates interviewed in the study.

This represents a potential area of *tension* within the activity system and relates to issues of depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) as well as that of PK-12 partnerships (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) as demonstrated here. This issue will be revisited in the next chapter when *tensions* and harmony within the system are discussed as it relates to issues of balance across the program.

Of importance here is that the nature of the relationships between the program and the community early childhood settings does not fully support the program as it pursues its goals. Securing quality field sites that align with a teacher education program's philosophy is considered particularly important for collaborative models of teacher education as it affects the degree to which programs have access to sites where collaboration among general and special education teachers is practiced and relatedly programs' ability to prepare candidates for inclusive

teaching (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). The faculty expressed concern with the models of inclusion employed at available sites and there is an apparent lack of balance in regards to the program's ability to provide a full range of experiences across the various ages and professional roles found in early childhood education and early childhood special education. Further, since the relationships are often tenuous and unreliable, which leads to an ongoing struggle to find and secure sufficient placements, the program's ability to impact the field through partnerships centered on simultaneous renewal might be compromised.

To further understand the nature of field sites commonly used by the program, observations were conducted at three commonly used and valued field sites. These sites were selected by the participating faculty. The selection process occurred after collaborative discussion with me regarding the study parameters and needs. As noted previously, Gina served as the primary conduit through which access to the program was garnered. She therefore could be considered a gatekeeper in this study. The rationale for their selection is apparent in the following interview excerpt from Gina.

I will say that [Site A], [Site B] and [Site C] are probably the best inclusive preschool programs, well the best options that we have. They take [kids with disabilities]. There are other programs that don't accept kids with disabilities and others where a child has to look a certain way to be included. These programs really take all kids. So that's why we use them and why they were selected for the study. Plus they are convenient and accessible. For example I know the curriculum director at [Site B] and I knew we could get in and get a tour. Plus it's an exemplary site. I know [the director] at [Site A] too so I knew we could get a tour but I also know that they are exemplary they are inclusive sites

Mary shared that the three sites matched the program's philosophy "pretty well" and consistently take candidates for practicum experiences. She expressed agreement that these sites understood the program and its expectations well and were subsequently perceived to be able to meet candidates' needs adequately.

Gina also indicated that there are ways in which these three sites do not represent the ideal clinical sites for the program. Specifically she shared that she knows, "that they're not all as good as we'd like them to be." She elaborated by sharing that at each site they have had, "some really good placements and some really not so good placements." She shared that there can be disconnects between the field sites and the philosophy of the program. For example, she has personal struggles with how certain sites view inclusion in terms of ratios of children with and without disabilities which are 50/50 in two of these three sites. She also takes issue with a lack of attention to evidence-based practice within some programs.

Mary shared Gina's perspective that there were ways in which these sites were not ideal. For example, she described the quality of mentoring as "sketchy" at one site due to the early childhood special educators being "spread thin." This further illustrates the fact that the program does not currently possess sufficient clinical sites or mentorship to fully match the program's mission and objectives. Specifically, it alludes to an increased awareness of issues pertaining to clinical practice pertaining to special education.

Observations, coupled with review of documentation pertaining to each of the three sites observed, helped to further illuminate the nature of the sites in relation to the program. All three sites serve children with and without disabilities and employ or are associated with special educators and related service professionals that provide services to children onsite. All three sites employ current candidates and graduates of the program. Mary serves on the community

advisory board for Site A, and Site B is associated with the university through a research and technical assistance center. These connections were offered by Gina and Mary as reasons for the long lasting relationships that have endured. Table 5.1 shares a summary of observational data and document review pertaining to the three sites.

Looking at all three of these commonly used practicum sites, commonalities were evident. All three sites are center-based community early childhood programs serving toddlers through preschool and one site also provided kindergarten as it was associated with the public school district. All three describe themselves as inclusive sites despite variation in proportion of children with and without disabilities. Site B has a population including 20% SWD while the other two have 50% students with disabilities. The primary placement for candidates completing practicum at these sites was that of the ECE classroom teacher, which is possibly related to the fact that faculty felt the special education teachers at some sites to be unavailable or unable to serve as cooperating teachers. However, consultative roles could be observed by auxiliary staff and individualized opportunities to explore coaching or consultative roles were possible if not the norm. Few instances of pairing candidates directly with professionals in consultative roles exist across practicum sites. This will be revisited in the next chapter under tensions, as it presents a complication in preparing candidates for the full range of roles and responsibilities that exist in the field and for which they are licensed for should they pursue licensure through the program.

### **Division of Labor**

Within an activity system, the parameter of *division of labor* examines how tasks are shared among the members of the community. This dictates the roles and responsibilities regarding course and program design, program delivery, field coordination, and field supervision

Table 5.1  
 Descriptions of observed field sites.

Age range served	Site A - Birth to 6 years	Site B - Age 2 years to Kindergarten	Site C - 12 months to 6 years
Key aspects of Mission	Dedicated to meeting the needs of and enhancing opportunities for young children, including those with special needs due to disabilities, developmental delays, and economic disadvantages. Since [Site A] is committed to inclusion, children with special needs learn and grow with their typically developing peers in our integrated educational programs.	Focuses on meeting the developmental needs of children of all abilities. Whether your child is gifted and talented or has special needs, [Site B] can individualize preschool and/or therapy services to meet your needs. [Site B] ensures your children are ready for Kindergarten as well as develops skills that aid in a lifetime of success. [Site B] uses early childhood education practices that have been researched and proven to provide children with the best chance to flourish. These practices are evidence-based and are used to meet the individual needs of all children	The purpose of [Site C] is to provide the highest quality early childhood education for all children, including children with developmental disabilities. [Site C] completes its mission by: Providing exemplary services based on recommended practices for children with diverse abilities and their families; Offering instructional opportunities through collaboration with therapists and various academic programs at local colleges and universities; Engaging in research that positively influences practice in the field of early childhood education at the local, state and national levels; Interfacing with the community through outreach and public awareness activities; Disseminating information and providing assistance to other community-based agencies who work in fields related to Early Childhood Special Education; and affecting policy and systems change at the local, state and national levels.
Services Provided/ on site	Special education and related services for children who qualify under IDEA. Head Start Services Diagnostic Evaluation Clinic (proclaimed transdisciplinary teams)	Individual and small group therapy options including water, speech, occupational, and physical therapies. Sensory-Motor and language-motor group therapies as well.	Occupational, physical, and/or speech therapies, using a collaborative/consultative service delivery model
Classroom Teaching format	Teaching triads which include both ECE and ECSE professionals.	Traditional early childhood classrooms staffed with 1 or 2 teachers.	Classroom staffed by one lead and two assistant teachers. All leads have or are pursuing MA degrees in ECE/ECSE.
Service Delivery model	Therapists embedded in classrooms as members of teaching teams or provide services within classrooms.	School-wide practices (e.g., social-emotional support) employed and embraced. New position of inclusion specialist who consults with teachers created for recent graduate of the program. Previously an ECSE from the school district was a consult on site. Therapies provided on site in therapy room.	Therapists, including OT, PT, SLP, and music are on staff and come into classes to embed therapy and coach teachers.
Ratio	50% students with disabilities	20% students with disabilities	50% students with disabilities
Candidate experiences	Classroom placements joining teaching teams.	Typically summer toddler classroom placements.	Classroom placements joining the lead and assistant teachers
Relationship and history with program and faculty	Mary was employed as a child development specialist earlier in her career. Numerous graduates and current candidates employed here.	National demonstration site for a research and technical assistance center located at the university	Mary currently serves on the advisory board.

within a teacher education program. Issues related to the *division of labor* are inherently helpful when examining the nature of collaboration within a teacher education program. As noted, this program is delivered by two program faculty and a cadre of adjunct faculty and field supervisors. The roles and responsibilities of program and adjunct faculty, and field and cooperating teachers will be described. Then a discussion pertaining to interdisciplinary teaming among the program staff; a characteristic that has been recognized as key to collaborative teacher education (Miller & Stayton, 1998; 2006; Piper, 2007; Pugach & Blanton, 2009) will follow.

**Roles and responsibilities of program and adjunct faculty.** The program faculty are jointly responsible for the coordination, administration, and delivery of the program. As the tenure-line faculty member within the program, Gina is designated as the program coordinator while Mary, a clinical faculty member takes on the responsibility of the field-based components as the practicum coordinator. Both faculty teach classes and advise candidates, albeit these tasks tend to be delegated according to professional designations of ECE and ECSE as will soon be discussed. Gina also has a number of responsibilities outside of the program related to research, grants, and development of new programs including a new doctorate program and several certification programs. Adjunct faculty are hired to teach specific classes and several have taught the same course for many years. As noted, Abby was recently hired to provide additional support as a co-coordinator of the practica. While Mary and Abby possess shared roles across course instruction and field supervision, Gina, the adjuncts, and the field supervisors maintain roles and responsibilities specific to one of these areas within the program. Overall, tasks are typically discussed collaboratively but then delegated discretely.

Observation, interview, and document review illustrated that a concern for equity in terms of quantity of work is evident across the two program faculty. For example, attention is

afforded to ensuring equal quantity of work related to tasks, such as candidate advising and grading of comprehensive exams for those completing the masters in ECE. Of particular interest to collaboration across ECE and ECSE, many tasks are divided between Gina and Mary based on the perceived professional designation or of the candidate involved. For example, Mary shared that she is, “typically the advisor for the MA only students and Gina is the advisor for early childhood special education. Sometimes if there's a huge group and there is an imbalance I take some of the early childhood special education students too.” Course delivery and practicum coordination, the two central activities in the delivery of the program are also delegated.

*Course delivery.* Additionally, course assignments are also delegated based on professional designation with many of the courses deemed most associated with the ECSE licensure assigned to Gina which is in recognition of her depth of knowledge pertaining to current ECSE research and practice. Adjuncts are hired for courses across these divides and teach courses related to their own personal and professional experiences. For example, two primary practitioners are employed to teach a course focused on literacy and mathematics in primary grades. Gina also expressed that her tenure earning status as compared to Mary’s clinical faculty status impact division of labor around course delivery. She shared that she “has more responsibilities around research while Mary has more around teaching.” However, due to Mary’s length of time with the program, Gina shared that coordination of the program is primarily the responsibility of Mary despite the fact that Gina is technically the program coordinator as noted above. Gina explains,

Mary does more than I do in general. She's been here longer and does a lot of the program coordination. She ran the program by herself for three years before I got here. Recently, I've been doing a lot to make sure the curriculum is up to speed. We've been



gradually giving me more things to do. For example, I am now in charge of the adjuncts but even there, she has relationships with some of them so she still works directly with them.

This represents a cultural division of labor valuing Mary's years of experience with the program and the network she has built with adjuncts and field sites. It is also indicative of the nature of their collaboration as it illustrates a culture of delegation more than that of collaborative, shared responsibility.

***Practicum.*** Interview data clearly indicated that the coordination of the practica was also a significant task and that it was delegated primarily to one individual, Mary. Mary described the nature of work required for coordinating the practicum as extremely time intensive due to the variability of university – field site relationships.

...it becomes a situation where practicum is pretty much individually arranged for each group of students each semester we can't just say we can count on placing 5 students here every semester and 5 students here every semester there's not that consistency, its very time intensive.

Recently, as noted above, Abby's role was recently expanded to support Mary as a co-coordinator of the practicum. Therefore, she currently assists with coordinating placements as well as with field supervision.

Additionally, as a clinical faculty member, Mary has a large amount of her time delegated to teaching. As she noted, coordination of the practica is extremely time consuming. It is understandable that the development of relationships more in line with a professional development school model would necessitate a significant amount of time and other resources which are simply not available to this program at this time. The addition of Abby as a team

member who teaches courses, helps coordinate practicum and supervises candidates in the field has the potential of helping the program align with another recommendation from the Miller and Stayton (1998; 2006) studies, as using team members for field supervision was suggested as important to successful collaborative models. The fact that Mary also supervises candidates in the field further aligns with recommendations regarding the importance of clinically-rich teacher preparation (Futrell, 2010; NCATE, 2010) as well and promotes program cohesion across course and field work. Abby indicated that she valued the opportunity to get to know candidates through both course delivery and practicum.

It's really helped now teaching a couple of classes because I feel that I have a better relationships with those students to sort of say ok this is who you are and where do you think you are going and what is it that you are missing and trying to be more intentional about putting students in places that make sense.

Therefore, serving the program in more than one capacity has enhanced her work. Not only did she obtain a better understanding of the candidates as individuals, she also was afforded an opportunity to gain a broader, more comprehensive understanding of the program as a whole and therefore an awareness of its areas of coherence and tension. Other adjunct faculty also have roles and responsibilities within the program.

*Adjunct faculty.* In regards to other adjunct faculty, they are hired on a semester to semester basis to deliver specific courses and Gina is currently in charge of their hiring and supervision. Gina shared that they “don’t meet with the adjuncts as often as we should.” Further, she that most adjuncts have a long history with the program and therefore already possess a working knowledge of the program and its philosophy. When discussing how they feel that philosophy is broadcast by adjuncts, Gina and Mary indicated that they have worked together to

seek adjuncts who they view as sharing this core philosophy from the onset. A level of trust to deliver the program courses in line with the espoused program design is then afforded to adjuncts based on this belief that core philosophies are shared. However, due to the fact that they do not meet regularly, there are few opportunities to conduct oversight or for assurance that the philosophies are indeed shared and broadcast with continuity and congruence across the program. Gina and Mary had indicated that the set of core philosophies are touched upon in every class providing congruence across the program. However, this may be compromised in the absence of team meetings and collaborative course design and delivery.

When new individuals are brought on as adjuncts, Gina and Mary shared that they are given a face to face orientation to the logistical aspects of working for the university and the program structure and to the philosophy of the program. The ECE Student Handbook is relied upon as a means to educate adjuncts in relation to the program. Gina and Mary shared that they ensure adjuncts receive a copy of the handbook and review it with them. Adjuncts are also provided with a syllabus for the course they will teach that is written by one of the program faculty.

Initially, adjuncts are expected to follow the syllabus, however those who have been teaching in the program for a long time are given the freedom to write their own as long as course objectives and standards are followed. Gina and Mary indicate that ECE and ECSE standards are intended to be included in all the syllabi as an additional means of ensuring congruence. Review of syllabi revealed that this is the case for some but not all courses. Gina indicated that oversight of adjuncts has surfaced as a priority due to a recent negative experience where an adjunct acted inappropriately with candidates. Therefore, Gina now provides oversight by being a “blind instructor on the online course shells, conducting some of the grading, and

checking in with students.” This oversight is more focused on appropriateness of interactions with candidates and equity issues than on assurance content or philosophical congruence.

However, her presence in the courses does afford an opportunity should resources permit for such observation. Examination of the character of interactions between program and adjunct faculty, however, did not illuminate areas of collaboration.

**Roles and responsibilities of field and cooperating teachers.** The Program also includes a cadre of professionals who provide supervision to ECSE practicum candidates and consultation to practicum cooperating teachers in an effort to support a mutually beneficial practicum experience. These field supervisors support candidates in planning and completing performance based portfolio products and demonstrating proficiency on required performance based assessments (PBAs). Contact with candidates includes group practicum seminars (three 2-hour meetings each semester), on-site meetings and observations, individual meetings as needed, phone conversations, and email communication (UPF and student responsibilities, n.d.).

I had the opportunity to observe Mary, in her role as field supervisor, with a candidate whom she had just formally observed. This individual was completing her preschool practicum at one of the observed field sites; she was not an employee. The cooperating teacher was not present. The debriefing session consisted of discussion of the candidate’s lesson planning, performance, and reflections. Mary used strategic questioning to require the candidate to engage in reflective practice, which appeared to be the primary purpose of the session. She also provided additional strategies and checked in with the candidate regarding course assignments and deadlines, thereby promoting awareness of program cohesion. The candidate was observed to discuss connections to prior experiences and aspects of the program, showing her own ability to recognize curricular coherence and developmental aspects of the program. They also discussed

progress on an individualized PBA that focused on coaching and consultation, which illustrated an example of how the program tailors learning experiences to particular students and how it offers opportunities to explore various roles from the early childhood and early childhood special education field.

Mary indicated that my observation constituted how the program expects field supervision to proceed and acknowledged that this is not always the case. As noted previously, many candidates and graduates described their relationships with their field supervisors as distant in that most interactions were via email. Indeed, many expressed that their field supervisors did not visit them in the field, not to mention conference with them around their practice. When describing her relationship with her field supervisor, one current candidate stated, “She didn’t do anything. When she would come in, she would just say, “oh you girls are doing so great” and leave. She was just a total liar.”

This is in stark contrast to how Mary described the role of the field supervisor as, “a liaison between the university and the site and as a support to the site itself in their work with the candidate in order to make it easier for the site to have candidates.” As noted, this program is staffed by only two full time program faculty and therefore relies on a cadre of professionals from the community to fill the roles of field supervisors. While the program outlines specific responsibilities for these individuals, they are not properly compensated or supported to fulfill this role in line with recommendations from the field such as that of Valencia, Martin, Place, and Grossman (2009), who recognized that practice does not always lead to learning and that candidates must be provided not only with opportunities to practice but also to learn about that practice. Providing scaffolded learning within the field is an important responsibility of field supervisors that does not appear to take place within this program.

The fact that the program struggles to find and properly support and compensate field supervisors is similar to earlier discussion regarding the position the program is in when working to secure placements and the perception that was shared regarding barriers to finding cooperating teachers willing to not only take candidates but to assist in assessment. Cooperating teachers are charged with providing ongoing mentorship to the candidate within the setting of their own teaching practice. As noted, they are typically classroom teachers who as Mary indicated, are asked to “allow the student to shadow and gradually release some responsibility, let them do the work.” They are also expected to assist the student in completing tasks and assignments pertaining to the performance based assessments. Table 5.2 displays the responsibilities pertaining to field and cooperating teachers.

As can be seen in the table, the program asks cooperating teachers to assist in the assessment of candidates by reviewing and rating the work around performance based assessments completed in the practicum setting. However, as noted above, the assessment piece is an area where the program feels compelled at times to reduce expectations of the cooperating teachers in order to secure placements. Further, while cooperating teachers who are graduates of the program or have worked with the program before are preferred given a belief that they understand the program and candidate expectations, if they do complete assessments, the field supervisor’s ratings “trump those of the cooperating teacher,” as noted by Mary which indicates a lower level of trust in their opinion in relation to the program expectations. This mirrors common practice in the field of teacher education as cooperating teachers typically have limited formal roles in the process of learning to teach which ignores the valuable role the cooperating teacher plays (Borko & Mayfield, 1995).

**Interdisciplinary teaming.** As noted in chapter two, Pugach and Blanton (2009) indicate that examination of faculty collaboration within a collaborative model of teacher education should include investigation into the composition of groups who meet around the program and the nature of those meetings. Important questions regarding faculty collaboration within collaborative models of teacher education include examination of how faculty work to achieve and maintain curricular coherence (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Frequency, purpose, and composition of collaborative faculty meetings are key elements helping to indicate the degree to which collaboration actually occurs and its ability to support a collaborative design. Therefore, perhaps the most important aspects of *division of labor* in an examination of a program as a system of collaborative teacher education are the nature of interdisciplinary teaming employed and the administrative support for a collaborative design.

The work of Miller and Stayton (1998; 2006) presented in chapter two also aids in the examination of the interdisciplinary teaming within the program. The program demonstrates some elements of some of the recommended practices highlighted by this work. For example, the two program faculty meet together regularly to discuss the ongoing activities of the program and jointly revised the conceptual and philosophical framework of the program. Further, they worked together to seek adjuncts who they viewed as sharing this core philosophy. Many elements recommended by participants in the Miller and Stayton (1998; 2006) studies are not currently observed in this program. These included: co- or team-teaching of courses; collaboration on research, writing, and presentations; and adoption of a team approach to instructional design. The

Table 5.2  
Responsibilities of Field and Cooperating Teachers. Note. (ECSE Practicum Supervision Agreement, 2012, p.1).

Field Supervisors	Cooperating teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate and act as university liaison during an initial planning meeting or conference call at the beginning of the practicum semester between the ECSE student, cooperating teacher, and cooperating classroom teacher to ensure that common expectations have been set and are understood.</li> <li>• Observe the student in practice once or twice during the semester and provide feedback during a post-observation conference (which may also include the cooperating teacher). For online practicum students, observations will be completed by the cooperating teacher, who completes submits an Observation of Practicum Student Practice form to the university supervisor.</li> <li>• Provide feedback regarding practicum experiences and PBA requirements. Contact with student may include group practicum seminars, individual meetings, phone conversations, and email communication.</li> <li>• Provide contact information to cooperating teacher and remain available for ongoing communication.</li> <li>• Review student's practicum portfolio and determine final ratings on each required PBA element; post ratings on PBA rubrics in Live Text. Determine practicum grade based on Practicum Sequence of Activities/Requirements for Grade. Submit PBA rating sheets and grades to ECSE Practicum Coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orient student to your program/school, including discussion of the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program/school philosophy/curriculum models</li> <li>• Policies and procedures (RtI, PBIS, IFSP/IEP meetings, discipline, emergencies, etc.)</li> <li>• Introductions to teaching staff and special services personnel with whom student will have contact</li> <li>• Dress code</li> <li>• Visitor badges/ wearing UCD student ID/ procedures for signing in each day</li> <li>• Parking locations/required sticker or tag</li> <li>• Travel arrangements for home visits</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Allow the student to shadow you in your work with children and attend IFSP/IEP meetings, parent conferences and team meetings.</li> <li>• Support student to gradually assume responsibilities of your special educator/early interventionist role (consistent with the ability of the student, the classroom/program schedule, and your program/school policies).</li> <li>• Support ECSE practicum student in planning and completing Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs).</li> <li>• Observe ECSE student in practice on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Meet with student and university supervisor prior to or during the first week of practicum and mid-semester.</li> <li>• Hold regularly scheduled conferences with practicum student in which progress towards meeting practicum requirements is discussed and performance is critically evaluated.</li> <li>• Review and rate practicum portfolio; complete 1-page practicum rating sheet and cumulative/summative observation of practicum student practice form.</li> <li>• Initiate immediate communication with the university practicum supervisor in any instance where student performance and/or personal conduct raises any concern for the well-being of children, families, program staff, or the practicum student.</li> </ul>



subsequent discussion will detail faculty meetings, followed by a brief description of the interdisciplinary composition of the program community. Although adjuncts are responsible for a significant portion of course delivery, they are not included in faculty meetings, which illustrates a dilemma for the program in regards to ensuring program coherence.

***Faculty meetings.*** Of note in this case is that the two program faculty members meet regularly, on a monthly basis. Indeed, this program differs from typical collaborative models that often need to draw faculty participation from different departments or even colleges as the program is a single program offering preparation across ECE and ECSE. Therefore, faculty collaboration between Gina and Mary, the two full time faculty members, was inherently supported by the program structure. Between meetings, however, contact is more limited. In fact, when discussing how program planning documents may support the study, Gina indicated, “I don’t know what would be there, we do most of our communication via email.”

In order to more closely examine the nature of faculty collaboration, identified as an important dimension of collaborative teacher education (Pugach & Blanton, 2009), one faculty program planning meeting was observed as part of this study and minutes/agenda from thirteen previous meetings between January 2011 and March 2013 were reviewed. Topics discussed in these meetings included advising issues pertaining to specific students, as well as general recruitment and enrollment, use, compensation, and hiring of adjunct faculty and university practicum faculty (i.e., individuals hired to supervise practicum students in the field). Task delegation, directly related to the parameter of *division of labor* was also a commonly discussed topic, as were scheduling needs and changes pertaining to courses. Other topics included areas of specialization for candidates such as, infant/toddler, autism, behavior, and literacy certificates as well as accreditation and licensing requirements and reports.

Further, faculty interview and document analysis of these meeting notes/agendas demonstrated that the two program faculty worked collaboratively to revise the program's conceptual and philosophical framework which is a recommended practice in early childhood collaborative teacher education (Miller & Stayton, 2006). Gina and Mary also worked jointly on revisions of the ECE Student Handbook as well as elements of the practica requirements and performance based assessments. Doing so helped them examine and articulate a shared philosophical foundation for the program.

The development of a new undergraduate ECE program was also discussed often across this time period and meeting notes contained evidence of conversations around how to structure the undergraduate program, including ideas for the creation of a dual certification option. Concerns were raised regarding faculty capacity to develop and deliver the second program, as well as whether it was appropriate to offer ECSE licensure at the undergraduate level due to what was perceived to be a limited allotment of credit hours at that level for coverage of ECSE content. This directly evidences attention to the notion of *depth of knowledge* from the Pugach/Blanton (2009) framework and evidences that the faculty was actively examining this issue in the program. This collaborative work is also related to the Pugach/Blanton (2009) framework as it demonstrates attention to *curricular cohesion, depth of knowledge, performance/portfolio assessments, and PK-12 partnerships* from a stance of shared responsibility.

Importantly however, the entire group responsible for the delivery of the program does not convene as a group. This group would include the adjunct faculty, the co-coordinator of practicum, and field supervisors. Ideally, there would also be periodic meeting with cooperating teachers as well. The lack of regular meetings of the entire social group responsible for the

delivery of the program undoubtedly has an impact across all of the program's dimensions of collaborative teacher education but particularly that of curricular coherence (Pugach & Blanton, 2009).

*Interdisciplinary composition of the program community.* While the entire group responsible for delivering the program does not meet regularly, it is marked by an interdisciplinary composition. Specifically, the interdisciplinary nature of the program was enhanced by the particular make-up of the adjunct faculty pool as noted in chapter Four, which includes individuals with backgrounds in general education, special education, and related services. Further, Mary saw the interdisciplinary nature of the candidate population as helping in regards to supporting collaboration across professional disciplines including ECE and ECSE as well as related services.

We've have several related services professionals in our program and they always bring a good perspective to the courses and candidate discussions. Plus, it's always an eye opener for them and supports them to be more play based, peer supported, and focused on providing services in the natural environment [as opposed to a clinical settings]. It's not therapy in preschool.

As related services professionals are an integral component of interdisciplinary practice in early childhood education, particularly for the birth to three population, coupled with mandates for services to be delivered in natural settings, this comment speaks about a potential added benefit of this program's specific format and status as a graduate level program.

Per activity theory, the community and division of labor operate and deliver the program through the application of tools. Such tools allow the program to carry out the roles and responsibilities outlined here. Some tools become ingrained in the structure and philosophy of

programs or organizations and therefore become elevated to the status of cultural tools. Each will be described next.

## **Tools**

*Tools*, as defined in activity theory, include the social others and artifacts that can act as resources for the *subject* during the activity (Engeström, 1987; 1999; Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). Some of these tools become highly valued by a system and through continued and evolving use can be elevated in status to what Engeström (1987) called *cultural tools*. Engeström and Miettinen (1999) assert that the activity itself is therefore cultural and as specific activities among participants become institutionalized, they evolve into enduring tools within the culture of participants (Cole & Engeström, 1993). Therefore, tools can be transformed into *cultural tools* by the way the subject of the activity decides to use, discontinue use, and/or share them (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). As this study is concerned with the collaborative nature of the program as opposed to its general function, this discussion will briefly summarize *common tools* inherent in the program and then center on *cultural tools* pertaining to the program as a collaborative system of teacher education, which were identified through analysis and application of the conceptual framework.

**Common tools.** As noted in chapter three, any teacher education program has many tools at its disposal. These elements of the program are used to develop and guide the enactment of the program. In terms of discussing this program's congruence and collaborative design, the most salient of these common tools are the course syllabi and assignments as they relate to the performance based assessments.

**Course syllabi and assignments.** As noted, each course instructor is responsible for the design and implementation of syllabi and course assignments pertaining to the courses they

teach. Program faculty wrote original syllabi for the vast majority of the program courses, with the exception of the course on medical and physiological aspects of development, which was originally developed by the current instructor. Once adjuncts have taught a class for a period of time dependent on faculty perceptions and trust in that individual, they are afforded flexibility to change their courses as they see fit as long as the course objective and personnel standards are met. Barbara had indicated that the blended nature of the original collaborative design was at the course level. The current program continues to employ single classes that cover both ECE and ECSE content related to the topic at hand. This will be discussed more fully in the next section on cultural tools.

Of particular interest to this program's congruence, faculty indicated that course assignments were designed to provide early knowledge and skill development leading up to full implementation and demonstration of proficiency through the performance based assessments embedded in practicum. Therefore, analysis of course syllabi coupled with communication with program faculty helped identify specific examples of this intention. One such situation is highlighted here to provide an example.

The course, "Social Competence and Classroom Supports," is one of the core courses shared across all programs of study offered in the program. Review of the most recent syllabus (Spring 2013) revealed the following course description:

The primary focus of this course is the cognitive and social development of infants and young children, and problems that may occur during the process. Equally emphasized are prevention, positive behavior support, and intervention approaches for children birth to eight. Knowledge, skills, and competencies related to working with children with behavioral challenges will be emphasized. There will be a focus on the practical

application of intervention strategies based on current research. This class will focus on the implementation of evidence-based strategies (p.1).

Evident in this description, the course covers content pertaining to both typical and atypical child development related to social-emotional development and behavior, demonstrating the blended content at the course level as described earlier as central to the collaborative design of this program.

As noted earlier, candidates completed a performance based assessment titled, “Challenging Behaviors.” This particular PBA was developed by Mary, Gina, and Barbara. The practicum handbook contains the following description of the performance based assessment.

This Challenging Behaviors PBA will be introduced in *ECE 5070: Social Competence and Classroom Supports* or *ECE 5202: Stress, Violence, and Behavior Challenges* and applied during **two out of three** practica (infant/toddler, preschool, or primary) during which students will engage in essential experiences related to working with young children with behavior challenges:

- Design and implement functional behavior assessment (FBA) and positive behavior intervention support (PBIS) plan
- Collect, summarize, and interpret data to inform and evaluate plan
- Collaborate with team members, including family, to create plan
- Plan and implement activity that promotes social and emotional development (p. 19)

As can be seen in this description, the course referenced above is explicitly included as connected to this assessment. Looking at the course syllabus, the culminating assignment is an example of

how candidates are afforded an early experience to develop skills. The description of the assignment is as follows:

Develop a Positive Behavioral Intervention Support Plan based on the completed, comprehensive functional assessment (assignment #6). Use the PBIS Plan format provided. Design an implementation checklist for teachers or parents to use to support their implementation of the plan. (This will be the same as your PBS Performance-based Assessment for your ECE practicum.) The plan must include the following information: Description of the Problem Behavior (topography, intensity, frequency, and parent / teacher concerns); Function of the Problem Behavior (with clear and specific examples); Prevention strategies (Things to do all the time); Describe functional, generative replacement skills to be taught; Describe teaching strategies for increasing or teaching replacement skills; What to do when the problem behavior occurs; and a Comprehensive Implementation Checklist (Course Syllabi, 2013, p. 12).

Therefore, this class assignment asked students to develop a behavior plan that will be the same or similar to that which they will implement in their practicum. This can be considered developmental and linked to the performance based assessments in practicum. Mary described their intention as follows.

During courses they do assignments that rather mirror the types of things they will be doing in practicum, but in practicum they're implementing things under supervision whereas in classes sometimes they are just either planning or maybe not implementing or they're implementing but they're not being supervised.

This focus on developmental, sequenced learning also showed promise as a cultural tool and therefore additional discussion can be found in the next section.

**Cultural tools.** Cultural tools can be considered key elements of a system that are particular features and often facilitators of attainment of the *object(s)* and ultimate *outcome(s)* of the system. Therefore, examination into cultural tools within this collaborative model of teacher education helped to illuminate the specific elements or components of the program design and enactment that could be used to categorize the program as collaborative as well as to define the nature or level of that collaboration. Several elements of the program surfaced through data analysis that showed promise as cultural tools. These elements were seen as employed by the program in pursuit of its *object* of preparing early childhood leaders and ultimately its aspired *outcome* of promoting quality inclusive practice for young children and their families. They include: (1) the use of a core program of study across outcome options; (2) a value in and use of practical, authentic, and developmental learning experiences structured around performance-based portfolio assessments; and (3) the use of graduate and candidate perceptions of need to guide the program.

*Use of a core program of study across outcome options.* As previously noted and displayed in Appendix G, the program possesses different programs of study for each of the degree and licensure options available to candidates. These programs of study are built around a core set of courses that draw from both ECE and ECSE philosophical and theoretical foundations. All students, regardless of outcome option chosen, are required to complete this core set of courses. The espoused program design holds that each course be marked by embedded ECE and ECSE content. As discovered through interview with Barbara, this focus on the course level as where to locate the blended nature of the program was the approach taken to blend content across ECE and ECSE. Therefore, the structure of programs of study reflect a



longstanding program practice of blending ECE and ECSE content at the course level that has become institutionalized, and therefore has become a *cultural tool* within the program.

As discussed in chapter two, Pugach and Blanton (2009) indicate that curricular coherence is a key tenet of collaborative teacher education and that in an ideal situation this could extend to all aspects of the program. The fact that the program possesses different outcome options associated with different programs of study might lead to an assumption that the program is not an example of collaborative teacher education. However, the core set of coursework, or program of study, is intended to ensure candidates are prepared in both ECE and ECSE and further to be developmental nature. Therefore the use of a core program of study shared across outcomes aligns with this notion of curricular coherence (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) and further indicates the program attempts to provide curriculum that reflects depth of knowledge pertaining to both ECE and ECSE. However, the presence of multiple options in terms of program options also presents elements of tension in that as the program attempts to meet diverse needs of candidates, some aspects may be lost. For example, this program, in its efforts to meet the needs of both ECE and ECSE professionals who tend to be currently working, focuses primarily on the preschool population making the role of early interventionist, a role typically filled by an ECSE, less stressed within the program. Foci on various ages of children, roles of candidates and other aspects of the breadth of preparation the program attempts to provide will be discussed further in chapter six.

Content analysis of syllabi pertaining to the core program of study revealed that ECE and ECSE content is embedded throughout many courses as intended by design. For example, the syllabus for a course addressing approaches to early childhood education included the course schedule depicted in Figure 5.1.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Presentation Topic:</b>	<b>Reading Assignments:</b>
August 22	Welcome and Introductions Review of Syllabus and Assignments Small Group Discussion: The Role of Theory	Articles: Role of Theory
August 29	The Role of Theory continued Bloom's Taxonomy- Small group practice with analysis, synthesis and evaluation	
September 12	World Class Café: What we know about Dewey Dewey in Depth- Philosophical Bends	<i>Education and Experience</i> by John Dewey
September 17 (all day)	Dewey in Education- Student Learning and Instruction and Application of Theory in ECE  Behaviorism/ Skinner	Gredler- Chapter 4 Roopnarine and Johnson- Chapter 5
September 19	Behaviorism/Skinner	
September 26	Cognitive- Development/ Piaget	Gredler- Chapter 8 Roopnarine and Johnson- Chapter 9
October 3	Cognitive- Development/ Piaget-	
October 8 (all day)	Cultural- Historical/ Vygotsky  Work Time for Team Presentations	Gredler- Chapter 9 Roopnarine and Johnson- Chapter 10
October 10- Class begins at 6:30pm	Multiculturalism	Roopnarine and Johnson- Chapter 6
October 17	Bronfenbrenner	Article: Goldstein
October 24	Thriving and Resilience in Children and Adults	
November 7	Team Presentations	

Figure 5.1. Course Outline. Approaches to Early Childhood Education (Syllabus, 2011, p. 3).

As can be seen foundational theory discussed in this class represent those from both fields (see chapter two) and appear to be presented in a blended manner as opposed to demarcating certain theorists as ECE or ECSE.

The Language and Literacy course covers both typical and atypical language development as evidenced by the following course description from the syllabus.

Overview of normal early language and literacy development, language components, and pertinent research relating to early language and literacy acquisition. Emphasis is placed on language challenges commonly demonstrated by young children with disabilities and appropriate assessment and interventions strategies in EI and in preschool classrooms.

Information distinguishing language differences associated with learning English as a

second language from disorders is presented and discussed (Language and Literacy Syllabus, n.d., p.1).

In an interview with Betty, the adjunct who has taught this particular course since the 1990s, added further information regarding how the course presents content from a perspective of cultural and linguistic diversity.

I think that in the specific coursework that I teach, like language and literacy that we really try to make the point that every child is coming from a culture...that every child is unique and diverse and that you if they come from a culture that is different from your own that you really need to learn about that culture, the beliefs, the expectations, customs...it's more to me individual consideration...that every child and family is going to be coming from their own life ways, their own values, beliefs and that part of teaching is building that relationship with families...whether the child has an identified special needs sort of speak or a challenge in communication or challenge because they were born with Down Syndrome or a challenge because they have CP or because they're also a dual language learner coming from a lower SES status.. There are many factors that are involved...and so I see it as diversity in its broadest sense. But at the same time teachers really need to understand specific developmental challenges that can interfere with the child's growth and development but in the context of that family.

This demonstrates a potential area where disability is considered an aspect of broader notions of diversity, as Betty discusses the focus on individualization regardless of the source of a difference in development. She clearly defines disability as part of diversity.

Another course, *Curriculum and Program Development*, included a major assignment around curriculum. The following excerpt details the requirements.

- Provide a descriptive overview of **contextual factors of the classroom, school, and community** which includes:
  - Community—geographic location, community stability, socio-economic status, community support for education, and other environmental factors
  - School—school and district factors that influence learning-teaching context
  - Classroom—classroom arrangement, schedule, classroom rules and routines, availability of equipment and resources, adults present in classroom and adult/child ratio; availability of support personnel (ECSE, OT, PT, SLP, mental health consultant, etc.), level of family involvement
  - Number of children, age range, gender distribution, linguistic and cultural diversity (including number of English language learners)
  - Learning needs/styles, range of abilities (including number of children with IEPs and number identified as gifted/talented) (Syllabus, p. 4, emphasis in original).

This excerpt appears to illustrate that candidates are to consider this assignment primarily from an ECE classroom teacher perspective such as when considering the availability of support personnel and the diversity of the student population. This particular example seems to afford candidates an opportunity to explore a traditional role of an ECE classroom teacher from an inclusive perspective. This may be an example where an imbalance between the depth of knowledge from both fields exists, as this course is the sole course in the program exploring curriculum design and it does so primarily from the perspective of the ECE classroom teacher. This issue of balanced depth of knowledge will be revisited in the later discussion of *harmony* and *tension*. Of additional note is the separation of disability from other aspects of diversity

which is discussed by Pugach and Blanton (2009), as an issue of interest for research in to collaborative models of teacher education as it relates to broader issues of educational reform.

As noted in chapter four, Barbara's description of how and why the program originally blended content from ECE and ECSE was that the program worked to blend content previously delegated to each of the fields at the course level by merging courses centered on the same content (e.g., language development) into one new blended course. In this way depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) from both fields was incorporated in a merged way as opposed to an add-on model of requiring separate courses from each field. This course-level location of blended content seems to continue as a strategy in the modern program.

However, some courses are seen by faculty as coming primarily from one field, such as a course on intervention and one on assessment, seem to retain a perspective from a single field as primary and might constitute an "add-on" model of blended content. Admittedly they are not members of the shared, core program of study, being required only of those individuals pursuing the ECSE license. In terms of the intervention course, it is designed to support the development of knowledge and skills pertaining to evidence based practice in early intervention and early childhood special education (EI/ECSE). Of note it is not one of the courses shared across all programs of study. It is required within the dual option however, but not for candidates only pursuing an ECE Master's. Its course description and course objectives are:

**Course Description:** This course provides an overview of approaches, strategies, and EB research related to intervention planning and implementation for young children with special needs and their families including those from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Specific theoretical models, approaches, interaction strategies, procedures

for accountability and policies and procedures related to implementation of federal mandates (IDEA, 2004 IEP/IFSP) will be reviewed and practiced

Course objectives:

- Describe and use EI & ECSE terminology and differentiate terms
- Describe evidence based practices in EI & ECSE
- Describe the guiding principles of EI & ECSE
- Describe the components of a unified theory of practice in EI / ECSE
- Describe and identify the models of service delivery in EI
- Demonstrate and describe effective consultation strategies in EI / ECSE
- Describe the benefits and evidence base for inclusion
- Describe a tiered model of intervention – recognition and response
- Describe the components of embedded instruction
- Create embedded instruction plans (embedding schedules)
- Write appropriate IEP and IFSP goals and objectives
- Create and use appropriate data collection systems for monitoring child progress and informing teaching strategies
- Describe and differentiate child-focused, naturalistic teaching strategies
- Describe strategies to promote engagement in classrooms and home settings
- Describe and demonstrate strategies for planning and implementing individualized adaptations and modifications

Further, the required readings for this particular course are comprised of texts and articles from the early childhood special education literature as opposed to being from both fields. The curriculum course described above may be another such course where one field is dominant as it

focuses primarily on the role of the classroom teacher, traditionally held by an ECE professional. The curriculum course however is a required course across programs of study. This conception of courses where one field appears dominant may represent missed opportunities to fully merge or collaborate across the two fields as with the espoused design of blended content at the course level. However, when taken together it is possible that courses, such as Intervention Strategies and Curriculum and Program Development could be designed to complement each other as an alternative way to ensure depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) from both fields across the program as a whole. Another way in which the program is designed to act as a holistic system where all components work in tandem is in the valued placed in practical, authentic, and developmental learning activities which are discussed next.

*Practical, authentic, developmental learning activities.* Many of the participants spoke to a perceived value in and commitment to practical, authentic learning opportunities through a developmental progression of experiences within the program. As described earlier in this chapter, assignments within classes are intended to prepare candidates for their work in practicum and in particular for the performance bases assessments. Gina described this as follows when discussing candidate learning and assessment,

They have to do performance based assessments in their practica, but they practice those in coursework. So they do that work beforehand and get feedback on it and then they have to do pretty much the exact same thing in their practicum. We talk about the connection there.

Looking to insight from current candidates expressed during interviews, it was evident that many shared this perception of curricular coherence associated with the practical focus within the program. For example one candidate commented that, “You get to practice skills to prepare for

the PBAs [performance-based assessments] and then do them in practicum.” While others added, “I think that they [the courses] pleasantly overlap...they reinforce each other” and “I think the practicums really do pull things together for us.” These comments clearly illustrated that candidates were not only aware of the coherence but valued it as well.

Graduates supported this as well. The following statement from a graduate of the program illustrated that she also perceived the performance based assessments as supported by previous learning activities.

I was working in a preschool during [my time in] the program so I was able to do those earlier assignments, obviously, right in my classroom. I think by the time I got to practicum, with all the requirements we had, I had already crafted each one of the PBAs in some manner.

The emphasis on authentic, practical application of knowledge and skills through multiple opportunities of practice in a developmental nature was a theme expressed by members across the participant categories. Therefore a theme of ongoing practical experiences being embedded throughout the program was evident. Further, the experiences were seen as developmental as noted previously as they are intended to build upon each other giving candidates early opportunities to explore and continued opportunities to practice and expand their skills. As highlighted earlier, Mary commented on the developmental nature of the program as well as the way content is connected across program components by stating that the program is designed to help candidates make the connections between the course work and the field by having students do assignments that mirror the types of things they will be doing in practicum. Therefore, PBAs were considered to be a culminating performance based assessment for which candidates received several previous opportunities to gain and refine related skills.



Gina and Mary illuminated their personal perception of the importance of the PBAs to the central goals of the program when asked to describe the key experiences within the program. For example, Mary shared that

The performance based assessments that they complete in practica are the most important aspects of our program. Although they complain and whine about how much work it is, at the end they say ‘this got me ready.’

The value of the PBAs was also shared by several current students and graduates. For example, one current student shared that “the PBAs I think they are all really valuable assignments. They were by far the most meaningful [part of the program] for me so far.” Graduates of the program also discussed these elements. One graduate who had completed the dual option stated the following.

I loved how in depth she taught us to do our lesson plans and reflection. The reflective questions on all of our PBAs were what I learned the most from, just reflecting on ... seeing what I’d done in the past, how I wanted to do things different. That just showed me that a teacher doesn’t have the answer every single day or have done the best they could every single day, as long as they reflect and know, “Next time, I’m going to try this differently.” Or, “Wow, that didn’t really work. I can reflect on it, it’s okay.” I really loved that aspect of all of our PBAs, the reflection part.

This comment not only illustrates her value in the PBAs but also illuminates the power of reflection embodied in the practical authentic learning experiences.

The centrality and value in the PBAs was also illuminated through a publication written by Mary and a colleague. This publication, mentioned previously, stressed how the development and use of PBAs strengthened the program’s preparation of candidates as data on candidate

proficiency levels on the PBAs were compiled and used to make modifications to the overall program (Faculty Publication, 2008). Overall, the PBAs were described as an effective way to enhance the professional development of candidates and measure critical professional knowledge and skills for early childhood teaching (Faculty publication, 2008).

The use of the PBAs therefore appeared to be used as a central learning path woven throughout the entire program. This relates to the dimension of faculty collaboration from the Pugach and Blanton (2009) framework as it suggests a context where all faculty would be working collaboratively to ensure this developmental trajectory was maintained and connected. Therefore, it also speaks to the perceptions of curricular coherence as discussed previously. Further, the PBAs and their use relate to the performance/portfolio assessments dimension of the Pugach/Blanton (2009) framework as it became clear that assessment of candidates was found to culminate with portfolios during practica which were structured around these key performance based assessments. Therefore, the PBAs are clearly a central, valued component of the program and can be considered an institutionalized, cultural tool. As noted, graduate perception was mentioned by Mary as a way of providing evidence of the worth of performance based assessments. This focus on and use of graduate perceptions to assess and guide the program represents the final cultural tool to be discussed here.

*Use of graduate perceptions.* The use of graduate perceptions of the program was identified as an additional cultural tool. Data analysis also revealed a commitment to individualizing the program to meet the specific career aspirations and expressed needs of candidates. As mentioned previously, the program has relied on the insight of an advisory board in the past. Mary shared how graduate perceptions were seen as valued and important.

Several of our graduates who are several years out and now in professional positions have been members of the advisory board. We ask questions like; what should we be tinkering with? What could use some revision in terms of content or skills or just emphasis based upon what you know now that you are out in the field? What do you wish you had more of? Was there some repetition that you feel would have been better spent in another way? So that's an added benefit that they know the program and they can provide some really good feedback.

Despite the lack of recent advisory board activity due to lack of resources in the form of time to organize meetings, program faculty discussed a continued focus on using graduate perceptions to guide the program. This was most evident in the fact that the program relies on past graduates to fill the roles of adjunct faculty and field supervisors. Two of the four adjunct faculty members I encountered during this study were former graduates and certainly have a voice in the planning of the program as they have authorship of the courses they teach. Indeed, Abby described how she has modified one of the course she teaches.

One of the classes that I teach is administrative seminar...and that course as I looked it over and I was sort of granted some freedom by [Mary] and [Gina] I really felt like what we are producing from this program is not really the administrator...or somebody who would or a director of an ECE center...when I look at the people who come out of this program that is not a majority. I think that the majority of the students end up as ECSE in the public schools...many of them these days are connected to autism and a lot of the stuff that is going on around there like some of those non-profit non-inclusive places....but very very few of them are the people who go out and open up or have an ECE center...of some kind. Specifically inclusive. There are some of them but not so many. So when I

structured admin seminar I felt like it wasn't if we were the target audience and I talk about this a ton is leadership capacity...really the idea that in the work that you do when you leave here you have a capacity for leadership.

This description illustrates how Abby considered her own experiences with the program as a graduate, her perceptions regarding the goals and needs candidates, as well as her experience as an instructor to tailor this specific course to match what she saw as the needs for candidates and graduates.

### **Rules**

According to CHAT, an activity system is also influenced by *rules*, formal and informal regulations, which can affect the activity in various ways. When examining this parameter of the activity system, one can consider that any teacher education program is subject to certain *rules* such as local, state, and national policies, licensure regulations, and professional standards. The program of interest in this study is no different. To apply the conceptual framework, the rules most relevant to collaborative teacher education at the early childhood level are of importance. These include: licensure regulations and personnel preparation standards and program practice and policy. As noted, the parameters within an activity system are highly interrelated. This is certainly the case here as many program policies having significant impact on the program were found to serve as tools within the activity system and several were found to fit the notion of cultural tools. Therefore, they have already been discussed in the previous sections. However, there licensure and personnel standards represent additional *rules* that warrant further discussion.

**Licensing regulations and personnel standards.** While only one discipline is represented in the licensure structure of the program, faculty indicated that personnel prep standards from both fields are attended to in the program design. As noted in chapter four, the

program has identified specific learning outcomes for candidates which are listed in the ECE Student Handbook (2012). Of importance to the discussion of personnel preparation standards, these learning outcomes were found to be aligned with and derived from the standards. Therefore, the standards helped form the foundation of the program and influence it at all levels. For example, Table 5.3 presents a side by side comparison of select CEC content standards and program learning outcomes.

As can be seen by these two examples, the language and focus of the learning outcomes are clearly aligned with and derived from the CEC content standards. While the program was only concerned with ECSE and therefore CEC standards as the performance based assessments were designed for the practicum courses that were specific to candidates pursuing licensure, the program expanded some standards to reflect its blended nature. Additionally, as noted previously, there is a long history of collaboration between NAEYC and CEC/DEC and standards from each professional organization include similarities. An example of the expansion reflecting the blended nature can be seen in the first example in Table 5.1, the program extends the use of individualized instruction to all children where the CEC content standard addressed it to individuals with exceptional learning needs. The recent alignment of personnel preparation standards from NAEYC and CEC/DEC will undoubtedly reinforce and support this process.

In 2000, NCATE mandated the use of performance-based assessments of teacher candidates related to mastery of content knowledge and effective teaching. Subsequently, the state licensure pertaining to this program changed the expectations of teacher education by requiring the implementation such performance-based assessments. According to the K-12

Table 5.3

Comparison of ECE and Program Standards. Note. Side by side comparison of CEC Content standards (Faculty publication, 2008, p., 10, emphasis added) and program learning outcomes (ECE Student Handbook, 2012, p. 5, emphasis added).

CEC Content Standard	Program Learning Outcome
Special educators possess a <i>repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to individualize instruction for individuals</i> with exceptional learning needs.	Successful early childhood educators demonstrate the ability to design and implement developmentally appropriate curricula and create effective learning environments for young children. They understand and are able to implement a <i>repertoire of evidence-based, child-focused, culturally responsive instructional strategies to individualize instruction</i> for all children, including those with special needs and those whose primary language is not English.
Special educators understand the similarities and differences in human development and the characteristics <i>between and among individuals with and without exceptional learning needs</i> .	Successful early childhood educators demonstrate knowledge of child growth and development and individual learning differences <i>between and among young children with and without special needs</i> .

faculty at this university, this presented a dramatic shift in focus from the previous programmatic content and processes of teacher education within the university (K-12 Faculty publication, 2007).

The shift toward performance based assessments led directly to the development of the Performance Based Assessments or PBAs specific to the early childhood program. As they have become a valued and institutionalized component of the program they will also be discussed later as a *cultural tool*. However, the PBAs are important here as they were designed to meet CEC/DEC content standards and demonstrate teacher candidate knowledge, skills, and

dispositions therefore demonstrating a direct influence of the personnel development standards. Performance based assessments are found across the program and were developed by a team comprised of the ECE program faculty, exemplary graduates currently working in a variety of early childhood settings and roles, university practicum faculty, and employers of graduates (Faculty publication, 2008).

Originally, nine fully performance based assessments requiring teacher candidates to demonstrate proficiency on specific teaching tasks within authentic settings were developed and embedded within the practica (Faculty publication, 2008). Originally, the PBAs covered a range of topics including: assessment, challenging behavior, curriculum, intervention, literacy, mathematics, primary literacy, primary mathematics, and professional practice (Faculty publication, 2008). Currently, the ECE Student Handbook (2012) indicates that candidates in the ECSE licensure option complete the following seven PBAs:

- Assessment (Infant/Toddler and Preschool)
- Challenging Behaviors (2 out of 3 practica)
- Curriculum (Preschool)
- Intervention (Infant/Toddler and Preschool)
- Literacy and Mathematics (Preschool)
- Primary Special Educator (Primary)
- Professional Practice (p. 8).

Additionally, candidates in this program option must demonstrate proficiency in regards to state licensure standards and requirements, and state performance-based standards for teachers. These highly correlate with those of NAEYC and CEC/DEC. In 2001, CEC and NAEYC began NCATE program reviews of blended EC/ECSE teacher education programs

using both sets of standards and the CEC common core (Pugach et al., 2011). While this program did not ever actually apply for NCATE accreditation as a blended program, faculty both historical and current shared that they have always attended to the related standards.

Taken together, the state licensure requirements, state standards for teachers, and standards from these national professional organizations are infused throughout the program and are present within the course syllabi, course assignments, and PBAs completed in the context of practica.

### **Summary**

This chapter completes the analytic description of the program as an activity system. When combined with chapter four, the parameters inherent to an activity system have each been reviewed through the lens of collaborative teacher education. As noted, these parameters are inherently interrelated and highly influential of each other. These interactions illuminate areas of harmony where alignment is high and congruence can be seen as well as *tensions* where various elements of parameters are not aligned and therefore lack congruence per activity theory (Engeström, 1987; 1999). These areas of harmony and tension will be discussed in the next chapter along with a final discussion of the collaborative nature of the program.



## Chapter 6

### **Conclusions, Implications, and Needs for Future Research**

Collaborative models of teacher education have grown out of a belief that through collaboration across traditionally discrete programs of teacher education we can improve the quality and availability of inclusive opportunities for children of diverse abilities and their families. Little is known, however, as to the extent collaborative models are capable of influencing inclusive service delivery or in terms of their efficacy to impact the relative inclusive practice of their graduates as compared to other models of teacher education. As an important first step toward examination of the relative worth and efficacy of collaborative models, this case study applied a conceptual framework derived from activity systems theory (Engeström, 1987; 1999) and the recommended research framework for investigation into collaborative models of teacher education (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) to consider one such teacher education program as a system. Doing so produced a description of one program's parameters of practice as they relate to collaboration and efforts to produce effective, inclusive teachers and leaders through a collaborative approach; something that was previously lacking in the literature base.

This chapter provides discussion of the study findings by contextualizing the program in the analytical framework (Wolcott, 1994) and discussing conclusions regarding its operation as a system of collaborative teacher education. First, the program is examined further as a system of collaborative teacher education by first classifying the program's collaborative nature per the continuum of collaboration proposed by Blanton and Pugach (2011) and second by probing

elements of *harmony* and *tension* per activity theory observed within the program. Then, a summary of the program's key tenets and characteristics as perceived by study participants is presented and critiqued. Subsequently, implications gleaned for current and future applications of collaborative teacher education in early childhood and recommendations for future research are shared.

### **The Program as a System of Collaborative Teacher Education**

Analysis of this program through application of the conceptual framework provided insight related to current and future collaborative teacher education efforts and teacher education reform. First, the collaborative nature of the program is classified along the continuum of collaboration (Blanton & Pugach, 2011; Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Then, discussion of harmonies and tension per activity theory (Engeström, 1999) follows.

**Characterizing the collaborative nature of the program.** Throughout this study, the Pugach and Blanton (2009) research framework for inquiry into collaborative models of teacher education has been used as a lens to examine and understand the early childhood teacher education program. Considering each of the five dimensions of collaborative models in a summative manner helped complete this analysis and supports a tentative description and classification of the nature of collaborative model employed.

**Curricular coherence.** The core philosophies identified by this program were indicative of programmatic efforts embedded in the design of the program to blend the two fields. Faculty felt strongly that curricular coherence was promoted through the fact that these core philosophies were a part of every class. Learning outcomes were also identified which were developed from personnel preparation standards from both CEC/DEC and NAEYC. Performance based assessments (PBAs) were also developed using national preparation standards and state licensure

requirements and embedded into the three practica courses taken by candidates pursuing ECSE licensure. Learning activities were found to be infused throughout coursework relating to and preparing candidates to demonstrate proficiency of knowledge and skills through the PBAs. In turn, these PBAs supported another tool of coherence, the focus and use of practical, authentic, and developmental learning opportunities, which was identified previously as an apparent *cultural tool* within the program. The use of the PBAs to support this developmental trajectory of knowledge and skill development appeared to be used as a central learning path woven throughout the entire program. Issues surfaced, however, regarding the enactment of this espoused design. The lack of a cohort model, coupled with admission of new candidates each semester and limited program capacity which resulted in the fact that each specific course can only be offered once a year, all complicated candidates' ability to follow the espoused course sequence.

***Faculty collaboration.*** As discussed previously, Miller and Stayton (1998; 2006) conducted two national survey studies which resulted in recommendations for interdisciplinary practice within collaborative models of early childhood teacher education. Several of these recommendations helped further examine the interdisciplinary practices within this program. Barbara described the context in which the program was originally changed to a collaborative model as a "highly collaborative culture" which was fueled by a "synergy" of knowledge and innovation across the country. This synergy was initiated by the 1986 amendments to IDEA, increasing the presence of children with special needs in typical early childhood settings coupled with a lack of qualified personnel in such settings, licensing changes, and increased collaboration between CEC/DEC and NAEYC.

The early design was constructed by a team of both program (teaching) and research faculty representing the fields of educational psychology, early childhood special education, and early childhood education. Adjunct faculty were also involved in early course development, including Betty, who added speech and language pathology and infant perspectives to the team. The professional identities of these individuals across various professional designations were also factors as they too were marked by experiences with and value for inclusive practice. Faculty designed the program together, worked together to deliver it, and developed research and published together. The core element of collaborative teacher preparation has been identified as the interdisciplinary faculty team (Hyson, 2003; Mellin & Winton, 2003; Miller & Stayton, 1998). Given Barbara's description, it appears that this crucial element was present at the time of the original work toward the blended design.

Today, the program is administered and maintained by two full time faculty. Barbara shared that administrative decisions based on budgetary issues led to a separation from the research faculty who had previously been involved. The two core faculty meet on a monthly basis to discuss and coordinate the day to day function of the program. As noted, the entire team responsible for delivery of the program rarely if ever meets. This leads to a lack of opportunity to ensure curricular cohesion across all elements of the program or for the group to think critically about the purpose and nature of their collaboration or of the blended nature of the program as a whole. The two core faculty have recently worked together to revise the student handbook, which helped them establish a common knowledge, understanding, and terminology--a recommendation of the Miller and Stayton (2006) findings. Of note, the mission and program philosophies stop short of explicitly labeling the program as collaborative, blended, or unified. They do however stress that the program prepares candidates to work with children both with

and without special needs in urban, diverse settings. Additionally, it is notable that some elements in the mission and program description contain instances of discrete professional designations.

The handbook is relied upon as a means to promote program coherence as it is shared with all program participants. However, this does not represent sufficient faculty collaboration, as it is used with adjuncts or field supervisors only at the beginning of their relationships with the program. This initial introduction might help the program enact its commitment to working only with individuals who share the program philosophy and help screen candidates. However, there was no evidence of ongoing whole group exploration of the program philosophy or collaboration as faculty do not currently engage in planning and delivery of the program in a collaborative or interdisciplinary manner. As this was identified as a key tenet to collaborative teacher education in early childhood education (Miller & Stayton, 1998, 2001), its absence in the program is particularly problematic.

Seeking administrative support is also a recommendation from Miller and Stayton (1998; 2006) and program faculty reported a sense of isolation from the other functions of the school of education. The program has a long history of being considered an independent, stand-alone program, which seems to have persisted. Program faculty appear to be lacking systemic support to fully deliver the program. Overall the program and adjunct faculty described a lack of resources to do all that needs to be done within the program. Specifically, due to its size relative to the number of full time faculty, the program relies heavily on adjuncts to deliver the program across course and field components. Further, participants expressed a need for better compensation for field supervisors and sites and time and resources for coordination of program. Again, while this identifies an issue inherent to teacher education in general, these factors limit

the ability of the program's faculty to fully collaborate around philosophy and purpose which has been documented as particularly essential for successful collaborative practice (Miller & Stayton, 1998; 2006; Piper, 2007; Pugach & Blanton, 2009).

Further, instructional design and delivery was found to be a relatively independent venture completed by the specific instructor of a course. No shared delivery of program components was evident, which prevented candidates from observing faculty collaboration which is seen as one way to prepare them for collaborative roles after completing the program (Blanton & Pugach, 2011; Miller & Stayton, 2006). However, faculty reported being cognizant of details pertaining to their colleagues' courses and candidates and graduates shared related observations.

In terms of candidate advising, program faculty share some responsibility by discussing candidates collaboratively. However, each is the primary advisor for individual students, with Gina working with candidates designated as ECSE, based on the fact that they are pursuing the ECSE licensure option. Mary works with those designated ECE. When numbers are unequal, Mary takes some candidates labeled ECSE. In general advising and other tasks were discussed in program meetings but delegated to individual members for completion rather than completed in a collaborative manner. Candidate reports also seemed to indicate that each faculty member had distinct responsibilities as opposed to a sense of shared leadership.

***Depth of Knowledge.*** A central issue for collaborative models is related to what constitutes the respective expertise for general and for special educators (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). This program operates from a shared, core program of study which is designed to be reflective of both fields and which all candidates complete, regardless of whether they are pursuing ECE or ECSE solely or dually. The program currently identifies two courses as specific

to ECSE and therefore beyond this core set of coursework. Therefore, it can be argued that the shared coursework represents what is seen as crucial expertise for ECE, while the additional courses are seen as ECSE specific expertise beyond that which early childhood general educators need to know and be able to do. This demonstrates that the program recognizes a distinct and value-added role for special education, with specialized knowledge and skills beyond what every early childhood educator needs (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). Faculty indicated the program best prepares candidates for two discrete roles, primarily those of inclusive classroom teacher/leader or ECSE specialist. Overall, participant report pointed to a strong focus on preparation for the role of classroom teacher.

Blanton and Pugach (2011) state that another central issue related to depth of knowledge is related to whether there is sufficient program space to fully address all aspects seen as necessary for preparation in the two fields. The graduate level nature of this program appears to pose a significant issue here, as it does not afford the same program space as an initial undergraduate teacher education program. Yet, this program serves as both an initial licensure program and as an endorsement program. Therefore, some candidates enter the program with little to no experience with teaching young children, or pedagogical training to do so.

The undergraduate program, which is under development, is intended to serve as a feeder program. This may help alleviate pressure on the graduate level program as graduate candidates would enter the program having completed an initial teacher education program and thereby possessing initial pedagogical training. The undergraduate program is intended to offer a degree and licensure in ECE only, albeit from a blended philosophy. The graduate level program, then, would remain as it is and serve as a means for graduates to further their preparation in early childhood special education and/or for leadership roles.

*Performance/portfolio assessments.* State licensure and national accreditation standards propelled the development and use of performance based assessments within this program. The PBAs are a strong feature and valued highly by faculty, adjuncts, candidates and graduates alike. Faculty see the PBAs as strengthening the preparation of all candidates and learning experiences are embedded throughout program of study to bolster a developmental pathway culminating in the demonstration of proficiency through completion of the PBAs in practica. While all candidates experience the related learning activities embedded in the coursework, only those pursuing the ECSE licensure complete the PBAs. Candidates pursuing only the MA in ECE complete individualized practica and are not required to complete the PBAs.

Demonstration of the PBAs is in the form of practicum portfolios. Of interest in relation to collaborative models, assessment of these portfolios is the responsibility of the field supervisors, who have little contact with the rest of the program. Cooperating teachers are asked to grade the portfolios as well. However, that does not always occur and even if it does, the field supervisors “regrade the work and their grading trumps that of the cooperating teacher” according to Mary. Therefore, the program does not currently possess shared assessment of candidate performance. Further, grading of the earlier learning activities are the sole responsibility of the instructor of respective courses. The design of candidate performance assessments has potential implications for collaborative models as they will reflect how faculty consider the relationship between special and general education (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). Blanton and Pugach (2011) assert that redesigning preservice teacher education as collaborative models necessitates reconsideration of performance assessments with particular attention to what constitutes adequate or appropriate depth of knowledge from each field. The absence of faculty



collaboration around the design and assessment of candidate performance prevents deep analysis of how this is planned and enacted in the program.

***PK-12 partnerships.*** The program faculty describes itself as committed to having “close relationships” with field sites. Several sites used have longstanding relationships with the program and individual faculty members, particularly Mary who worked at one site as a child development specialist and currently sits on the advisory board of another. Many sites were reported to send newly hired staff to the program for licensure as a means to help them obtain temporary licensure status. Another site is closely associated with a research center at the University. Therefore, potential exists to develop relationships more indicative of clinically- rich teacher education as recommended in the literature (Blanton & Pugach, 2011; Holmes Group, 1986; 1990; NCATE, 2010, Pugach & Blanton, 2009). However, the program does not currently employ such a structure for the clinical components of the program which compromises its ability to fulfill a fundamental espoused outcome of collaborative models; simultaneous renewal marked by education and teacher education reform.

All candidates are allowed to complete one practicum in their own work site but based on participant report, focus remains on their individual practice, not on systematic or program-wide practice. Other practicum sites for individual candidates are selected by Mary and Abby based on candidate career aspirations and related needs. Both described the process of finding appropriate settings matching the program’s philosophies as problematic particularly for infant/toddler and primary settings. Further, supervision and support of candidates in the field is weakened by the lack of resources allotted to this important program aspect. These aspects represent a significant issue related to the program’s capacity to fulfill its goal of producing leaders who are prepared to advocate for inclusion and other best practices for young children and their families. Candidates

may not be exposed to examples of roles and responsibilities required of inclusive practice nor authentic settings in which to practice and develop related knowledge and skill.

Program and adjunct faculty appear hesitant to challenge practice at field sites out of fear of not being able to continue to secure practicum placements for candidates or due to relationships between sites and other faculty. Faculty in general seem disempowered and at the mercy of what is available. Therefore, critical examination of field sites and collaborative discourse on the topic is avoided, which creates an additional issue related to candidates' support and space within the program to critically analyze practice. This represents an unfulfilled promise of the collaborative design.

*Collaborative nature of the program.* As discussed in chapter 2, Blanton and Pugach (2011) propose a conceptual framework for understanding the nature of collaboration in teacher education programs and developed a typology of collaborative models including three designated models: discrete, integrated, and merged. These teacher education models are described by Pugach and Blanton (2009) as differentiated along a continuum based on the degree to which faculty collaborate and the degree of curricular integration in existence. To aid in the utility of the framework for research in this area, Blanton and Pugach (2011) developed indicators of practice at each level. The following section explicates the program according to these indicators to classify and more adequately describe the nature of the collaborative teacher education program at the center of this study.

Classification of this program as a discrete model would not be appropriate due to the fact that it is a single program as opposed to two distinct teacher education programs which collaborate with each other. The merged model is not a match to this program either, as merged models prepare all candidates to work in both general and special education through a

completely integrated curriculum (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). This program operates from a core curriculum for all candidates that is shared across multiple program outcome options: ECE only, ECSE license only, or both the MA licensure options. To obtain both the ECSE license and the MA in ECE, students are required to take additional courses pertaining to ECSE content (i.e., Screening and Assessment and Intervention Strategies). An important aspect of depth of knowledge in integrated models is related to how much knowledge regarding working with students who have disabilities is considered appropriate for every teacher and where the demarcation point is located regarding how the knowledge of special educators is distinguished from the role and work of general educators (Pugach & Blanton, 2009).

This program has identified this delineation. Therefore, it can be classified as an integrated model of collaborative teacher education, as it demonstrates acknowledgment that there is a “distinct and value-added role for special educators – a role that requires specialized knowledge and skills beyond what every teacher should know and be able to do” (Blanton & Pugach, 2011, p. 225). Additional alignment with the indicators for integrated programs is also evident in that the program adheres to the following aspects outlined in the typology of collaborative models pertaining to integrated models (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). Curricular design facilitates obtaining both a degree in ECE and license in ECSE for students who chose to do so. ECE and ECSE teacher candidates study together for much of their initial preparation. The core assumption of integrated models is that the redesign of both general and special education programs can link and integrate curricula to better prepare all teachers by providing a solid foundation for teaching all children. Additional coursework/time is required for a special education license. Common performance and portfolio assessments exist in both areas (i.e., special and general) based on the portions of the program students complete together in the form

of embedded learning activities. Further, integrated models of teacher preparation are characterized by intentional and systematic efforts by faculty across general and special education to coordinate aspects of their programs including coursework and clinical experiences.

However, the classification of this program as an integrated model of collaborative teacher education is not without question. This particular program differs perhaps from the majority of programs for which this conceptual framework was intended as it is a solo program offering a degree in one field (ECE) and a license in the other (ECSE) through the various combinations described earlier. Therefore, coordination across different programs is not at play. Additionally, significant issues were identified related to the level of actual collaboration and interdisciplinary work within the program and between the program and field sites. These compromise the classification of the program as collaborative as data pointed to a culture of delegation born out of sheer necessity and desperation to deliver the program given the reality of significantly scarce resources. This reality affords little opportunity for faculty to collaborate not to mention for candidates to observe or practice collaborative skills. However, data in this study points to clear and intentional coordination across the various program outcome options and therefore to the designation of this program as an integrated model.

This section has provided rationale for characterizing the program according to research on collaborative models of teacher education based on examination of the description of the program's parameters of practice presented in chapters four and five. To further analyze the program as a system of such practice, the interactions of these parameters of practice were examined to identify elements of harmony and tension. The next section details that analysis.

**Harmony and tension within the system.** To focus the analysis on collaborative teacher education, issues of congruence from the perspective of the conceptual framework were

examined to identify elements of harmony as well as tensions specific to the research questions (Engeström, 1987; 1999). Therefore, the descriptive analysis detailed in chapters four and five was examined to investigate how all of the parameters of practice within the program worked together as a system. This section will discuss themes of balance related to elements of harmony and tension within the program. These issues of balance relate to: (1) depth of knowledge across ages; (2) depth of knowledge across roles and professional identities; (3) the espoused focus on practical, authentic, developmental learning and the nature of PK-12 partnerships; and (4) interdisciplinary, collaborative practice within a culture of delegation and attainment of the espoused outcome of “moving the field.”

*Depth of knowledge across ages.* Early childhood education is marked by three distinct age groups: birth to three years (infant/toddler), 3 years to 5 years (preschool), and kindergarten through third grade (primary). As noted previously, study participants indicated that much of the program targets preparation for working with the preschool population for reasons including concern for meeting candidate needs in relation to career aspirations and the availability of field sites in which to complete practica. In sum, participants indicated that most candidates enter the program already working in and/or planning to work with the preschool population, with very few being interested in primary settings.

An element of harmony exists in that the program faculty describe the preschool practicum sites available for candidates to be the most robust and of the highest quality and level of alignment with the program philosophy as illustrated in previous chapters. Therefore, harmony appears to exist between candidate desires, program philosophy, and available resources in the case of available clinical settings.

However, the ECSE licensure for which candidates are prepared covers the full early childhood age range of birth to eight years, and therefore all three age groups. Interviews with participants in all categories (faculty, adjunct, candidates, and graduates) reflected an imbalance toward the preschool age group and therefore a lack of depth of knowledge related to other age groups, both in coursework and in clinical aspects of the program. Therefore, tensions are evident within the system in relation to this issue.

Only two of the seven graduates and six candidate participants described the program as balanced across the three age ranges. The graduate spoke of coursework rather than field experiences, expressing confidence that she could “look in her books and notes and figure it out.” Specifically, she shared that,

I definitely think there was the balance between the three age groups. For the infant to toddlers, I felt that we learned a lot of how to work with the family and about developmental milestones. Then with early childhood and pre-school there was a lot more of the lesson planning, setting up your classroom. Then the curriculum course covered all areas too, especially for the elementary ages. Yeah, I do feel like there was a really good balance.

Although this graduate felt confident that she had been exposed to knowledge across the age ranges, her comments do not show that she had opportunities to development related knowledge and skill across all ages. The one candidate who described the program as relatively balanced added that, “more information regarding the infant/toddler age group might be needed.”

All other graduate and candidate participants described a heavy focus on the preschool age range. For example, one graduate stated that in her opinion she, “would definitely say that preschool was the focus.” Another indicated that, “preschool got the most focus, no question.

And there was definitely very little about infants. I felt like I got close to zero or very little about school age children.” The following comments from a candidate are quite similar,

It’s very preschool oriented. I feel in my element in my preschool practicum, but I felt very lost in the primary practicum because I think we even talk more about the toddlers than we do primary. I feel I have way more tools for preschool than the other groups.

Yet another candidate shared additional information about the impact of this imbalance for practicum experiences when she stated that when she “started my infant/toddler practicum I felt naked!! What am I going to do!! So yeah I think the program offers more at the preschool level than for the other two.”

As noted in earlier chapters, faculty also acknowledged that the program was geared more toward preschool ages and settings. Gina stated that, “It’s definitely viewed as geared toward classroom teaching and preschool. I mean it’s just the way it is.” Further, Abby added that she believed, “preschool gets a ton and next is infant/toddler and third is primary.”

As shown here, interview data strongly suggest the dominance of the preschool age range across the program. Further, document analysis confirmed what Mary had shared regarding the fact that the preschool practicum contains more performance based assessments than the other two practica which target the other two age ranges. This represents various tensions within the program when considered an activity system and therefore affects the program’s ability to achieve its object of preparing early childhood educators for the full range of the ECSE licensure and range of settings considered to be part of the early childhood landscape. This presents significant challenge for the program in relation to its espoused design and outcomes. Not only are candidates potentially not fully prepared for existing roles, their understanding and critical reflection on the current status of the field and practice is incomplete with such narrow focus on

the part of the program. This may limit their ability to serve as the change agents and leaders the program hopes that they become.

*Depth of knowledge across professional designations and related roles.* Early Childhood Education also includes a variety of roles and responsibilities for early childhood educators and early childhood special educators. One graduate expressed an aspect of harmony between her perceived needs demonstrated by this program in that her search for a preparation program came up with very few programs that focused on children younger than kindergarten and offered curricula across early childhood and early childhood special education.

That's what I was looking for was a Master's that was early childhood and also special education, and one that had a focus that was really preschool, because many of the other programs I looked at had early childhood Master's programs that were really focused on K through three, and that's what they called early childhood. You couldn't find a program that really included birth to six, so that was one of the things that attracted me to the program, is that I would get the early childhood but also get that special education piece [and focus on the preschool age group].

This quotation obviously illustrates a perceived benefit of the focus on the preschool age range discussed above, but also that of a perceived benefit of the collaborative nature of this program and others like it which offer candidates an opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills across early childhood education and early childhood special education. Further, this graduate's apparent difficulty finding a program that approached teacher education from a collaborative stance *and* focused on younger (non-school age) children and contexts indicates an issue specific to collaborative teacher education in the early childhood context. Given the fact that the personnel preparation requirements and standards for teachers and caretakers of our youngest



children are often quite minimal, much of the ECE workforce is simply not prepared in the same academic contexts as ECSE professionals. Nonetheless, this program represents an attempt to provide collaborative preparation across the two disciplines and with a focus on younger ages. This is indicative of harmony between the espoused design of producing leaders in the field of early childhood, as defined as birth to five years, who are seen as requiring knowledge across ECE and ECSE, and the blended curricula which forms the foundation for the program design.

*Professional designations.* Other aspects of harmony within the program pertaining to the two fields were related to the program dimensions of community and curricular coherence. An example illustrating curricular coherence across professional designations (i.e., ECE and ECSE) is evident in the following graduate comments.

Even though it took me longer to get through the program, I had a cohort of students pretty much that I went through with that were in the classes. Some of them were, they called it “Master’s only” and some were the ECSE. I never really knew, because I saw the same people, every once in a while I would go, “Are you going to be in this class?” but it wasn’t an assumption that I could make. I’m pretty sure there was a class that I took called “Managing challenging behaviors” and everybody was in that class. That’s just one example. I couldn’t even tell you now which ones the special education classes were. I couldn’t single out which were the students who were ECSE either.

This particular interview segment illustrates not only that the coursework was blended and coherent, but also that the community of learners was blended and coherent. Therefore, the core, shared program of study employed by the program can be considered an aspect of harmony within this system of collaborative teacher education. Further, despite the fact that the program does not employ a cohort model, students expressed that they developed close, supportive

relationships as evidenced in the following candidate stated, “we are pretty close a lot of us... We're texting and calling and emailing all the time to support each other.” While the majority of candidate and graduate participants shared that they had developed relationships with peers as well, one graduate interview illustrated a shared reflection across that majority that the graduate nature of the program, coupled with the fact that candidates are typically working full time, created barriers to the development of a sense of community as individuals only saw each other for class sessions.

One candidate, who had come to the program with previous special education experience, expressed a key benefit to the blended (across ECE and ECSE professional identities) nature of the candidate population when she acknowledged,

I was surprised that the program included such basic, entry level special education content but it was okay. I guess it has helped me see that ECE teachers don't have that special education background and now it is easier for me to collaborate with ECE teachers now that I have had classmates who did not have that background.

This highlights harmony within the program related directly to its design as a collaborative program which brings together individuals who might identify as ECE or ECSE discretely. Further, as this candidate shared that she feels more prepared to collaborate now that she has a better understanding of the knowledge of her colleagues, this shows evidence that the program's espoused outcome related to promoting inclusion is at least partially addressed when candidates feel they are more prepared to work collaboratively with professionals from other fields.

While this shows promise to promote a culture where all professionals take a shared approach to responsibility for all children (Murawski & Hughes, 2009; NAEYC, CEC, & NHSA, 2012) which is seen as an important element in regards to successful inclusion (Walther-Thomas,

Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000), little evidence was uncovered in this study pointing to opportunities within the program design or enactment for candidates to attain specific skills to collaborate in authentic, inclusive contexts. This particular candidate described her understanding of what colleagues knew to have increased, but did not detail further information as to her own increased skills related to working with others.

However, data pointed to a related area of *tension* due to imbalance in regards to the depth of knowledge pertaining to ECE and ECSE across the program. Current candidates and graduates who participated in this study expressed mixed perceptions regarding cohesion across the program in terms of the disciplines, with most expressing a heavier focus on ECSE. This echoes findings from Miller & Stayton (1998). Some current candidates, however, felt that cohesion did exist across the program in regards to the disciplines. For example one candidate shared,

I think it is pretty balanced actually. I think you can go either way especially since I have seen in the assignments that there is always an ECE piece that you do for everybody and then you have this additional piece related to how would you accommodate for a child with special needs. So there is always a piece from both and so I think it is pretty balanced so far.

This particular comment seems to illustrate a perception that the content pertaining to ECE and ECSE is blended at least to some degree at the course and assignment level of the program.

However, another candidate shared the following insight,

I think that the entire time it's just been so blended that I haven't noticed much of a difference and I have talked to other students who are just getting their masters and they

have said there's so much special education that has nothing to do with what they want to do that they feel that it is so blended it's just not relevant.

Despite the fact that this comment illustrates a disconnect between a candidate's apparent lack of value in the blended content and the program's collaborative approach, the speaker appears to highlight how the program includes ECE and ECSE content in all courses, including those targeting students only pursuing the ECE outcome option. However, the balance of attention across the two seems to be out of balance according to most participants with more consideration for ECSE reported most frequently. This has also been documented as a finding in other work (i.e., Miller & Stayton, 1998).

Miller and Losardo (2002), however, detailed findings showing the opposite, that graduates of unified programs perceived themselves to possess more knowledge and skill related to ECE than ECSE. This seems evident for this program as well when considering the finding that most participants also expressed a heavier focus on the role of the classroom teacher than other roles. Taken together these two findings from this study seem to contradict each other as they suggests that while participants perceived content to be more heavily weighted toward ECSE, overall preparation was most heavily weighted toward the role of ECE classroom teacher. While the focus was detailed as preparation for the role of inclusive classroom teacher, the role was still considered primarily that of an ECE professional as opposed to an ECSE professional.

Relatedly, Mary shared a concern that, "there's still some perception that those kids are not my main responsibility as a general education teacher." She acknowledged that this is an issue with candidates, field sites, and cooperating teachers. This is indicative of the reality programs are faced with related to dispositions, values, and beliefs candidates possess and which are expressed in the field. The difficulty for teacher education to adequately assess and change

candidate dispositions and attitudes is well documented (Floden & Meniketti, 2005). Given the espoused outcomes of this particular program, which are similar to many other collaborative models of teacher education, changing attitudes and dispositions is particularly important especially if graduates are to embrace and promote renegotiated roles and responsibility through reform and change agent activity.

Other current candidates and graduates expressed a sense that the overall program contained more early childhood special education content than early childhood education. For example, one candidate who was in her last semester pursuing the dual program option described the relationship between ECE and ECSE in the program as follows.

I think there's far more special education than there's general education. There are times that I am just like I would like to do an assignment that is for typically developing children. I think I have a far better understanding of how to help children who have disabilities than who don't.

None of those interviewed shared the opposite view, which would have held that the program was more heavily weighted to ECE. In fact across all current candidates (6) and graduates (7) interviews, a belief was expressed that the program was either relatively balanced in terms of ECE and ECSE focus or if one was felt to be more dominant, ECSE was named. Abby also indicated a perception that the program seemed to include more ECSE than ECE. She expressed a related concern.

I think the program is far more special education heavy. So I think you could take somebody who's really more identified with that general education perspective and they could do a lot of those special education things [as a result of completing the program]. Where my question remains is could you take someone who is very special education

focused and they get all this ECE stuff but can they make the leap to understanding children and families and where children go in the bigger picture of the educational system.

Her concern seemed related to a potential issue regarding depth of knowledge (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) pertaining specifically to general teaching and ECE. When considering the depth of knowledge in a collaborative teacher education program, the expectation is for adequate depth to be included in the program from *both* fields is of particular importance and the concern raised here around teaching in general highlights tension and incapacity for the program to achieve goals related to preparing individuals in either field, not to mention both.

Further, adequate preparation across both fields necessitates examination of competencies required by professionals in various roles. For example, Gettinger et al (1999) identified competencies seen as essential for inclusion specialists. The next section will detail harmony and tension observed regarding balance across professional roles for which the program attempts to and is charged to prepare candidates for.

*Professional roles.* This study also illuminated tensions related to preparation across the various roles and professional identities inherent to ECE and ECSE. Examples of the variety of professional roles within early childhood education and early childhood special education include lead classroom teachers, reading and literacy specialists, early childhood special educators who teach in segregated settings for children with special needs, ECSE who work as itinerant service providers and/or consultants, early intervention providers, resource teachers in primary education settings, ECE and ECSE teachers who work as co-teaching partners, and many more. Further, the settings in which ECE and ECSE professionals work vary considerably including home and community based settings for infants and toddlers, Head Start and School

District preschool settings, private preschools, schools specifically for children with disabilities, and public and private schools providing primary education, to name a few.

Therefore, the breadth of preparation a collaborative early childhood teacher education program needs to address is vast and tensions will undoubtedly be present based on program resources such as appropriate field sites for clinical components and relative expertise and experiences of faculty. While this is an issue for teacher education programs in general, it is of increased importance for collaborative models in early childhood education as that particular context is marked by a higher variance of roles and settings. Therefore, there are simply more content areas and experiences to attempt to cover within a program.

While this program is charged with preparing individuals for the various roles and settings associated with a birth to age 8 year ECSE license and a master's degree in ECE, tensions were seen to exist between various aspects of the program as a system related to depth of knowledge and practical experience afforded to candidates across the various roles and responsibilities through coursework and clinical practice. The program appeared to demonstrate a primary focus on the roles of the inclusive preschool classroom teacher/leader and that of a specialist in ECSE. Four of the six current candidates who participated shared a perception that the role of classroom teacher dominated their preparation. For example, one candidate shared,

I would say the classroom is the main one and then the ECSE consult is the second. It depends on the class a bit...the curriculum course is for classroom and social behavior is more for the consultant role.

This may indicate that the program spreads knowledge and skills related to various roles and settings across the program by making them more central in particular courses. When Gina was

asked whether one type of professional role was afforded more attention due to the structure and availability of learning opportunities she replied, “well classroom teacher, yeah, absolutely.”

In terms of exposure to a range of roles in a range of settings and across age groups, Gina added that, “students have to do an infant/toddler, preschool and K-2 practicum...but it’s not always as extensive as we want them to be.” She also indicated that alternatives to classroom teaching for practica are reserved for candidates who already possess experience as a classroom teacher, as evidenced in the following quotation.

For the most part, 99% of the time, they are placed as a classroom teacher for practicum except for the cases where they want a different experience based on career aspirations.

For example, if they want to be a part of an assessment team we might do that but only if they had extensive experience as a classroom teacher as that is primary.

Gina and Mary both shared that this practice was derived from a belief that in order to be successful in non-teaching roles, graduates would need to have a deep understanding of and extensive experience with teaching, as non-teaching roles often require a foundational understanding of classroom teaching in order for an individual to be successful.

Further discussion revealed that infant/toddler experiences are most often in center-based child care settings as classroom teachers for toddlers, as opposed to early intervention programs marked by home and community based itinerant service delivery by ECSE professionals. Therefore, the capacity of the program to prepare candidates for professional roles as early intervention providers is significantly reduced. In fact, few students receive any experience with home visiting, which further complicates candidates’ ability to develop knowledge and skills related to not just home visiting but also related to working with families. While home visiting experiences were not discussed often during interviews, one graduate shared the following.



I didn't actually get really to do any home-type things. There was definitely bits and pieces talked about throughout our courses, what that might look like, but I did not get to experience or shadow anybody doing that. Therefore I am not as confident in that area but definitely I can look through the books and all my notes that I took, and probably figure it out. I learn by doing or learn by watching first, so being able if I were to be in that position, I would love to be able to shadow someone for a week or something. I wouldn't shy away from taking a position like that if it were offered, but I don't know if I know as much about it as the rest.

This graduate's comments speak directly to a systemic tension between the program's rules, tools, and object. This program demonstrates a value and strong focus on practical, authentic learning experiences, yet this graduate was not afforded authentic experiences with this professional role or related skill.

An interview with Abby helped to look at this issue more broadly. When considering the range of roles and settings which characterize early childhood education/special education and the associated learning opportunities embedded within the program, she stated,

I think that learning about them is step one and I'm not even sure that we do that all that well...But I think we are getting better at teaching them the knowledge piece of it but in terms of experience the practicum sites are so limited in terms of what they [the candidates] can do...there are occasionally situations where we can start to influence a little as to what candidates get to do and be exposed to as we continue to build relationships with those practicum folks and the longer we hold onto those folks the more we can do that.

Abby's comments relate directly to the program dimension of PK-12 partnerships (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) as she indicates that through deepening relationships with clinical sites the program might be able to better influence the nature of experiences candidates are exposed to. As noted, document analysis of program planning meeting minutes revealed that faculty are interested in developing more robust relationships with the field. This interest demonstrates an additional area of harmony. The lack of related resources for developing such relationships as well as for appropriate mentoring and support of candidates, faculty and field sites as discussed previously marks a related tension which will be explored next.

*Depth of knowledge regarding practical, authentic, developmental learning.* Earlier discussions illustrated that the program highly values a model of teacher education which is well-grounded in practical, authentic learning experiences. Further, the program strives to offer these learning experiences on a developmental trajectory that affords candidates early and ongoing opportunities to develop knowledge and skills related to being a teacher, ECSE specialist, and leader for the field first in coursework and later in practicum. However, this analysis has also illuminated that the program's work toward these goals is significantly compromised by the nature of the relationships the programs have with field sites.

Faculty expressed challenge related to securing field experiences for candidates that include examples of the full range of the early childhood context including ages, roles, and professional designations. Further, current relationships with and availability of systemic models of collaborative practice are few as the program is forced at times to use less than ideal sites in order to find sites at all. Pugach and Blanton (2009) detail that the availability of quality field placements and the degree to which teacher and program practice in the field match what preservice students are learning, is a consistent challenge in teacher education.

This challenge surfaced in this study as participants described how the disparity experienced between what was disseminated by the program and what was observed in field sites was significantly difficult. This illustrates a lack of congruence between what the program promotes in coursework and what the candidates experience in the field. Securing quality field sites is of particular importance in regards to preparing teachers for inclusive contexts, as is the degree to which programs have access to sites where collaboration among general and special education teachers is practiced (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Further, research has documented that historically, field experiences, and other program components have not been well connected, resulting in fragmentation and therefore a lack of congruence (Clift & Brady, 2005).

The fact that relationships with field sites cannot always be relied upon and do not afford the program the ability to provide all candidates with experiences matching the program's mission and goals related to promoting quality, inclusive, and evidence-based practice does not align with recommendations regarding the nature of university-field relationships in general or within collaborative teacher education models (NCATE, 2010; Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Past lessons, such as those from the Holmes Group (1986) have illustrated that reform of teaching and of teacher education must occur simultaneously, with both higher education and local educational programs relying on and assisting each other to improve the outcomes of their respective work (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). Further, a key lesson from the Holmes Group (1986) is that relationships should be a central focus in design of university-field agreements. The NCATE 2010 Blue Ribbon Report on clinical preparation and partnerships for improved student learning suggests that to,

prepare effective teachers for 21st century classrooms, teacher education must shift away from a norm which emphasizes academic preparation and course work loosely linked to

school-based experiences. Rather, it must move to programs that are fully grounded in clinical practice and interwoven with academic content and professional courses (p. ii).

Capraro, Capraro, & Helfeldt (2010) share that in order for field experiences to create a bridge between theory and practice clinical experiences need to be anchored in school-university partnerships which include:

(a) explicit purposes that are clearly explained to teacher candidates, and mutually supported and understood by field-based practitioners and campus-based instructors; (b) periodic evaluation that ensures that the purposes are being accomplished; (c) field-based learning is developmentally sequenced and integrated over the entire teacher education curriculum to avoid redundancy or creating conditions for assumptive teaching; (d) provisions exist for altering the quantity and duration of the field experience to fit individual differences among groups of novice teachers; and (e) cadres of exemplary models of field based teacher educators (mentor teachers) are identified and cultivated (Cruickshank & Armaline, 1986; Erdman, 1983; Goodman, 1985; Grisham, Berg, Jacobs, & Mathison, 2002) (p. 133).

These recommendations help examine the field based elements of this program. Specifically, comparison of the program to these recommendations helped illuminate areas of harmony, such as the developmentally sequenced design of the program, which has explicitly explained connections to performance based assessments in practicum. Tensions also are illustrated in this comparison, including the focus on cultivating cadres of exemplary field based teacher educators as the roles of the field and cooperating teachers were found to be minimal in this program. Further, as illustrated in comments made by Abby and Mary regarding finding practicum placements, the faculty seem empowered and at the mercy of what is available.

We've struggled to find quality sites for all of our practicum students and it makes a dilemma for our students because they are faced with us saying this is how it should be and then what's actually happening out there.

Graduates and candidates also shared concerns and reflections on being confronted by a disparity between what they hear in coursework and see in the field. One candidate reflected on the nature of particular settings as compared to what was presented as best practice in coursework that mirrors Mary's comments.

We're learning so much about what best practice and evidence based is. However, we see that's not the reality. Then as an individual professional in a setting there will be limitations, there will be guidelines, what can I do?.

This interview segment touches on the availability of authentic learning experiences related to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions the program desires for candidates within the field sites in which candidates work and complete practica. Further, as this candidate alludes to, not all candidates are afforded supportive opportunities to apply the knowledge or skills they learn about in coursework when the nature of field sites is not aligned with or demonstrating those skills.

In another example, one recent graduate who works in an inclusive preschool setting as a lead ECE teacher shared the following.

Collaboration was a huge piece of the program and learning about it really helped me to realize that the school that I am at really is not good at it at all. It is something I strive for but it is really hard when you are at a place where it is not the culture and it is hard as a lowly preschool teacher. I am the only preschool teacher in a K-5 school. And with

inclusion...that was also a huge part of the program but once again I found that in the real world a lot of people are not good at that either.

This excerpt also illustrates this graduate's apparent lack of agency to change the practices she observed and perceives as inappropriate. She clearly expresses the difficulty she sees in implementing much of what she learned in the program in regards to collaboration and inclusion within the reality of her work. Further, her comments reflect a feeling of powerlessness to impact change. This is certainly in contrast to the program's espoused outcome of preparing leaders who act as change agents who support system reform.

This relates directly to recommendations such as those of The Holmes Group and highlighted by Capraro, Capraro, and Helfeldt (2010), who explain that partnerships between teacher education programs and field sites should promote rethinking and reinventing schools that not only promote development of quality teachers, but also the renewal of the field sites themselves. The nature of the relationships between this program and its field sites has been characterized as far from such a situation. Both Mary and Abby work hard to build a network of practicum sites and cooperating teachers, yet often securing sites involves compromising program ideals.

Inherent structural and administrative aspects may be barriers related to this tension. Faculty are thinly stretched and are not afforded time or other resources necessary to fully support all candidates in the field not to mention develop and maintain robust mutually beneficial PK-12 partnerships that would align with the recommendations from the literature such as NCATE's *Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning* (2010). This report calls for "programs that are fully grounded in clinical practice and interwoven with academic content and professional courses" (p. II).

Grossman and McDonald (2008) argue that research that will help move teacher education forward will be such that reconnects to the field of teaching. This necessitates teacher education faculty to practice engaged scholarship (Boyer, 1990) and become embedded in the field while sharing the responsibility of preparing candidates with field practitioners (Yendol-Hoppey et al., 2013). Current structural and resource deficiencies currently prevent this program, as with many others, from achieving or even fully attempting this conception of teacher education.

As noted earlier, an essence of harmony within this program exists in its espoused developmental design. This design is intended to afford candidates early opportunities to develop knowledge and skills that build through a developmental trajectory supported by a recommended course sequence. However, the fact that the program does not employ a cohort model, that it accepts new candidates each semester, and can only offer each program course once a year, result in the reality that candidates are often not following that recommended sequence. This compromises the developmental intention and leads to candidates feeling that the program is fragmented and at times overly repetitive. For example, one current candidate expressed, “there is a lot of overlap and I’m doing some of the same assignments in this class as I did in others and I’m fine with doing that...but at the same time when you have so much other stuff it feels like a waste of time. But this might be because I was supposed to take this class at the beginning. I’m not sure how I missed it.” This is indicative of issues of overall curricular coherence.

Despite the fact that the program does not employ a cohort model for the traditional, campus-based program, students expressed that they developed close, supportive relationships as evidenced in the following candidate stated, “we are pretty close a lot of us... We’re texting and calling and emailing all the time to support each other.” While the majority of candidate and

graduate participants shared that they had developed relationships with peers as well, as noted earlier, one graduate expressed that the graduate nature of the program, coupled with the fact that candidates are typically working full time, created barriers to the development of a sense of community as individuals only saw each other for class sessions.

*Interdisciplinary, collaborative practice within a culture of delegation and implications for graduate agency as change agents.* As mentioned previously, the program possesses a faculty that is interdisciplinary in composition but not in interaction or work. Indeed, the entire group responsible for delivering the program, which includes the program and adjunct faculty, field supervisors, and cooperating teachers, does not have the opportunity to meet on a regular basis. Competing priorities for faculty time and other resources affect the capacity for interdisciplinary and shared responsibility for the program delivery which has created an environment where tasks are assigned and delegated rather than conducted through collaborative means. This is in sharp contrast to recommendations from the literature (Miler & Stayton 1998; 2006; Piper, 2007; Pugach & Blanton, 2009) on successful and meaningful collaboration in teacher education. For this particular program, this creates a particular challenge related to promoting inclusive, collaborative practice and leaders who help propel educational reform. Candidates are not exposed to models of interdisciplinary work or collaboration and therefore are at a disadvantage when needing to demonstrate related skills. In particular, this compromises graduates ability to promote reform.

Mary indicated that perhaps one of the most difficult challenges for candidates was the confrontation between best practice explored in coursework and observations in the field.

It's a dilemma for our students because they are faced with us saying this is how it should be and then what's actually happening out there and so I think another thing that we have



as a primary principle of our program is that you need to be an advocate and you need to be careful and you need to recognize your position as a practicum student but certainly once you are hired some place you need to be an advocate for best practice.

This depiction of community and school settings in which candidates are placed for practicum and/or working demonstrates what was discussed earlier regarding an ongoing challenge related to the clinical components of this program. It is clear that candidates are often confronted with sites which do not demonstrate the practices they learn about in the program as is the case with many programs of teacher education. Most importantly, however, candidates are not afforded opportunities to explore how best to confront disparities in efforts to change practice. Indeed, graduates interviewed for this study expressed a lack of self-efficacy for such a task. Graduates and current candidates interviewed in this study were asked to describe their sense of self-efficacy for inclusive practice as a result of participation in the program and interviews often exposed significant concerns regarding their sense of empowerment or agency related to their ability to impact or change the field.

Previous chapters have used the parameters of practice from activity theory (Engeström, 1987; 1999) as a framework to examine and describe this teacher education program. Embedded throughout this framework has been further application of the analytic framework from the perspective of collaborative models of teacher education (i.e., Pugach & Blanton, 2009). When the above sections of this chapter are examined collectively, examination of the parameters of practice and the five program dimensions illustrate how this program can be conceptualized as a system. The examination of this program from the standpoint of collaborative teacher education was conducted as a means to not only describe and understand the nature of this particular

program, but also to begin to better understand collaborative teacher education in general. Therefore, implications for current and future collaboration teacher education are discussed next.

### **A Summary of the Program: Key Tenets and Characteristics**

To develop a summative description of the program, a list of descriptors comprised of sentiments and aspects that continually surfaced during data collection and analysis was compiled. This list was then shared with the program and adjunct faculty. Through collaboration with Gina, the list was finalized and she then indicated that it provided an “excellent summary” of the program. The final list is presented in Appendix H. This summary helped illustrate aspects of the program’s core philosophies and values in relation to its enactment toward its espoused outcomes providing a venue for examination of its function as a system and greater implications. First, elements of the summative list regarding foundational philosophies and the principle curricular tenets of the program is discussed. Then the program’s commitment to inclusive practice is examined. Lastly, the list supported analysis of the faculty composition and interaction both within its membership and with students before a discussion of enduring characteristics and general concerns conclude this section.

**Foundational philosophies and principle curricular tenets.** Study participants described the program as one which draws foundational philosophies from both the ECE and ECSE fields and encourages students to complete a program of study that leads to both a degree in ECE and a license in ECSE. The program has historically approached the blending of ECE and ECSE content at the course level and all programs of study related to the various program outcome options share a core set of coursework. This central design element is seen as helping the program embrace a state wide and broader overall goal focused on producing leaders who will help move the field by advocating for best practices on behalf of children and families.

In terms of principal curricular tenets, participants stressed attention to alignment of the program design and curriculum to the national and state standards for ECE and ECSE from NAEYC and CEC/DEC. This is expressed through attention to these standards at the course level and work has been done to ensure all are covered at some point in the program. Further, study participants described a centrality of social emotional development. Indeed, data analysis illuminated a programmatic focus on social emotional development as fundamental to teaching both children with and without disabilities. Of note is the presence of a research agenda focused on positive behavior supports located at the University. When asked about the influence of these factors on the program, Barbara had indicated that research faculty engaged in related work had been central participants in the original design and curriculum development for the program. Document review and faculty interview helped illustrate that the research activities related to social emotional development and positive behavior support continue and are thriving at the university. Therefore, it seems evident that the program draws from this contextual aspect to consider classroom management from a positive behavior support framework. The philosophical foundations and curricula are delivered through a combination of university and field based courses and experiences. Throughout, the program faculty are committed to promoting inclusive practice with is discussed next.

**Commitment to inclusive practice.** While acknowledging significant issues around securing adequate and appropriate field sites for candidates, program faculty stressed an ongoing focus on the use of practical, natural and inclusive settings to allow candidates to engage in realistic, authentic learning experiences throughout the program. However, an ongoing challenge exists related to securing quality, inclusive practicum placements where candidates have opportunities to observe and practice quality, inclusive and evidenced based practice. Gina

shared that many sites don't have early childhood special educators on site to serve as mentors and authentic models of ECSE roles and responsibilities. Truly inclusive sites, as defined by program faculty, were described as rare particularly at the primary level. Nonetheless, the program design remains centered on the use of authentic, performance-based learning opportunities that are seen as a developmental progression of skill and knowledge development with earlier experiences serving as a means for students to build skills which are ultimately demonstrated fully in practicum. Participants across groups in this study confirmed this intention and the enactment of related course and practica assignments/experiences.

Additionally, the program design is intended to promote a value for children with and without special needs being cared for and educated together in inclusive settings and there is a focus on embedded instruction as a key skill area to promote inclusion. Indeed, the promotion of the use of evidence-based practices and the ability to understand, use and conduct research as ECE/ECSE professionals is seen as a heavy focus and described as discussed extensively in the courses specific to the ECSE licensure. However, faculty identified another ongoing key challenge for candidates related to the disconnect between program content and the reality of practice in the field, a common issue across teacher education (NCATE, 2010). However, this is particularly problematic for the collaborative nature and espoused aspirations of the program related to producing leaders that will promote inclusive practice as little evidence that more than acknowledgment of this disconnect was embedded in the program curricula. One adjunct faculty in particular lamented the lack of space within the program for candidates to critically examine observed practice in relation to what the program deemed was best practice.

As noted in previous chapters, an inherent assumption of collaborative models of teacher education is that collaboration across general and special education at the preservice level will

lead to graduates who are better prepared to address the wide diversity of students, including those with disabilities, they will teach (Pugach, Blanton, & Boveda, in press). This program also holds this assumption. The program's philosophy of inclusion and diversity is marked by a philosophy of diversity that holds that all children and families are unique and that strategies are universal in that they are seen as applicable to a wide range of children and situations. Cultural responsiveness was described as the lens through which diversity was viewed. While this represents some attention to the intersection of disability and broader notions of diversity, it neglects to fully and deeply explore what it truly means to consider and meet the needs of children across the full range of diversity or to investigate and critically analyze related roles and responsibilities in an inclusive context that would embody such ideals. Pugach and Blanton (2012) have suggested that for collaborative programs of teacher education to demonstrate transformed curricula related to this issue, the relationships between special and general education as well as between disability and broader notions of diversity need to be explored. Indeed, they state,

In moving toward transformation, the curricula of such programs will need to move away from an additive approach, where special education content has simply been placed within or appended to an existing curriculum (Pugach & Blanton, 2009), and address more fully how to situate content related to disability within multiple, intersecting diversity communities. This requires a more thorough rethinking of the curriculum's underpinnings.

Such rethinking has not fully occurred in this program. Both ECE and ECSE content is present at the course level, but not necessarily redefined into something new and often the discourse of study participants denoted that individuals designated particular courses and/or other program

components as one field or the other. As noted, the program has an enduring philosophy which holds that all children are unique and knowledge and skills within the curriculum can apply to work with all children. This focus stresses individualization and responsiveness to cultural aspects; both considered to be “best practices” for ECE/ECSE. However, this represents neglect of how the preparation of teachers should be structured to ensure candidates’ abilities to meet the needs of all children in such diverse groups. Perhaps most importantly, little evidence was identified suggesting the program fully addresses preparation for candidates to serve as members of teams of professionals who work together to meet the needs of all and reform practice. The lack of truly inclusive settings possessing such teams of professionals poses another issue pertaining to the program’s ability to fully prepare candidates for such work.

Specific attention to critical analysis of related roles and responsibilities is lacking in this program. Therefore, the program’s ability to produce leaders or change agents to help with reform of the field is again limited as attention to the full impact increasing diversity is having on educational systems as well as the specific intersection of diversity and disability and the related implications for teaching, teacher roles and responsibilities, and educational systems in general is not afforded space for examination in the program curriculum. An additional aspect affecting the program’s ability to achieve its espoused outcome of producing change agents and leaders in the field relates to the composition of the program faculty who delivery the program and their interactions with each other and candidates. This is of particular importance given the value placed in interdisciplinary practice by faculty by those historically and currently embracing collaborative models of early childhood teacher education (Miller & Stayton, 1998; 2006).

**Faculty composition and interactions.** To carry out its mission and work, the program possesses a faculty that is interdisciplinary in composition including individuals with

backgrounds pertaining to ECE, ECSE, OT and SLP as well as two primary general education practitioners. However, the interaction of this group is not interdisciplinary in nature. Rather, individual members operate in relative isolation which is in contradiction to key findings from the literature in support of the absolute necessity of interdisciplinary, shared work by faculty (Mellin & Winton, 2003; Miller & Stayton, 1998; 2006). While the two program faculty meet at least once per month, they shared that they do not meet as often as they would like and the vast majority of their interaction is via email. Further, the entire group responsible for delivering the program, which includes the program and adjunct faculty, field supervisors, and cooperating teachers, does not have the opportunity to meet on a regular basis. Program faculty shared that they don't meet with adjuncts as often as they would like and in fact they rarely, if ever, meet as a whole group. Competing priorities for faculty time and other resources affect the capacity for interdisciplinary and shared responsibility for the program delivery which has created an environment where tasks are assigned and delegated rather than conducted through collaborative means.

In an effort to promote program congruence in spite of the lack of interdisciplinary, shared work and responsibility, program faculty share a commitment to soliciting adjunct and field based team members who are perceived to share the philosophies of the program. Therefore, a reliance on and trust in past graduates both in the field as cooperating teachers and as field supervisors and adjuncts was observed as a means to better support current candidates and establish placements. This is seen as additional means of ensuring program/curricular coherence.

Historical and current faculty also expressed a commitment to fostering relationships between the faculty and the candidates as well as working to be very individualized and

responsive to candidate and community needs. While individual candidates develop relationships with individual faculty and other candidates, the traditional program does not follow a cohort model which results in course composition variation across an individual's experience. Despite the lack of a cohort model, some candidates follow a similar program path and therefore develop peer relationships that were described as beneficial and supportive. Elements of the program design work to meet the perceived and expressed needs of candidates related to their current work and career aspirations. Faculty also shared that the program is dedicated and designed to allow for individual flexibility and choice through multiple program outcome options. The program also embraces a philosophy that particularly stresses family and community centered practice including a historical use of community, candidate, and graduate needs and perceptions as guidance for the program design and delivery. However, capacity issues make this philosophy difficult to enact and the historical avenues through which this was done (i.e., advisory council/board) have not been possible in recent years.

The focus on candidate needs both perceived and voiced, has steered the program delivery to a primary focus on the preschool age level and the role of classroom teacher and leader and/or the role of ECSE specialist. Other age groups and professional roles are a part of the program to various degrees and are stressed more for certain individuals based again on their individual needs. While this could certainly be seen as responsive to candidates' needs, it raises further important questions in regards to the program's capacity to effectively prepare candidates for the full range of roles and settings which comprise the ECE/ECSE context and for which graduates become licensed for. Further, this also affects capacity toward attainment of the espoused outcome of producing leaders and moving the field through reform. The focus on community and candidates' *current* expressed desires and needs limits the program's ability to



demonstrate the future needs of candidates or of the field in general from a reform standpoint which would recognize the need for renegotiated roles and responsibilities (Blanton et al., 2011). Again as noted above, little critical analysis of current practice, roles, and responsibilities was observed or described by participants.

However, a challenge persists due to limited program resources related to adequate support for faculty, candidates, and community practicum sites. This leads to instability and lack of alignment between the program, its goals, and the opportunities and nature of relationships with clinical sites and practice. While misalignment between program and field sites represents a common issue in teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2010; NCATE, 2010), it is particularly problematic for collaborative models of early childhood teacher education due to the fact that the literature has shown interdisciplinary practice and faculty collaboration to be of utmost importance to successful collaborative teacher education models. Further, as such programs operate from core values and assumptions relating to inclusive education and reform, the lack of strong relationships with the field undoubtedly limits the program's ability to fully enact its espoused program as candidates are not afforded opportunities to experience reconceptualized roles and responsibilities. Further, the program's ability to reach its espoused outcomes of producing leaders who are fully prepared to support reform in the field is compromised as tenuous relationships with field sites do not support shared commitment to simultaneous renewal and therefore do not expose candidates to important systems change aspects and experiences that would help them explicitly develop the specific skills necessary to be such leaders and collaborators.

**Enduring characteristics and general concerns.** This list of key tenets and characteristics provides a summative view of the program. When compared to the list

collaboratively generated with Barbara regarding the original blended design, similarities can be seen. These include an ongoing attention to standards and commitment to inclusive practice. Further, the foci of practical, authentic learning experiences for candidates as well as a focus on the social-emotional needs of children as central have both endured as key aspects in the program today. Perhaps most relevant to teacher education reform, is the historical and continuing attention to a grander goal of producing change agents in the field which has remained a central goal of the program.

However, capacity issues lead to a lack of community in general and an absence of interdisciplinary practice within the program. These voids create a significant barrier for the program in pursuit of its goals as candidates, faculty, and field partners are not afforded the benefits of a community of practice which could enhance the collaborative enterprise. Further, while standards from both ECE and ECSE are addressed in the espoused program design, little current, active work exists to examine the enactment of these standards or the interaction of standards within the program. The program's ability to fully prepare candidates for work in inclusive settings is also compromised by the limited availability of such sites for authentic, clinical based learning. Additionally, the program lacks attention to critical examination and negotiation of roles and responsibilities across the two fields and participant discourse indicates a division within the program in that some courses are deemed the ECSE courses and others the ECE courses. Beyond exploration of the intersection of general and special education, the philosophy of diversity which focuses on how all kids are unique represents a surface level focus on diversity and deeper analysis of diversity and disability are missing from the program enactment and design. Not surprisingly, deeper critical analysis of systems change related to the

espoused outcome of producing leaders who move the field is not possible within the current structure.

### **Implications**

Although it remains a contested practice without clear and consistent definitions, inclusion is widely seen as beneficial to all children, especially at the early childhood level (Bailey et al, 1998; Jones, 1995; Odom, 1998, 2011). Professional organizations have increased support and recommendations for inclusion. Recent policy recommendations have included an increased focus on the importance of adequately preparing all teachers to work with diverse children in inclusive contexts (i.e., Blanton, Pugach, and Florian, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; NCATE Blue Ribbon Report, 2010). At the early childhood level there has been a movement to unify the fields of early childhood education and early childhood special education (Miller, 1992; Odom & Wolery, 2003). The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) have issued joint position statements on inclusion and personnel preparation standards (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). Licensing structures have also been observed to show support for inclusive practice as unified certifications have emerged in several states (Stayton & McCollum, 2002; Piper, 2007). Indeed, there is much policy support for inclusive practice (Chandler et al, 2011).

A collaborative culture has been touted as an essential element of successful diverse and inclusive education (Walther-Thomas et al, 2000). Yet, general and special education teachers have been traditionally been trained in isolation of each other (Gargiulo et al, 1997). It is of no wonder that research continues to show that educators do not feel adequately prepared for inclusive contexts (Chang et al, 2005) or for collaborative work in general (McKenzie, 2009).

Regardless of whether teachers feel prepared, initiatives which necessitate a high level of collaboration including RtI, PBS and inclusion itself continue to be implemented in schools. Such initiatives and other changes described here have led to the need for new and expanded roles and responsibilities and a related identity crisis in special education (Buisse & Wesley, 1993).

This instrumental case study (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995) was conducted in an effort to inform broader teacher education reform efforts related to collaborative models of teacher education. Implications garnered from this study relate to themes including: (1) Understanding collaborative models of teacher education; (2) Faculty supports and program resources; and (3) Consideration of appropriate depth and breadth for individual programs.

#### **Moving toward greater understanding of collaborative models of teacher education.**

The need for greater understanding and clarity regarding collaborative models of teacher education has been established (Blanton & Pugach, 2011). As the practice continues to become more prevalent, the field remains marked by vast differences in practice and terminology that while all relate to this same phenomenon, tell us little about the true nature of various “collaborative” programs. The application of the Pugach/Blanton (2009) research framework in this study helps begin to develop greater understanding through the use of proposed, common terminology as well as examination of common program dimensions. Therefore, not only does this study provide an analytic description of one program, it also creates potential for further comparative analysis between and within programs.

Further, this analysis of an entire teacher education program through the conceptual framework based on activity theory and collaboration in teacher education, offers a program-wide consideration of systemic collaboration which is missing in the literature to date. This

program-wide view of one instance of collaborative teacher education moves the field one step closer to better understanding how such programs work and operate. By garnering a deeper understanding of how collaborative models of teacher education operate as systems, the field moves towards the study and understanding of their relative worth, utility, and effectiveness for preparing teachers for inclusive practice in diverse settings.

Additionally, the use of activity theory (Engeström, 1987; 1999) has also begun the process of identifying key cultural tools utilized by this program. Relatedly, the core philosophies and learning outcomes described here help illuminate how licensure, accreditation, and personnel preparation standards are embedded in program design and used to create specific cultural tools, such as the performance based assessments embraced by this program. Analysis of cultural tools employed by this program in its efforts to deliver a collaborative design may be of great worth to related teacher education practice and reform.

While much more is needed to develop richer understanding of this phenomenon as it occurs more broadly and frequently, the process of developing a rich description of one program also illuminated implications for other programs currently working from a collaborative design, as well as for related educational and teacher education reform efforts including issues around support for faculty and programs to fully engage in valued elements of this work and considerations as to what is appropriate in regards to depth and breadth of individual programs with undoubtedly all relate to broader educational and teacher education reform efforts.

**Faculty and program supports and resources.** Specific to faculty supports and resources for collaboration in teacher education, this study illustrated many of the issues that have been identified in the field. Two notable issues relate to the importance of administrative and programmatic support for collaborative, interdisciplinary practice and for the development

and maintenance of robust, clinically-rich teacher education. Both of these aspects of teacher education have been documented in the literature as persistently problematic (Miller & Stayton, 2006; Yendol-Hoppey, Hoppey, Morewood, Hayes, & Sherrill-Graham, 2012). Further, related work by faculty has been documented as not well supported by traditional structures in academia (Boyer, 1990; 1996). The following will discuss implications related to faculty and program supports and resources pertaining to interdisciplinary, collaborative practice and engaged scholarship.

*Supports and resources for interdisciplinary, collaborative practice.* While this program is structured as a solo program rather than a collaboration across two departments or teacher education program as described by its program faculty, it does rely on a cadre of satellite professionals (i.e., adjuncts, field supervisors) in the delivery of the program. While this community of professionals responsible for delivery of the program is representative of many of the interdisciplinary professional roles seen in the early childhood educational context, the individuals within the group do not collaborate as a team around the program goals. Therefore, little interdisciplinary teaming, highlighted as a key tenet of collaborative teacher education (Miller & Stayton, 1998; 2006; Pugach & Blanton, 2009), occurs.

As noted previously, this represents a missed opportunity for all faculty to have deep awareness of all components of the program and intentionally work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is designed and delivered in a meaningful, relevant way (Pugach & Blanton, 2009). In the absence of such collaboration several important arenas including ensuring program coherence, deeply exploring the nature of collaborative practice within the program, and the impact the program has on candidates and the greater field, do not receive adequate attention. Therefore, the program is at a disadvantage regarding its ability to explore how its collaborative

nature achieves greater curricular coherence and clarity particularly as which relates to the most critical issues in education, including issues of diversity and disability (Pugach & Blanton, 2009; Pugach & Seidl, 1998).

Implications related to this observance exist. If collaborative programs of teacher education are to fully enact their purpose and collaborative nature, a high level of faculty collaboration needs to occur and that interaction needs to be supported by administrative and structural factors (Miller & Stayton, 2006; Pugach & Blanton, 2009). In the same way that we cannot expect inclusive service delivery to be meaningful or effective simply based on the fact that children with and without disabilities are in the same physical setting, we cannot expect faculty members to practice interdisciplinary practice and share responsibility across a teacher education program merely by the fact that they come from diverse professional backgrounds.

Miller and Stayton (2006) revealed that a significant obstruction to interdisciplinary teacher education appeared to be the traditional administrative structure of higher education. Study participants in the Miller and Stayton (2006) research indicated that these persistent challenges to their interdisciplinary and collaborative work were caused by “traditional faculty assignments, FTE limitations with department-specific workload assignments, lack of incentives to participate in demanding interdisciplinary work, no credit toward tenure and promotion decisions, challenging interpersonal issues, and a general absence of administrative support. (Miller & Stayton, 2006, p. 64). Miller and Stayton also compiled several recommendations from faculty of collaborative early childhood teacher education program regarding soliciting administrative support. These include:

- Meet with administrators in the very beginning stages of program development to share the knowledge base and secure formal statements of support for interdisciplinary

teaming. Determine whether lobbying efforts may need to take place with accrediting agencies to establish expectations for interdisciplinary teaming. Draft agreements across administrative levels related to faculty incentives for interdisciplinary work.

- Engage administrators in the work of the team. Share minutes of meetings, engage in regular conversations, and solicit administrator input at all levels.
- Work with administrators to design faculty workload assignments that include interdisciplinary work and opportunities for collaborative teaching (Miller & Stayton, p. 66).

Faculty of this program described administrative aspects neutrally, without strong feelings of barriers or supports, and the program was described as independent, indicating a lack of administrative support or possibly of awareness. Administration did not appear to be engaged with the program as these recommendations assert as important to the success. Administrative awareness of the features of faculty work necessary to conduct collaborative, interdisciplinary work well may be the first step toward garnering more support.

Administrative support might help promote collaboration not only within the program but also between the program and the other teacher education programs at the University. One particular area might be related to the clinical aspects of the program. Participants described an ongoing challenge related to securing quality, appropriate field settings, particularly for the primary grades. The university's other teacher education programs embrace a professional development school model and dedication to clinically rich teacher education. One particularly relevant example lies in the elementary teacher education program which possesses a dual-certification option and represents an example of missed opportunities to collaborate and



enhance the existing program. The following section will further discussion the supports and resources for clinically-rich teacher education which emerged as another theme.

*Supports and resources for clinically-rich teacher education.* Faculty within this program note that practicum coordination and supervision was extremely resource dependent and that the clinical aspects of the program were not currently aligned fully with their ideals. Resources both within the community and within the structure of the program and university were identified as a factors. Therefore, a second area of implication regarding faculty and program supports and resources relates to a program's ability to develop and maintain clinically-rich teacher education.

This program and the field of teacher education in general have placed increasing value on the clinical elements of teacher education. Indeed a potential cultural tool within this program was found to be its attention to practical, authentic learning experiences as central to candidate development. This programmatic attention was considered a cultural tool due to its valued status and institutionalized status within the program structure. However, as demonstrated in this case study, the structure and staffing of the program do not include sufficient resources to develop or sustain meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships with community and school settings.

The importance of clinical aspects of teacher education is well established (NCATE, 2010). As noted, it is of utmost importance for collaborative models of teacher education, particularly those such as this one that espouse to promote reform. This is due to the fact that through rich relationships with field sites candidates will ideally be exposed to and have opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions for acting as true change agents. Further, the literature proclaims the importance of authentic preparation for clinical skills for early childhood special educators (Clifford et al, 2005) as well as for interdisciplinary (Stayton et

al, 2001) and transdisciplinary work (Silverman et al, 2010) if educational reform is going to progress.

This particular study highlighted the common problem within teacher education related to faculty and program support for engagement in clinically-rich models. Engaged scholarship (Boyer, 1990) is one recommendation for reform of the professoriate to better support clinically rich teacher education. Engaged scholarship is defined by Boyer (1990) as combining conceptions of scholarship including: (a) the scholarship of discovery, which focuses on collaborative inquiry in the search for new knowledge; (b) the scholarship of integration, marked by making connections across contexts and disciplines; (c) the scholarship of application in which faculty investigate how knowledge can be applied from a practical sense to address educational dilemmas and develop and test theory; and (d) the scholarship of teaching which not only relates to traditional conceptions of teaching candidates but also to working to create and maintain partnerships in the field create, transform, and extend knowledge of teaching outside of the university (Yendol-Hoppey, et al., 2013). This is in sharp contrast to traditional academic settings where the most value is typically placed in research (scholarship of discovery) with much less structural motivation for excellence in the other areas of scholarship proposed by Boyer (1990).

This particular program places significant value in authentic, field-based learning for teacher education. However, it lacks institutional and administrative support for faculty to initiate and maintain robust relationships with clinical sites that embrace a model of clinically rich teacher preparation where the relationship is one of mutual benefit. As noted, Mary's status as a clinical professor assigns her a heavy teaching load and Gina's tenure-earning status places a higher expectation on research productivity reflecting traditional conceptions. Community

colleagues and past graduates are relied upon for field supervision but do not possess full membership to the program team and are not compensated or trained adequately to ensure robust clinical experiences and mentorship for candidates. Neither are they included in program design nor planning processes.

Of importance, therefore, is consideration of the mentorship triad inherent to clinical aspects of teacher education which includes the candidates, a field-cooperating teacher, and a university supervisor. The character of this triad in terms of the relationships and interactions of its members is of critical importance to the effectiveness and meaning of field work. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) suggest that work between members of the triad should be designed so as to produce scaffolded, experiential learning opportunities for candidates.

Valencia, Martin, Place, and Grossman (2009) recognized that practice does not always lead to learning and that candidates must be provided not only with opportunities to practice but also to learn about that practice which is an important responsibility of field supervisors. Due to the importance of this area of candidate learning, recommendations exist for university faculty to themselves be deeply engaged in field supervision (Yendol-Hoppey et al., 2013). However, Wilson (2006) highlighted the fact that field supervisors are typically individuals with little to no training in how to be a supervisor and cooperating teachers are often isolated and lacking full awareness of the parameters and expectations of the teacher education program. When faculty are themselves engaged in the field, this work is often delegated to early career faculty who are then significantly challenged to meet both the requirements to engage meaningfully with the field and that of the tenure and promotion process (Yendol-Hoppey et al., 2013).

Current calls (e.g., NCATE, 2010) to reform teacher education promote enhancing clinical practice to be marked by collaboration between school and university faculty around

educational renewal and improved teaching practice. The recent NCATE Blue Ribbon Report Panel (NCATE, 2010) has revitalized calls for making clinical practice central to teacher education. Referencing earlier work such as that of the Holmes Group, the Holmes Partnership, the National Network for Educational Renewal, the National Association of Professional Development Schools, and initiatives of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, Association of Teacher Educators, and the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the NCATE Blue Ribbon report calls increased focus on creation of clinical preparation that tightly couples theory and practice, engages faculty in school settings, and enhances the use of master teachers within those settings in the education of teacher candidates and research on and efforts to improve teaching itself (Yendol-Hoppey et al., 2013).

For collaborative teacher education to be successful, this is of particular importance as an inherent fundamental goal of such work is to examine and reconceptualize roles and responsibilities of both general and special educators. This cannot happen in isolation from the field and if graduates are to realize the espoused desires of collaborative teacher education by entering into and promoting these reconceptualized roles universities and PK-12 educational settings must work together to explore and create such roles which in turn show promise for promoting simultaneous renewal of both education and teacher preparation. This related directly to the Pugach/Blanton (2009) dimension of PK-12 partnerships. The nature of the relationship between the university and community for the early childhood programs in this case study do not promote simultaneous renewal.

While faculty interviews in this study certainly illustrated an expectation that graduates will advocate, it may also indicate less optimism in their ability to explore, create and promote

reconceptualized roles as change agents as espoused by the original intentions of the blended design as described by Barbara. Examination of roles assumed by graduates of the program illuminated two instances of graduates who were in reconceptualized roles for this early childhood community. One graduate has continued in her existing employment setting upon completion of the program, but with half of her time now devoted to a newly created role of inclusion specialist. In this role she consults and provides support to other teachers around inclusion and embedded instruction for children with special needs. Another graduate described how the school district where she works began serving some preschool children through an itinerant model, which is new for the district, and she has entered that role after previously serving as a member of a child find evaluation team. If collaborative early childhood education is really reaching its espoused outcomes however, this will be the norm, not the exception, as it is in this case.

**Consideration of appropriate breadth and depth for individual programs: Can one program be everything for everyone?** As noted in the discussion regarding tensions, this program currently struggles to provide balanced learning opportunities across various aspects of ECE/ECSE including the three distinct age ranges and the professional roles and responsibilities associated with ECE and ECSE. This brings to light another implication related to the breadth and depth individual collaborative teacher education programs can be expected to achieve, especially within the highly variable early childhood context. Clearly, this particularly program was described by participants as not providing equal depth across the various age ranges and roles within early childhood. Some participants also expressed concern that pedagogical training for teaching in general was lacking due to the graduate level status of the program.

This raises questions as to whether it is appropriate or even possible for one program to be everything for everyone. For example, in terms of preparation for teaching in general, this particular program attempts to provide both initial teacher education for those who enroll with bachelor degrees in unrelated fields as well as an endorsement program for those already possessing a teaching license. Further, the program attempts to provide preparation for a wide variety of roles including classroom teachers, leaders, and ECSE specialists who typically provide more itinerant services. Yet the nature of the program clearly privileges the role of an inclusive classroom teacher and the preschool age range due to the fact that it provides more depth in those areas than in others. The likely outcome is that in trying to be everything for everyone and offering so many options, the program falls short of adequately providing for the needs of any one group.

This implication regarding breadth and depth also relates to a global tension regarding collaborative models in the early childhood context. State licensure structures in early childhood education coupled with the industry's standards in terms of requirements for early childhood professionals work together to make university level programs in early childhood education that address the birth to kindergarten age range rare. Many professionals working in ECE with birth to five year age span do so in early care and education settings commonly known as child care. State child care regulations typically require very the minimal standards and few requirements related to teacher education (Early & Winton, 2001). In several states, being 18 years old, having a driver's license, and having no criminal record is all that is required to care for and teach young children (Azer, Clifford, Morgan, & Crawford, 2002). Relatedly, wages and benefits for teachers in such settings remain extremely minimal (Early & Winton, 2001) making working at that level quite unattractive to an individual who possesses an undergraduate degree and the

ability to work for a school district program with dramatically better wages. Therefore, undergraduate level programs in early childhood education attend to the needs of their constituents, who typically target K-3rd grade positions. Further, licensure and industry standards regarding early childhood and K-12 special education lead many early childhood special education programs to focus primarily on the birth to five year age span, as primary settings often employ individuals with a special education license spanning the K-12th grade age span which is commonly the licensure structure across the country.

This illuminates a disconnect leading to difficulties for collaboration across the full range of early childhood special education, which is typically most focused on birth to five, and early childhood education at the undergraduate level, which is typically focused on K-3rd grade. Overlap exists in that many states offer ECE licensure covering the preschool age group, which may be one reason for the imbalance toward preschool seen in this program. However, most individuals pursuing a degree and license in ECE do so with intentions to work in school settings, not preschool or other community-based settings. Further influence may be related to the graduate level status of the program which is attractive to ECE professionals who are working in the preschool age range as with advanced degrees they can leave the classroom where wages are low and obtain higher paying administration positions or become community college instructors. This fact was acknowledged by program faculty in this study as one element related to the focus on preparing leaders. Overall, the differences in licensure and industry expectations regarding preparation requirements for early childhood professionals present a particularly difficult situation for programs who wish to fully blend undergraduate level early childhood education and early childhood special education.

At the core of all of these issues is the philosophical difference that exists across members of both fields as to what special education is and whether or not it can be achieved within the context of general education. The field is currently exploring how to provide intensive services to all children who need them, not only those with identified special needs, within the general education framework (Fuchs et al, 2010). A core question is whether it is instruction or children which should be expected and required to change. It appears that the two sides of this debate have different foci, one being more idealistic and focused on what should be, and one perhaps more practical and focused more on current reality. Notably, this is the same issue voiced by Ayres and Wallin in the early 1900s. Wallin's notions of abandoning inflexible instruction and moving toward differentiated instruction has been embraced by some but the push for universals in education threatens to lead the system to reductionist notions of achievement and further exclude anyone who doesn't fit or conform to an ever narrowing notion of "normal" (Hulgin & Drake, 2011).

While more empirical research is still needed into the effectiveness of inclusive education (Zigmond, 2003), Jackson, Lewis, Ryndak, and Wehmeyer (2008) presented inclusion as a "research supported practice." Further, the roles and responsibility of professionals within an inclusive context need further exploration. Lamar-Dukes and Dukes (2005) discuss that both general and special education teachers must take on different and novel roles and responsibilities when working in inclusive schools. In particular, while special educators have a long history of working with other professionals they have historically conducted their work from the role of classroom teacher, inclusive education dictates that special educators function in a variety of new, non-classroom roles while working with a diverse collection of professionals (Lamar-Dukes & Dukes, 2005).



In 1993, Buysse and Wesley identified an identity crisis in ECSE as the field moved toward a multiplicity of roles and responsibilities necessitated by increasing complexity in service contexts. They highlighted how traditional means by which to conceptualize roles for ECSE and EI professionals focused almost exclusively on the direct service element of ECSE professional's responsibilities. The failure of the field to address how professionals could be supported and prepared to balance multiple roles was also raised as a concern (Buysse & Wesley, 1993). This study has illuminated how this program explicates how this identity crisis persists in the absence of direct examination of the intersections and relationships between early childhood educators and early childhood special educators. Without such direct renegotiation of roles, responsibilities, and relationships coupled with explicit attention to preparation of candidates to succeed in multiple, reconceptualized roles, the promise and original intentions of early childhood collaborative models of teacher education remain unfulfilled.

### **Future Research**

As with any research endeavor, the end result of this case study is marked by additional questions related to collaborative models of teacher education in general and for the early childhood context. Themes related to future research needs illuminated here include: (1) more systematic views of entire programs; (2) more in-depth studies of program dimensions and parameters of practice; (3) longitudinal studies of programs; and (4) investigations into the future purpose and nature of collaborative programs.

**More systematic views of whole programs.** As illustrated in chapter two, the literature to date around collaborative teacher education does not include comprehensive examinations of collaborative teacher education programs as systems. This study offers one such examination and uses a conceptual framework specifically chosen not just to analyze the program as a system of

collaborative teacher education, but also to respond to the proposal to utilize common study terminology and variables in an effort to promote greater understanding of collaborative models of teacher education programs as well as the variety of models which exist. Further, through the use of common terminology, variables, and structure comparative studies within and between collaborative teacher education programs are made possible. Many more studies on complete programs are needed to garner a more complete picture of this phenomenon and how it may impact and represent educational and teacher education reform. Generation of a data base of comprehensive studies of collaborative teacher education will take the field one step closer to establishing their relative worth and validation (Brownell et al, 2011).

The process of a teacher education program can therefore be considered to be the interactions of the various activities or elements which are organized as systems as this study illustrated. These interactions can either be marked by coherence or disjointedness. Teacher education scholars (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2002; 2006a; 2006b) have argued for the importance of program coherence to the effectiveness of teacher education programs. Developing and maintaining coherence in teacher education, however, is not a process operating in isolation. Indeed coherence in teacher education has been challenged by aspects of the larger context in which teacher education programs operate. Examples include departmental divides, individualistic norms, and the hiring process which often lead to faculty who are not full members of teams (Darling-Hammond, 2006). System or program wide studies would be useful for the examination of program congruence and other markers of quality, effective teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2006a).

Further, the application of common conceptual frameworks to structure analysis should be employed to provide a means to engage in comparative analysis. The frameworks of activity

theory and collaborative teacher education proved very useful in this endeavor and show promise for future, related work toward the goals listed here.

**More in-depth analysis of program dimensions and parameters of practice.** While more broad, program wide studies such as this one are sorely needed, more in-depth analysis of collaborative program dimensions (Pugach & Blanton, 2009) and parameters of practice pertaining to programs as activity systems (Engeström, 1987) are also in great need. Further, each parameter of practice, while impossible to define independent of the others, could be investigated thoroughly. Doing so could help broaden our understanding of how collaborative models operate but fully exposing the cultural aspects and components of programs and the cultural tools they employ to meet their espoused outcomes. This in turn may help the field understand more regarding the enactment of collaboration in programs.

Examining the enactment and culture of programs might include discourse analysis to examine the language used which could help illuminate how the language used and modeled within programs perpetuates or challenges the status quo. Further, cultural tools which might be considered signature pedagogies (Shulman, 2005) that may prove useful across the field might be developed or at minimum disseminated. Of particular importance is examining of the relative effectiveness and appropriateness of particular program dimensions and parameters of practice in relation to effective models of collaborative teacher education and the attainment of espoused outcomes. The use of CHAT as a research method can aid in this exploration as well as support the examination of intersecting activity systems within and across programs. These are important missing elements as the field continues to see an increase in collaborative models.

**Longitudinal studies.** To truly validate and understand the impact of collaborative models of teacher education, longitudinal studies of programs are needed. Foci of such

longitudinal inquiry may include: (1) maintenance of programs; (2) graduate and child/family outcomes, and (3) systems change.

First, the literature provides numerous descriptions of the initiation of and rationale for collaborative models of teacher education, there are fewer examples of longitudinal studies that provide pictures of how programs are sustained. Doing so will support other longitudinal studies which could focus on graduate and child/family outcomes related to the collaborative approach to preparation. Further, in today's educational landscape, accountability has increasingly come to the forefront. Longitudinal studies might help garner information regarding the efficacy of collaborative models and therefore such studies can help the field to understand the relative efficacy, depth, and quality of preparation of candidates for diverse settings and roles.

Outcome studies pertaining to child and family outcomes are also increasingly called for in the field. While I believe much is yet to learn about linking a teacher's preparation program to the educational success of children graduates teach before endorsing such linkages as valid, longitudinal studies of programs as well as graduates related to child and family outcomes is important if we are to meet the promise of early intervention (Bruder, 2010). Further, studies are needed to explore the attainment of the espoused outcome of promoting inclusion through collaborative teacher education (Stayton & McCollum, 2002; Piper, 2007; Pugach, Blanton, & Correa, 2011) by examining outcomes pertaining to practice across general and special education within educational systems.

**Investigation of the future purpose and nature of collaborative models.** Brownell et al (2011) concluded that collaborative teacher education research needs to garner more clarity as to what collaborative models of teacher education are trying to accomplish and how those efforts relate to quality inclusive practice. Many years ago the first collaborative early childhood

teacher education programs grew out of a need to respond to greater numbers of children with special needs entering preschool classrooms after the 1986 reauthorization of IDEA granted FAPE to three to five year olds. Focused on inclusion then, the field called for unification and blending of the two fields (e.g., Gargiulo et al, 1997; Miller, 1992). Lowenthal (1992) and others (e.g., Apple, 1995; Kemple et al., 1994; McCollum, et al., 1992) recognized the similarities between ECE and ECSE and noted that,

...what is good early childhood practice for typical children in most cases appears to be good for those who have special needs. The presence of children with disabilities does not require a different style of teaching from that which is appropriate for other young children (p. 123, as quoted in Gargiulo et al., p. 138).

While many teachers would hold this sentiment as true, the field of ECSE and that of special education in general recognizes the importance of individualized, embedded intervention marked by evidence based practice to ensure the needs of children with special needs are adequately met in inclusive settings. Further, there is a longstanding value in inter- and transdisciplinary work with young children and their families within EI/ECSE.

Therefore, when examining the future purpose of collaborative teacher education, for the early childhood context in particular, it will be important to embrace this focus on interdisciplinary practice and investigate how collaborative teacher education can be reconceptualized to fully mirror and provide learning opportunities related to interdisciplinary work in diverse settings. Investigation into how to conceptualize personnel preparation across all related professional disciplines charged with collaborating around meeting the needs of young children is sorely needed if we are to realize the intentions for interdisciplinary work as best practice. Within ECE and ECSE, reconceptualization of preparation should also include

examination of how to bring the preparation of ECE professionals at 2 and 4-year colleges and universities together in addition to combining ECE and ECSE at the University level. Further, models must afford candidates with authentic learning opportunities to learn how to collaborate within interdisciplinary teams across all disciplines and serve as change agents and advocates so that best practice becomes increasingly prevalent in our realities. This is particularly important to understanding how collaboration in teacher education and personnel preparation can represent and inform systemic reform. Lastly, the needs of faculty to design, deliver, and adapt collaborative models of early childhood education as members of interdisciplinary faculty teams is of great importance should the movement toward collaborative models evolve to meet the needs of candidates and the field.

Grossman and McDonald (2008) assert that for research in teacher education to move forward, a stronger relationship to research on organizations and policy implementation could focus attention on the organizational contexts in which the work takes shape. This view helps illuminate the importance of recognizing a teacher education program as a nested system which operates in a broader contextual system. Ultimately studies are needed into how roles and responsibilities in the greater educational landscape can and should be reconceptualized to help the field evolve and therefore truly reform practice. Conceptions of engaged scholarship (Boyer, 1990) are of great importance if we are to achieve these goals and therefore the needs of faculty who desire to engage in this important work should be of high priority for research and reform of the professoriate (Yendol-Hoppey et al., 2013).

What may be of greatest importance is examination as to why initial and historical reform efforts that resulted in changes within early childhood teacher education have not produced change in educational settings for young children in regards to reconceptualization of

professional roles and identities. The initial synergy described by Barbara which propelled this program toward collaboration evaporated across the field. While the number of collaborative early childhood teacher education programs, and collaborative programs in general, has increased, the nature of the practice within them may represent a failure to evolve. As noted, Buysse and Wesley first identified an identity crisis in ECSE in 1993. To date the fields of ECE and ECSE and general and special education for school-age children have not fully renegotiated roles and responsibilities. It seems that the field is avoiding the courageous conversations, rather dancing around the core issues related to professional territory, identity, and roles and responsibilities really required to meet the needs of all children in diverse settings. What results appears to be surface level attention to these issues failure for teacher education to evolve and represent reform. Examination through respectful and courageous conversations is needed to promote a next generation of collaborative teacher education. Kozleski (2011) recommends the creation of a “third space” for such exploration to occur for members of both fields.

Critical examination of the fields must also include the identification and implementation of competencies related to the espoused outcomes and roles for graduates and the field. It has been suggested that there exist a level of consensus as to what constitutes quality early childhood inclusion and that those qualities be used to inform the design of teacher education (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009). The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI, 2011) also discusses competencies needed for successful early childhood inclusion through examination of unified national standards and the emphasis on integrated complex early childhood systems which have resulted in increased variety of roles and responsibilities (NPDCI, 2011). These notions of what it takes to create quality inclusion and act as an inclusive teacher can be used to plan teacher preparation through “backward-mapping” (Winton, 2000).

Additionally, inclusive school reform, and collaboration between school and university partners should be conceptualized to help address issues of diversity and inclusion and reduce the research to practice gap that exists between higher education and PK-12 educational contexts. Notions of collaboration must move beyond the general and special education dichotomy to address a broader landscape of stakeholders. Collaboration between all players in a school and in a greater community can further inclusive practice as well as promote simultaneous renewal of both schools and teacher education. As posited by the Holmes group in 1986, schools and universities can work seamlessly to education the new workforce while providing professional development to existing staff. This is of utmost importance if teacher education is truly going to promote increased collaboration and inclusive practice. There is a dearth of quality, inclusive field sites available to teacher preparation programs in which teacher candidates can not only see quality inclusive practice in action but also practice and develop the necessary skills for successful inclusion (Macy et al). Collaboration between schools and universities may be one way to address this issue.

Additionally, teacher preparation must address the need to train teachers in the use of evidence-based practices (EBPs) as members of collaborative teams within inclusive contexts. As context increasing focuses on access to quality in the form of universal standards and equal outcomes accountability for such outcomes has become paramount, the importance of EBPs has surfaced. Research is needed to explore how to tie accountability to implementation of evidence-based practice. Implementation science shows promise in doing so (Fixen, Blase, Naoom, & Wallace, 2009; Odom, 2011).

Clearly, the reconceptualization of professional roles and responsibilities across early childhood contexts must be at the forefront of future endeavors of early childhood teacher



education. In doing so, the professional fields that comprise the early childhood education and intervention landscape must shift from viewing professionals as “sole guardians of exclusive sets of knowledge” (Edwards, 2010, p. 1) to a focus on interdisciplinary work. This is the promise and heart of early childhood and necessitated by the increasingly complex and diverse settings in which early childhood professionals carry out their work. Edwards (2010) makes the argument that as these settings have increased in complexity, the need to cross disciplinary boundaries has also increased. Further, she states,

As professionals work increasingly across professional boundaries on complex problems with other practitioners and with clients, they operate outside the safety net of their organisations’ bureaucratic procedures. Consequently, rather than following established institutional practices, they have to rely on their specialist knowledge and their expertise in working with others while they negotiate the accomplishment of complex tasks. This kind of relational practice means that practitioners need to be able to label their own expertise; recognize, draw on and contribute to the funds of expertise available; and demonstrate a strong sense of their own identities as practitioners whose actions can make a difference in the world.

Edwards also highlights how professionals’ work with clients further enhances their practice. Her central argument is based on the notion that professional expertise must no longer be assumed, rather it should be negotiated in the context of authentic work (Edwards, 2010). For such negotiations to be successful, each profession needs to identify and articulate what matters most from their perspective so that it is made visible to others. Edwards labels this process of negotiation, “relational agency” (Edwards, 2010; Edwards & Mackenzie, 2005). Relational agency is an area of expertise necessary in today’s complex contexts and involves “offering

one's professional resources to collaborating practitioners and to clients, and working with what they have to offer" (Edwards, 2010, p. 2).

What Edwards describes here is necessary should graduates of any program be in a position to "move the field" as espoused originally by the program examined in this study. Before an individual can push boundaries of practice, they must develop a sound foundation from which to begin. Further, if professionals are to succeed in providing truly individualized, family-centered, and culturally responsive services to all children and families, they must embrace this notion of relational agency. By doing so they are in a position to confidently offer what their own professional preparation and experience have afforded them as well as adapt to the resources provided by other professionals and children and families.

While the fields of ECE and ECSE have engaged in historic examination of their relative similarity and difference, there is a clear need for explicit exploration of what constitutes the professional identities, roles, and responsibilities for each. Establishing clear identities for the fields as well as for individuals could help create such a foundation of practice and confidence from which individuals and collective could act as true change agents in teacher education and educational reform. The program studied here is potentially in an excellent position to move toward this process given that it embraces the development of multiple professional identities across candidates as supported by the program outcome options. Generally speaking, both ECE and ECSE share the same espoused object and outcome of delivering best practice to children and families. We are all focused on the same horizon, albeit with different notions of how that horizon is defined and by which particular path it is to be reached. Relational practice across professional roles and identities may be the key to our collective success and true educational

and teacher education reform as it affords the opportunity to redefine our shared goals through collaboration.

A key lesson here is that it is not enough to simply expose both ECE and ECSE candidates to what has been traditionally considered to be the key tenets of each. Rather, there is a need for professionals from each perspective to fully and deeply understand their own discipline and how it relates to the other so that they set forth from a strong confident foundation in their own professional knowledge and skills to support adaptive, innovative work with other professionals and families. Only then can we truly say we are collaborating across fields and practicing truly interdisciplinary practice. Exploration of relational agency is well suited to be the central purpose of future endeavors of collaborative early childhood teacher education and preparation for early childhood/early intervention across all related fields.

In summary, while collaboration in higher education is becoming more supported and common, many questions remain as to how best to design, implement and assess collaboration as well as what the potential outcomes of collaborative programs may be in terms of inclusion. The research base must be significantly strengthened. Brownell et al (2010) suggest analyzing the current research to emphasize connections between theory and outcomes and to identify how collaboration might influence elements of inclusive teaching. Kozleski (2010) suggests we create a “third space” where we can honor our differences and understand our multiple perspectives as we pursue improvements in our work. The common language posited by Pugach and Blanton (2009) and related research framework also show promise for furthering this endeavor. Further, a focus on relational agency as a locus of work within the boundaries of the professionals should be a central focus of collaborative models of preparation.

However, it will be vital that collaboration be considered broadly to encompass not only children with and without disabilities and not only general and special education. Disability must be recognized as nested within diversity (Pugach, personal communication) if inclusive and collaborative work is to meet the needs of the increasing diverse and complex educational landscape. As Artiles (2003) suggests, researchers and practitioners must “surface their assumptions” about difference or the educational system will continue to marginalize some students. We must also “surface our assumptions” regarding teacher preparation and its impact on inclusion. Segregated preparation can only serve to perpetuate segregated education. We must strive to find ways to respect our differences, yet also recognize our similarities in practice and desire for meeting the needs of all children and learn to embrace relational agency as a means by which to maximize our interdisciplinary practice and ability to promote positive, meaningful outcomes for children and families.

What may be of greatest importance is examination as to why initial and historical reform efforts that resulted in changes within early childhood teacher education have not produced change in educational settings for young children in regards to reconceptualization of professional roles and identities. Perhaps through defining a future purpose for collaborative models of teacher education focused more explicitly on application of the ideals that led to the original blending of programs and moving toward embracing relational agency (Edwards, 2010) we may come to realize and fully value the inherent existence and importance of discrete knowledge and skills related to the various professional disciplines. Perhaps the early focus on unification and blending of the two fields is at issue here. Collaboration typically connotes differences between collaborators that when brought together through collaboration may finally help the field achieve its grander goals. Perhaps most central to our future success will be a

realization that rather than blending fields together into one, we need to focus on developing diverse, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary teams to meet the diverse needs of all children and families. Therefore, teacher education and preparation for related services personnel should focus on preparing candidates for work as members of such teams that embrace flexibility and evolution as a natural aspect of our work. In the end, perhaps the most important message for faculty of such programs as well as for candidates is,

"I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things."

- Mother Teresa

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**Appendix A**

## Observation Protocol

Anecdotal Observations	Notes

## Initial Analysis

Program dimensions	Facts/Observations What? Who? Where?	Analysis Why?	Follow up? Next Steps?
Curricular coherence;			
Faculty collaboration			
Depth of knowledge			
Performance/portfolio assessments			
PK-12 partnerships.			

## **Appendix B**

### Semi-Structured Interview/Focus Group Protocol

#### Faculty – Espoused Program

1. Describe the overall purpose, mission, and vision of this teacher education program.
  - a. Would you personally consider it to be a blended or collaborative program? Why or why not?
  - b. How does the program define the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective inclusive, collaborative teaching?
  - c. What are the goals or hopes for program graduates?
    - i. What types of roles/responsibilities does the program attempt to prepare graduates for?
2. Describe the program's curriculum and overall structure as it is intended.
  - a. What are the key characteristics?
  - b. Are there intended connections between any aspects of the program including special, general, multicultural, and foundational? Describe.
  - c. In what ways is the intended structure made known to faculty? Students?
3. Describe intentions as to how various faculty interact regarding planning, delivery, and evaluation of the program.
  - a. Who is responsible for what? What are the roles and responsibilities of various individuals?

- b. What are intentions pertaining to how other stakeholders (families, community members/partners, field sites, others at the university, etc) are to be involved in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of the program?
4. Describe what influences (barriers or supports) the design of the program?
  - a. Describe the involvement and/or support of administrative and other structures in the design of the program.
  - b. Departmental, college or university aspects?
  - c. State or regional aspects?
  - d. Licensure? Accreditation?
  - e. Other stakeholders (families, community members/partners, etc)?
5. What content and/or experiences are most crucial for candidates to obtain?
  - a. Describe how special education content is designed to be situated in the program.
  - b. Describe how early childhood education content is designed to be situated in the program.
  - c. What are the graduation requirements?
6. What are the intentions/ideals regarding how candidates are assessed?
  - a. What types of assessments would ideally be used to measure graduates' knowledge, skills and dispositions for teaching?
  - b. How does the program intend to measure whether candidates are adequately prepared for roles in early childhood education?
  - c. How does the program intend to measure whether candidates are adequately prepared for roles in early childhood special education?

- d. How does the program intend to measure whether candidates are adequately prepared for inclusive teaching?
7. Describe the desired relationship between the program and field sites.
- a. How are field sites selected?
    - i. Is there a set of criteria? If so what does it entail?
    - ii. What are the characteristics or examples of ideal field sites?
      - 1. Inclusion?
      - 2. Collaboration?
    - iii. What is the ideal role of university faculty within the field sites?
      - 1. What is the ideal role of the mentor teacher?
8. What else would you like to share about the program and how it is designed?

## Appendix C

### Semi-Structured Interview/Focus Group Protocol

#### Faculty – Enacted Program

1. Describe how the overall purpose, mission, and vision of this teacher education program are seen in its activities.
  - a. Would you personally consider it to be a blended or collaborative program as it is enacted? Why or why not?
  - b. What types of roles/responsibilities does the program fully prepare graduates for in your opinion?
    - i. How does the enacted program define the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective inclusive, collaborative teaching?
  - c. What influences your perceptions of how the program is being enacted and how well it is functioning as compared to its design and intentions?
    - i. How does this impact design? Enactment?
  - d. Do you feel the design and enactment are congruent? Why or why not?
2. Describe the program's curriculum and overall structure as it is enacted.
  - a. What are the key characteristics?
  - b. Are there realized connections between any aspects of the program including special, general, multicultural, and foundational? Describe.
  - c. Do you personally have awareness of all components of the program and how they interrelate? Explain.

- d. In what ways do you think the intended structure or nature is understood by faculty? By students? By graduates?
3. Describe how various faculty interact regarding planning and delivery of the program.
  - a. How often are meetings held?
  - b. What is their purpose?
  - c. Who is responsible for what? What are the roles and responsibilities of various individuals?
  - d. In what ways do you work collaboratively with other faculty to plan the curriculum? To deliver the curriculum? To assess the curriculum? Explain and describe.
  - e. How are other stakeholders (families, community members/partners, field sites, others at the university, etc) involved in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of the program?
4. Describe what influences (barriers or supports) the design of the program?
  - a. Describe the involvement and/or support of administrative and other structures in the design of the program.
  - b. Departmental, college or university aspects?
  - c. State or regional aspects?
  - d. Licensure? Accreditation?
  - e. Other stakeholders?
  - f. How do they create supports or barriers to collaboration? To delivery of the program? To mission/vision of the program?
5. What content and/or experiences are most crucial for candidates to obtain?



- a. Describe how special education content is situated in the program.
  - b. Describe how early childhood education content is situated in the program.
  - c. What are the graduation requirements?
6. How are candidates assessed?
- a. What types of assessments are used to measure graduates' knowledge, skills and dispositions for teaching?
  - b. How does the program measure whether candidates are adequately prepared for roles in early childhood education?
  - c. How does the program measure whether candidates are adequately prepared for roles in early childhood special education?
  - d. For inclusive teaching?
7. How is the delivery of the program assessed?
- a. Program level? Course level?
8. Describe the relationship between the program and field sites.
- a. How are field sites selected?
    - i. Is there a set of criteria? If so what does it entail?
  - b. Describe the nature of available field sites.
    - i. Do the available field sites fully meet the needs of the program's mission/vision? Why or why not?
    - ii. Do candidates see examples of quality, effective inclusion? Why or why not? Describe.
    - iii. Do candidates see examples of effective collaboration? Why or why not? Describe.

- c. What is the ideal role of university faculty within the field sites?
    - i. What is the ideal role of the mentor teacher?
9. What else would you like to share about the program as it is enacted?

## Appendix D

### Semi-Structured Interview/Focus Group Protocol

#### Current Candidates – Enacted Program

1. Tell me about your teacher education program.
  - a. Why did you decide to pursue this program?
  - b. What are your goals related to career post graduation?
    - i. Do you see this program as supportive of these goals? Why or why not?
  - c. What do you see as the key characteristics of your program?
    - i. Preparation for what? Infants, preschool, primary, families, collaboration?
  - d. What are the main experiences you have had?
    - i. In relation to key characteristics?
  - e. Tell me about what you see as the most meaningful aspects of the program.  
About the least meaningful.
2. How do the faculty seem to organize and present the curriculum?
  - a. Do you see faculty working together? Explain.
  - b. If you have a question about the program, who do you go to?
    - i. About a specific class?
    - ii. Can all faculty answer your questions? Explain.
3. Are there connections between your classes?
  - a. Between classes and your field work?
  - b. Assignments, content, faculty support, materials, etc.

4. What are you learning about being an early childhood special educator or about early childhood special education in general?
  - a. Where/In what experiences does this take place?
  - b. Interdisciplinary/collaborative work? Direct service? Working with families?
5. What are you learning about early childhood educator or about early childhood education in general?
  - a. Where/In what experiences does this take place?
  - b. Content? Assessment? Collaborative work? Working with families?
6. Describe the field sites you have worked in.
  - a. What were the teachers' roles, titles, and responsibilities?
  - b. What were yours?
  - c. Who were the children?
  - d. Describe your relationship with your collaborating teachers. With other professionals at the site?
  - e. Describe your view of the relationship between your collaborating teacher(s) and your faculty.
7. Describe how you have had to demonstrate knowledge, skills, or dispositions regarding early childhood education.
  - a. Regarding early childhood special education?
  - b. In coursework?
  - c. In fieldwork?
8. What teaching contexts and/or teaching roles is your program best preparing you for?  
Why?

- a. What teaching contexts and teaching roles is your program least preparing you for? Explain.
  - b. Do you feel your program is preparing you to work in inclusive settings?
    - i. Why or why not?
    - ii. What roles and responsibilities in an inclusive setting are you being prepared for? How? Explain.
9. Do you feel confident in your effectiveness as an inclusive teacher? Why or why not? How does this relate to your preparation?
10. Is there anything else you can tell me about your program?

## Appendix E

### Semi-Structured Interview/Focus Group Protocol

#### Graduates – Enacted Program

1. Tell me about your teacher education program.
  - a. Why did you decide to pursue this particular program?
  - b. What were your goals related to career post graduation when you were in the program? Did they change during your preparation? Why or why not? What are they now?
    - i. Do you think this program was supportive of these goals? Why or why not?
  - c. What were the key characteristics of your program?
    - i. Preparation for what? Infants, preschool, primary, families, collaboration?
  - d. What are the main experiences you have had?
    - i. In relation to key characteristics?
  - e. Tell me about what you saw as the most meaningful aspects of the program.
    - i. About the least meaningful.
2. How did the faculty seem to organize and present the curriculum?
  - a. Did you see faculty working together? Explain.
  - b. If you had a question about the program, who did you go to?
    - i. About a specific class?

- ii. Do you think that all of the faculty would have been able to answer all of your questions? Explain.
3. Did you see connections between your classes? Explain.
  - a. Between classes and your field work?
  - b. Assignments, content, faculty support, materials, etc.
  - c. If needed, revisit key characteristics and main experiences.
4. What did you learn about being an early childhood special educator or about early childhood special education in general?
  - a. Where/In what experiences did that take place?
5. What did you learn about being an early childhood educator or about early childhood education in general?
  - a. Where/In what experiences did that take place?
6. Describe the field sites you worked in as part of the program.
  - a. What were the teachers' roles, titles, and responsibilities?
  - b. What were yours?
  - c. Who were the children?
  - d. Describe your relationship with your collaborating teachers. With other professionals at the site?
  - e. Describe your view of the relationship between your collaborating teacher(s) and your faculty.
7. Describe how you were asked to demonstrate knowledge, skills, or dispositions regarding early childhood education.
  - a. Regarding early childhood special education?

- b. In coursework?
  - c. In fieldwork?
8. What teaching contexts and/or teaching roles did your program best prepare you for?  
Why?
- a. What teaching contexts and teaching roles did your program least prepare you for? Explain.
  - b. Did your program prepare you to work in inclusive settings?
    - i. Why or why not?
    - ii. What roles and responsibilities in an inclusive setting were you prepared for? Explain.
9. Do you feel confident in your effectiveness as an inclusive teacher? Why or why not?  
How does this relate to your preparation?
10. Is there anything else you can tell me about your program?



**Appendix F**

## Document Review Protocol

Anecdotal Observations	Notes

## Initial Analysis

Program dimensions	Facts/Observations What? Who? Where?	Analysis Why?	Follow up? Next Steps?
Curricular coherence;			
Faculty collaboration			
Depth of knowledge			
Performance/portfolio assessments			
PK-12 partnerships.			

**Appendix G**  
Programs of Study

Program Option 1: Master's Degree in ECE

Classes are listed in approximate order of when they will be taken by students.

<b>Course</b>	<b>Cr</b>
<b>Advanced Child Growth and Development</b> (complete during first or second semester in program)	3
RSEM 5100 Basic Statistics (suggested for second fall in program)	3
<b>Approaches to Young Children's Learning</b>	3
<b>Language and Literacy in Young Children</b>	3
<b>Curriculum and Program Development in ECE</b>	3
<b>Administrative Seminar</b>	3
<b>Working with Parents and Families</b>	3
<b>Medical and Physiological Aspects of Developmental Disabilities</b>	3
<b>Social Competence and Classroom Supports</b>	3
Single Subject Research Design	3
<b>Literacy and Mathematics K-2</b>	3
Elective—choose one of the following UCD courses: Advanced Infant Toddler Development (meets Director qualification) Foundation and Organization of Coaching* (part of Coaching Early Childhood Professionals series) Autism and Early Intervention (online)* (part of Applied Behavior Analysis series) Collaborating in Schools and Communities EPSY—Educational Psychology course of choice relevant to ECE LCRT early literacy course of choice* Independent study—Research and data analysis (graduate research assistant to faculty) *may be taken as stand-alone class or part of a certificate program	3
Practicum in Early Childhood Education	3
Total Credit Hours	39
Comprehensive Exams	

### Program Option 2: Early Childhood Special Education Specialist License

Classes are listed in approximate order of when they will be taken by students.

Course	Cr
<b>Advanced Child Growth and Development</b> (complete during first or second semester in program)	3
<b>Medical and Physiological Aspects of Developmental Disabilities</b>	3
<b>Approaches to Young Children's Learning</b>	3
<b>Language and Literacy in Young Children</b>	3
<b>Curriculum and Program Development in ECE</b>	3
<b>Working with Parents and Families</b>	3
<b>Administrative Seminar</b>	3
Screening and Assessment of Young Children	3
Intervention Strategies	3
<b>Social Competence and Classroom Supports</b>	3
<b>Literacy and Mathematics K-2</b>	3
Infant/Toddler Practicum	2
Preschool Practicum	2
Primary Practicum	2
Total Credit Hours	39
ECSE State exam	

### Program Option 3: Early Childhood Special Education Specialist License and Master's Degree in ECE

Classes are listed in approximate order of when they will be taken by students.

Course	Cr
<b>Advanced Child Growth and Development</b> (complete during first or second semester in program)	3
Basic Statistics (complete within first 2 semesters)	3
<b>Medical and Physiological Aspects of Developmental Disabilities</b>	3
<b>Approaches to Young Children's Learning</b>	3
<b>Language and Literacy in Young Children</b>	3
<b>Curriculum and Program Development in ECE</b>	3
<b>Administrative Seminar</b>	3
<b>Working with Parents and Families</b>	3
Screening and Assessment of Young Children	3
Intervention Strategies	3
<b>Social Competence and Classroom Supports</b>	3
Single Subject Research Design	3
<b>Literacy and Mathematics in K-2</b>	3
Elective—take towards end of program	3
Infant/Toddler Practicum	2
Preschool Practicum	2
Primary Practicum	2
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>	<b>48</b>
ECSE STATE Exam	
Comprehensive Exam	

## Program Options 4 and 5: Added Endorsement in Early Childhood Special Education Specialist

For Teachers holding a current Early Childhood, Elementary, or Special Education (K-12) License

Classes are listed in approximate order of when they will be taken by students.

Course	Cr
<b>Medical and Physiological Aspects of Developmental Disabilities</b>	3
<b>Language and Literacy in Young Children</b>	3
<b>Curriculum and Program Development in ECE</b>	3
Screening and Assessment	3
Intervention Strategies	3
<b>Social Competence and Classroom Supports</b>	3
Infant/Toddler Practicum	2
Preschool Practicum	2
Primary Practicum	2
<b>Total Credit Hours</b>	<b>24</b>
ECSE State Exam	
<b>Requirements for MA plus ECSE added endorsement</b>	
Elective—take towards end of program	3
Single Subject Research Design	3
Basic Statistics	3
Comprehensive Exam	
<b>Choose 2 of the following with faculty advisors approval</b>	
Approaches to Young Children's Learning	3
Administrative Seminar	3
Working with Parents and Families	3
<b>Total Credit Hours for MA plus ECSE added Endorsement</b>	<b>39</b>

## Appendix H

### Key Tenets and Characteristics of the Program

- Embracing a state wide and a broader overall goal focusing on producing leaders who will help move the field by advocating for best practices on behalf of children and families.
- A program design that draws from the foundational philosophies from both the ECE and ECSE fields and encourages students to complete a program of study that leads to both a degree in ECE and a license in ECSE while allowing for individual flexibility and choice through multiple program outcome options.
  - The program has historically approached the blending of ECE and ECSE content at the course level and all programs of study related to the various program outcome options share a core set of coursework.
- A program faculty (core and adjunct) that is interdisciplinary in nature including ECE, ECSE, OT and SLP as well as two primary practitioners.
  - Core faculty meet frequently and regularly. – Gina indicated that faculty try but don't get to meet as often as we like. They meet at least once per month.
  - The entire group responsible for delivering the program (core, adjunct and field faculty) does not have opportunities to meet on a regular basis. Gina shared that they don't meet with adjuncts as often as they would like either and rarely meet as a group. Rather they meet individually more often. A commitment to soliciting

team members who share the philosophies of the program exists in an attempt to ensure program/curricular coherence.

- A reliance on and trust in past graduates both in the field as site supervisors and as University Practicum Faculty as a means to better support current candidates and establish placements.
  - A second challenge persists regarding program resources to adequately support candidates and community practicum sites.
- An ongoing focus on the use of practical, natural and inclusive settings which allow candidates to engage in realistic, authentic learning experiences throughout the program (during courses and leading up to practicum).
  - This is seen as a developmental progression of skill and knowledge development with earlier experiences serving as a means for students to build skills which are ultimately demonstrated fully in practicum.
  - Promoting a value for children with and without special needs being cared for and educated together in inclusive settings.
    - A promotion of embedded instruction to promote inclusion.
  - Commitment to using only inclusive sites for practicum experiences.
  - An ongoing challenge exists related to securing quality, inclusive practicum placements where candidates have opportunities to observe and practice quality, inclusive and evidenced based practice. Gina added that many sites don't have ECSEs on site. True inclusive sites are rare and even more difficult to secure at the primary level.



- Commitment to fostering relationships between the faculty and the candidates as well as working to be very individualized and responsive to candidate and community needs.
  - Working to meet the perceived and expressed needs of candidates related to their current work and career aspirations. This focus helps to steer the program delivery to a primary focus on the preschool age level and the role of classroom teacher and leader and specialist in ECSE. However, other age groups and professional roles are a part of the program to various degrees and are stressed more for certain individuals based again on their individual needs.
- Attention to alignment to the national and state standards for ECE and ECSE (NAEYC and CEC/DEC) in the program design.
- A philosophy that particularly stresses family and community centered practice including a historical use of community, candidate, and graduate needs and perceptions as guidance for the program design and delivery.
- A philosophy that sees social-emotional development as central to child development and therefore adoption of a positive-behavior support philosophy toward behavior/classroom management.
- A philosophy of diversity that all children and families are unique and diverse and that strategies are universal (can be applied to a wide variety of children demonstrating various aspects of diversity including disability). Cultural responsiveness is the focus
- Adhering to a strength-based philosophy towards candidates and children as well as a value for children with identified needs.

- Promoting the use of evidence-based practices and the ability to understand, use and conduct research as ECE/ECSE professionals. There is a heavy focus on use of Evidence Based Practices (EBPs). These are discussed extensively in ECSE licensure courses.