Bachelor of Special Education Program Review 2017

A Report of the Review Panel
Spring 2017

Mildred Cahill
Edith Furey
Judith Mellor
Sharon Penney
David Philpott (Chair)
Gabrielle Young
Introduction

Special Education

• Initial certificate program in 1976
  ➤ Bachelors degree (BSpEd) in 1979

• Degree has attracted:
  ➤ a consistent number of students each year, and
  ➤ an equally consistent number of graduates.
• Structure of degree remained unchanged.
  ❖ 12-course, post-degree program
  ❖ combination of required and elective courses
    • including a practicum

• Courses have continuously evolved.

• Models of program delivery have changed:
  ➔ exclusively on-campus
  ➔ correspondence
  ➔ online learning environments
  ➔ limited requirements for students to be on campus
Two previous formal reviews (1996 & 2003) guided changes to the degree:

- more learning experiences in special education at graduate level
Special Education Context

• Discipline of special education:
  ◆ medical model of diagnostic/prescriptive
  ◆ individualized teaching and supports
  ◆ inclusive learning environments

• Universal Design for Learning
• Differentiated Instruction
• Response to Intervention
  ◆ Inform practice
• Classroom Teacher
  - the lead educator for all students
• IRT
  - a support to through a co-teaching model
• Collaborative Planning
  - at times multi-grade
  - characterize contemporary classrooms in NL
20% of the student population in Canada receiving supports (Focusing on Students, 2007)

In 2016/2017, the total number of students with 1+ exceptionality will increase to over 20% (Department of EECD)

Dominant areas of exceptionalities:
- autism spectrum disorders, specific learning disorders, speech/language, and behavioral challenges
Faculty of Education Context

• Post-degree:
  ❖ Bachelor of Education (I/S),
  ❖ Bachelor of Education Conjoint with Diploma in Technology Education; and,
  ❖ Bachelor of Education (P/E),

• Brings graduates close to, or at, 6th grade teacher certification and associated pay scale.

• No financial incentive to complete the Bachelor of Special Education degree.
## Admission Trends
### Initial Teacher Preparation Programs at MUN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Elementary</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate/Secondary</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech Ed. Conjoint</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Studies</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current Review

• 2016, the special education program faculty group requested the Dean of Education to approve a review committee to conduct:
  ❖ self-review of the current B.Sp.Ed. degree;
  ❖ review of the opportunities in graduate studies within the faculty for special education; and,
  ❖ exploration of the aspirations of B.Sp.Ed. students and graduates for continuing education opportunities.
Committee consisted of:

- 3 faculty members within the program,
- 2 faculty members external to the program, and
- 1 senior staff member.

Data were available January 2017.
Final report completed Spring 2017.
Methodology

• Mixed methods approach.
• Consultations and roundtable interviews were held with key stakeholders:
  ❖ NLTA
  ❖ Dept. of Educ. and Early Childhood Development
  ❖ NLESID
  ❖ CSPNL
  ❖ Learning Disabilities Association of NL
  ❖ Autism Society of NL, and
  ❖ Registrar of Teacher Certification
• Wanted to compare Memorial’s program and course structure with other Canadian universities.

• Graduate assistant completed:
  - Environmental scan of
  - Special education teacher preparation programs
  - 16 Canadian universities
Online survey developed.

- Input from members and stakeholders.
  - Survey available **October, 2016**.
  - Open until **November, 2016**.
- Individuals accepted into B.Sp.Ed. invited to complete survey,
  - regardless of whether they had completed the degree, or
  - were still active in the teaching profession.
• Intent of survey, to explore:
  
  ◆ **perspectives** on the degree and its courses,
  ◆ the professional **needs** of educators in meeting the needs of exceptional students, and their further educational **goals**.

• Faculty’s webpage contained link to survey,
  
  ◆ Emailed to students active on the degree,
  ◆ Dept. of Educ. and Early Childhood Development,
  ◆ NLESD, and
  ◆ NLTA distributed the survey.
Sample Size

• 310 respondents completed the survey.
• The committee, with the assistance of Dr. Gerry White (Research Computing Specialist) analyzed the results.
• Additional round table discussions with key stakeholders (consulted during the initial phase) will be held to present and discuss emergent themes and recommendations.
• Recommendations are addressed in the final report.
Current Bachelor of Special Education

- **11 of 20 courses are available online**
  - Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL)
- **6 required courses**: Education 3040, 3600, 3610, 3620, 3630, and 3650
- **6 electives** required for the degree
  - total of 36 credit hours
- **Students with 2+ years experience**
  - Special education teacher
  - Can waive 3650 (Practicum) and complete another elective course
• With the exception of 3600 (assessment), the degree can be completed on-line.

• Summer semester allows students to complete on-campus requirements in 6 weeks.

• Care is given to ensure relevant courses (e.g., Autism, Speech/Language) are regularly offered.
# Enrollment Trends in Special Education at MUN

## Bachelor of Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Received</th>
<th>Admissions</th>
<th>Degrees Conferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Degree completed **full-time or part-time**.
  - Many candidates start full-time and switch to part-time status.

• Size of the graduating group does not match the intake group of any given year.

• There is no time limitation on the degree.
  - Hundreds of students continuing studies.
• Teachers’ pensions calculated on best 7 years.
  ❖ Senior teachers trying to finish degree for pension, despite having started the degree many years before.

• Males in graduating class are less than 10%.

• Graduates acquire teaching positions across the country.
  ❖ Graduates need to be familiar with models of practice, broader than the service delivery model used in NL.
• 4 full-time faculty members
  ❖ Maich, Penney, Philpott, & Young

• 1 faculty member whose teaching load is predominantly special education
  ❖ Furey

• Per-course instructors,
  ❖ hired in accordance with the LUMUN contract,
  ❖ teach approximately half of the course sections.
Issue

• Per-course instructors bring current practice and a strong link with contemporary schools.

• Per-course instructors, who are retired from the school system for many years, have seniority for hiring, yet may be no longer familiar with current program delivery models.
Current Graduate Degree

- Recommendations from previous reviews (1996 & 2003)

- Graduate degree commenced in 2005/06.

Master’s degree in CTLS with Specialization in “Special Education”

- Comprised of 3 elective courses, from an existing slate of 4 graduate course options, and a thesis.
4 graduate electives:

- 6710 - Issues in Development and Implementation of Special Education Policy and Practices
- 6712 - The Nature and Assessment of Behaviour Disorders in Children and Adolescents
- 6714 - Principles and Practices in Exceptionality
- 6755 - Nature and Assessment of Learning Disabilities
Since 2005:

- 21 admitted candidates,
- **6 completed** the degree.
  - Others dropped out / changed programs.

As of January, 2017,

- **7 candidates** listed as active on this degree.
Two reasons for this:

- no identifiable career outcome
- fear of completing a thesis

Fewer than 7% of graduate students in education pursue a thesis route.

- Strengthening the Value Chain (MUN, 2013)
- Office of Graduate Programs and Research, Faculty of Education
Environmental Scan

• Most course intensive degree in Special Education in the country.

• A representative search of 16 universities,
  - across 8 Provinces,
  - no other Bachelor’s degree in Special Education,
  - Others have a series of undergraduate certificates / diplomas or graduate degrees specializing in inclusive education or educational psychology.
Previous Reviews

Examined 1996 and 2003 reviews

• 1996 recommendations:
  ❖ #5 and #7 - a core course specific to NL’s model of program planning, and a course on writing IEPs
  ❖ #11 - a specific course in classroom management
  • have not been implemented.

• #13 - mandatory courses in special education
  ❖ not fully implemented.
2003 report:

• # 6 – interdisciplinary training on collaboration
• # 7 & 8 – initial teacher preparation in spec. ed. **not addressed**

• Previous reviews relied on interviews with key informants.
  • **No student survey or environmental scan**
Findings

- Each consultation went over the allotted time.
  - Conversations were rich.

- 310 participants completed on-line survey.
  - Qualitative data as rich as in-person consultations.
Survey Respondents

- 84% - female
- 75% - B.Ed. (Primary/Elementary)
- 15% - currently completing B.Sp.Ed.
- 18% - < 5 years teaching experience
- 32% - 11-20 years teaching experience
- 23% - > 20 years teaching experience
- 52% - currently employed as an IRT
- 50% - employed in Primary/Elementary classes
- 58% - employed in Eastern Avalon
- 44% - are completing a M.Ed.
- 38% - have completed a M.Ed.
All educators are “special education teachers”

- *Every classroom teacher* requires the skills of a special education teacher.
- Some students with more *complex needs* are the responsibility of specialist teachers.
- Most students with exceptionalities are taught by *regular classroom teachers*, who are *frequently struggling* to meet their needs.
Despite co-teaching and collaborative practice, classroom teachers are not equipped to identify, understand or accommodate individual needs.

- 82% - classroom teachers do not have sufficient preparation in special education
- 78% - school administrators lack sufficient preparation
- 67% - IRTs are sufficiently prepared
- 89% - courses in the B.Sp.Ed. program should be available to all educators
“Even if all initial teacher preparation programs now had two mandatory courses, it would not be sufficient to meet the needs of today’s educators.”
Suggestions
Initial Teacher Preparation Degrees

• Include courses on:
  ◆ Multi-grade classrooms
  ◆ Rural and small schools
  ◆ Co-teaching and collaborative planning

• Develop short summer institutes on:
  ◆ Student mental health, assistive technology, behavior management, autism, etc.

• Include more education on play-based learning.

• Include 2 mandatory courses (minimum) on exceptionalities that address differentiated instruction
• Raise the academic standard for admission to initial teacher education programs

• Review the high use of per course instructors, many of whom have been retired from the field for an extended time
Diploma in Inclusive Education for Classroom Teachers

• New teacher graduates, or existing teachers, could continue their studies
  ❖ 1 semester; 5 courses.

• Diploma could include courses such as:
  ❖ Intro to service delivery model and IEPs;
  ❖ Co-teaching and collaborative planning;
  ❖ Differentiated instruction;
  ❖ Behaviour issues;
  ❖ ASD and SLD.
The intention of a diploma to better prepare classroom teachers.

- Offered as a separate, stand-alone diploma, or
- Completed conjointly,
  - Similar in structure to the Bachelor of Education (Intermediate/Secondary) Conjoint with the Diploma in Technology Education.
Classroom Management Skills

- Best addressed as *professional learning* during the introductory years to teaching.

- NLTA interested in co-hosting,
  - with Faculty of Education,
  - online professional learning course (PL),
  - for new teachers in their first 2 years of teaching.

- Course would be voluntary and recognized as teacher’s professional growth plans.
• 2 year teacher induction program (suggested)
• New teachers working through their probationary period, can avail of targeted PL during introductory phase.
• 90% - educators are interested in pursuing PL during their careers
• 69% - on-line courses are an effective medium of course delivery
Relative Support for the Existing Degree Structure

- Appreciated **content and rigour** of program.
  - 64% - degree was academically rigorous
  - 83% - it enhanced their professional skill set
  - 89% - confidence in their professional competence

- Majority of the courses **relevant** to their duties,
  - slight variation in courses for low incidence issues (deaf education, hearing loss, giftedness).
Changes to the Degree are Warranted

- 3600 (Academic and Behavioral Assessment)
  - essential, cornerstone course

- Redevelop 3620 (Nature and Characteristics of Emotional/Behavioral Disorders)
  - title change - include focus on mental health

- 3650 (Practicum in Special Education)
  - should not be waived
  - need to display professional competence
• 3680 (Inclusive Practices for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder)
  ❖ mandatory, introductory course on ASD

• Develop a mandatory second course
  ❖ program planning, sensory balance, and self-regulation for ASD

• 3690 (Collaborative Practice)
  ❖ co-teaching and collaboration - central content
• 4505 (Transition Planning for Adolescents with Intellectual Disabilities)
  ❖ transition planning for *all* students with exceptionalities

• 4520 (Inclusive Practices for Students with Behavioral Challenges)
  ❖ Mandatory; functional behaviour assessment, developing behavioral management plans

• Fewer courses on intellectual disability
• Develop course on:
  ✤ Differentiated Instruction (DI)
  ✤ Model of support services
  ✤ Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

• Develop course on:
  ✤ Assistive Technology & Alternate Format Materials

• Develop blended courses,
  ✤ instead of either on-campus or online
Establish Enhanced Communication between Stakeholder Groups

• Schedule semi or annual scheduled meetings
• Stakeholders can:
  ❖ discuss the special education needs, and
  ❖ seek ways to coordinate efforts.
• Students reported a disconnect between:
  ❖ what MUN teaches,
  ❖ what provincial policy expects, and
  ❖ what the school district directs.
• Will prioritize this communication
French Immersion and Francophone Needs

- Discussed accommodating students with individualized learning needs in French Immersion classes in NLESD and at CSFP.
- Not enough French Immersion or Francophone teachers pursuing the B.Sp.Ed.
- Having supports delivered by English speaking IRTs does not work in an environment where the language of instruction is French.
Promote More Research on Provincial Practice

- 2015 - 282 students graduated with a M.Ed.,
  - 18 (6.3%) completed a thesis route.
  - In 2014, that number was 5.5%.
  - In 2013, it was 7.2%.
- Autism Association, LD Association, Dept. of Ed., and NLESD reported this concern:
  - separating the faculty from the school system, and
  - valuable opportunities to evaluate programs and inform practice are being missed.
Future Professional Learning Needs

- Look to employer or professional association to provide PL,
  - not the Faculty of Education.
- 67% - would pursue additional courses,
  - even if there was no financial incentive
- 65% - step increase in pay was a significant factor in considering additional training
- Interest in certificate or master’s degrees in:
  - ASD, mental health, behaviour, and AT.
Bachelor’s or Master’s?

• Change to a post-degree model.
  ❖ Teachers achieving 6th grade status (or within a couple of courses of it) with initial teacher degree

• Financially prudent decision:
  ❖ Immediately begin a master’s degree.
    • Same number of courses move them to 7th grade status

• Number of teachers in the province continues to decline.
  ❖ The desire for a third bachelor’s degree lessens
• Value content of the B.Sp.Ed.
  ❖ **strategy-based** versus being theoretical or research-focused

• M.Ed. students at MUN:
  ❖ not pursuing research and thesis routes,
  ❖ opting instead for **online, all-course** routes,
  ❖ which could further limit research options on provincial programs.
• Number of graduates that a master’s program could produce annually:
  ❖ 20 in graduate courses, and
  ❖ 40 in undergraduate courses.

• Several hundred students eligible to complete the current degree.

• 3 - 5 years, given to the current B.Sp.Ed.,
  ❖ Should the degree be changed to a Master’s?
Recommendations

• The absence of elective courses in special education for the (P/E) and (I/S) degree.
  ❖ Prevents students from completing two special education courses prior to beginning the program.
  ❖ Reduces course requirements from 10 to 12

• New teachers close to 6th grade certification.
  ❖ Limited appetite for a third bachelor’s program

• 5 course certificate - 6th grade certification

• Graduate studies - 7th grade pay level
• Emphasis for the faculty:

  ❖ enhancing professional learning for classroom teachers; and,
  ❖ providing appropriate graduate studies, to allow specialization in the discipline.
Recommendation 1

• Faculty of Education develop:
  ❖ 15 credit hour diploma program
  ❖ titled *Diploma in Inclusive Education*
  ❖ for classroom teachers

• Courses developed for on-line delivery,
  ❖ with the option of summer institutes.
Recommendation 2

- 3 credit hour courses - developed for diploma:
  - **Responding to Diversity**
    - universal design for learning, response to intervention, differentiated instruction
  - **Monitoring Student Progress**
    - IEP process, collaborative planning, developing individual goals and objectives, models of support delivery
  - **Supporting Student Behaviour**
    - redevelopment of 3620 and 4520
  - **Understanding Autism**
    - redevelopment of 3680
  - **Understanding Specific Learning Disorders**
    - redevelopment of 3630 & 4530
Recommendation 3

• That students have the option of exiting with:
  ❖ a diploma

  or

  ❖ continuing with an additional 15 credit hours,
    • and receive a Bachelor of Inclusive Education,
      • (30 credit hours beyond their initial degree)
    • which will replace the existing B.Sp.Ed. Degree.
      • (36 credit hours)
Recommendation 4

- Diploma to have a 70% admission average,
  - in the last 60 attempted credit hours
- Students must maintain this average
Recommendation 5

- Bachelor of Inclusive Education:
  - mandatory 3 credit hours on assessment (3600)
  - mandatory 3 credit hour practicum (3650)
- 9 credit hours be elective from courses in the existing B.Sp.Ed. program:
  - 3040, 3610, 3660, 3941, 4520, 4540.
Recommendation 6

- Develop a new course on assistive technology and alternate format materials.
  - also an elective on the new Bachelor of Inclusive Education
Recommendation 7

• That all courses on the existing B.Sp.Ed., other than those listed above, be delisted
Recommendation 8

- Courses listed as elective, in recommendation 5 and 6, be open electives as PL opportunities
Recommendation 9

Master of Inclusive Education be developed.

• Prerequisites for admission:
  - Diploma of Inclusive Education,
  - Bachelor of Inclusive Education, or
  - existing B.Sp.Ed.

• Identify and develop graduate courses using:
  - existing graduate courses; and,
  - new course developments.
Recommendation 10

Master of Inclusive Education

• Students specialize in areas of exceptionality

Such as, but not limited to:

- Autism Spectrum Disorders,
- Specific Learning Disorders,
- Behavioural Challenges,
- Student Mental Health,
- Assistive Technology, and
- Intellectual/Developmental Disability.
Recommendation 11

Master of Inclusive Education

• Strong thesis option, and
• Develop and delivery of an ongoing “thesis support” seminar.

Recommendation 12

• Students currently completing the B.Sp.Ed.
  ❖ 3 years to finish program before it is closed.
Recommendation 13

- Faculty of Education
  - partnership with the NLTA

- Develop a series of on-line learning modules on classroom management
  - targeting new teachers but open to all educators
Recommendation 14

• Semi-annual meetings occur between:
  - Faculty (inclusive education programs),
  - both school districts,
  - the NLTA,
  - community support groups
    • (such as Autism NL and LDANL), and
  - Dept. of Educ. and Early Childhood Development.

• Discuss emerging issues and concerns regarding:
  - preparation of educators to work in inclusive classrooms.

• Meeting be chaired annually, on a rotating schedule.
Recommendation 15

- Faculty of Education offer a bursary program to encourage French Immersion teachers to pursue the Bachelor of Inclusive Education.

Recommendation 16

- Faculty of Education offer a bursary program to encourage graduate theses in inclusive education.
Questions?
Comments?