

SCHOOLS AS CLINICS

In the TNE project at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), we have a range of activities and experiences that focus on clinical practice. In addition, we are institutionalizing the Teachers-In-Residence program and beginning to implement a Faculty-In-Residence initiative.

The prototype for our TNE project is the middle childhood early adolescence program. This program recognizes that context is a critical consideration in an urban teacher preparation program. Our students begin their clinical experiences early in their program with a service learning component in the Cultures and Communities option for completing the GERs. This service learning component is designed to involve students preparing to become teachers in a community setting in Milwaukee where they have an opportunity to interact and work with families. They begin to explore the importance of cultural traditions and their effects upon learning. This community experience is embedded in the Cultures and Communities coursework, which provides extensive opportunities for self reflection and sharing with others involved in similar experiences.

Students then enter the Pre-professional block, which places them in a 50 hour structured field experience in a Milwaukee Public School (MPS) site along with supporting coursework. Once students are admitted to the School of Education, they begin to move through the blocked courses. Each of the blocks requires a structured field component that places students in a Milwaukee Public School classroom. These required school placements are carefully selected to allow students to practice what they are learning in the block courses in a particular semester. Block faculty work as a team with the faculty at the school site through the Learning Teams at each MPS building to coach, provide support, and feedback to each student. The final block is student teaching. Students are placed in a full semester (20 weeks) experience in an MPS classroom. The on-going development of a portfolio, presentation of the portfolio each semester, and evaluation from the faculty teams (university and school site) are parts of the assessment of each student throughout the entire block sequence. We need to extend the structured assessment through the content major and minor coursework. This is part of the focus of the content Design Teams. The challenge for us now is to go to scale with the prototype in all the preparation programs, understanding that there will be some variation between programs. However, the on-going assessment of each student will be, and is already in most cases, a consistent part of every program. Another task that we will be focused on in the coming year is the incorporation/participation of the content faculty in the professional blocks including the associated field placements, and extending our support/interaction with our students into the first years of teaching (induction).

As part of our effort in partnership with the MPS, we have a Teacher-In-Residence Program. This program places master teachers from MPS on special assignment to the university for a two-year period. They work as equal partners in the teacher preparation program and are incorporated in all aspects of the program, which includes working with each of the blocks and serving on the content Design Teams with letters, sciences, arts and education faculty.

