

**INNOVATIONS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: TWO TEACHER
PREPARATION PROGRAMS AT THE SAN FRANCISCO STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Pamela Wolfberg

Pamela LePage

Ellen Cook

San Francisco State University

This article introduces two innovative teacher preparation programs that emphasize inclusive education at San Francisco State University. The Combined Elementary and Special Education program has as its main goal to provide specialized cross training for special and general educators who work in highly diverse inclusive public school settings. The training allows teachers to earn credentials in (a) elementary education, (b) special education, and (c) bilingual education. By combining and redesigning three existing programs at SFSU, the students now earn credentials in each of these three areas faster, while benefiting from the strengths of these multiple disciplines. The Autism Spectrum graduate program is designed to prepare highly qualified educators and related professionals to meet the unique needs of learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in diverse settings. This interdisciplinary program is offered at an advanced level for students pursuing any area of special education or a related field. The program enables candidates to earn a (a) Master of Arts (b) Clear Education Specialist Credential Autism and (c) Autism Spectrum Certificate. Through participation in this program, students demonstrate working knowledge of state-of-the-art training models, strategies and philosophies to guide them in implementing appropriate educational programs for learners with ASD in inclusive settings.

Introduction

There is a national movement in the United States to educate children with disabilities in inclusive settings. The movement began in 1975 with the passage of Public Law 94-142 (reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - IDEA, 1997), which states that students with disabilities have the right to be educated alongside students without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate within the least restrictive environment. Although inclusive placements and practices are determined according to a student's individualized education plan (IEP) on a case-by-case basis, data suggest that over the past two decades increasing numbers of students identified with disabilities from diverse backgrounds are spending a significant portion of their school day in general education (ED-DATA, 2006). California schools are among those most impacted in light of increases in the proportion of included students with high incidence disabilities (e.g., specific learning disabilities) and autism spectrum disorders (California Department of Education, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). As these rates continue to rise, the number of fully qualified general and special educators to serve diverse students with disabilities in inclusive settings is not keeping up (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2004; McLesky, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004). In an effort to address this need, this article introduces two new innovative teacher preparation programs that emphasize educational reform and teacher training for inclusive education at San Francisco State University.

Combined Elementary and Special Education Program

The purpose of the *Combined Elementary and Special Education program* is to provide specialized cross training for special education and general education teachers who work in highly diverse inclusive public school settings. The training allows teachers to earn credentials in (a) elementary education, (b) special education, and (c) bilingual education. By combining and redesigning three existing programs at SFSU, the students now earn credentials in each of these three areas faster, while benefiting from the strengths of these multiple disciplines.

Need for Program focused on Social Justice and Inclusion

In 1998–99, the U.S. reported that 47 percent of students with disabilities spent 80 percent or more of the day in a general education classroom. In 1988–89, only 31 percent of such students did so. According to a recent report by the Pew Foundation, in 2004, 80 percent of students with disabilities spent the majority of their time in regular classrooms (Olson, 2004). The increase in the percentage of students with disabilities included in general classrooms is noteworthy because the number of such students has been growing faster than total school enrollments. The ratio of special education students to total K–12 enrollment in 1988–89 was 112 per 1,000 students; in 1998–99, it was 130 per 1,000 students. Since the turn of the century, the numbers have remain constant; around 13% of the US population of children are being served under IDEA although the populations are changing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006-2007)

Not only did the percentage of students with disabilities placed in regular classrooms increase between 1988–89 and 1998–99, the size of increase varied by type of disability (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). The largest increase occurred among students with high incidence disabilities, for example specific learning disabilities rose from 20 to 45 percent. By 2004, 48% of the students with disabilities had specific learning disabilities. The smallest

increases occurred among students with multiple disabilities (from 7 to 11 percent) and those who are both deaf and blind (from 12 to 14 percent). Overall, the percentage of students with disabilities educated in separate facilities declined for students of all disability types except for those with visual impairments (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). In California specifically, a fairly consistent percentage (approximately 6 percent) of California's special education students (grades K-12) had been returning to general education each year between 1999 and 2002 (Walter, 2003). Since then the rates have stabilized.

Although California is working to integrate more students with disabilities into the least restrictive environments (general education settings) Wagner and Blackorby (1996) state that, "for many students, more time in general education was associated with a higher likelihood of course failure, which was a strong predictor of dropping out of school." Dropout rates are high: 32% of students with disabilities still drop out of high school (Olson, 2004). The dropout rate for students with disabilities is approximately twice that of general education students (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Olson, 2004). To support children with high incidence disabilities in inclusive settings, we need to understand reasons for failure. In her research on inclusive schools in Oregon, Irmsher (1995) found that when inclusion failed, it was usually due to inadequate teacher preparation, training, and support. Only fourteen states require general education teachers to take courses in special education before getting a teaching license (Olson, 2004).

This program not only prepares teachers to work with children with disabilities, it addresses ethnic and language diversity for both general and special education students. California's students are the most diverse in the nation. In addition to their differing backgrounds, fully a quarter of them are learning English. In fact, in 2002, English language learners (ELL) made up 25.4% of the public school population (Education Demographic Office, California State Department of Education, 2002). The challenge of working with children with such diverse needs has affected California's ability to keep up with other states in achievement testing. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test scores, in the California public schools just 15% of 4th-graders and 18% of 8th-graders are proficient in math, compared with 25% and 26% nationally. In science, 14% of 4th-graders and 15% of 8th-graders are proficient, compared to 28% and 30% nationally (Educational Demographics Office, Department of Education, 2003). In all three areas, reading, math, and science, students in California lag behind a vast majority of students from the other states (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). According to the NCES report, one reason for this discrepancy is because California has the largest percentage of English learners of any state at both grade four (29 percent) and grade eight (20 percent). In addition, California's results include a higher proportion of English learners than any other state in the nation (California excludes only 10 percent of English learners in grades four and eight from the test compared with the exclusion of 22 percent of grade four and 33 percent of grade eight for the nation as a whole.). These statistics clearly demonstrate the need for California teachers in both general and special education to understand the needs of English language learners.

To effectively prepare teacher candidates to successfully teach learners with high incidence disabilities from diverse backgrounds, an integrated curriculum approach is needed including a focus on dispositions (LePage, Nielsen, & Fearn, 2008). This approach is different than having candidates enroll in lengthy general education, and then special education, and then programs

focusing on English language learners concurrently or simultaneously. For the proposed program, course content is not separated by discipline, but is effectively integrated and presented as a cohesive whole. Programs offering general-special education integrated courses are unique because they challenge not only the candidates, but university personnel as well, to work together in a collaborative fashion, therefore modeling, in their teaching, practices encouraged for adoption in schools. Integrated programs, moreover, reduce the possibility of duplication of course content and will encourage candidates' application of proposed strategies and techniques across a range of students. The faculty who are working to design and implement this program will work together to support teachers who are responsive to the unique needs of younger children, who can integrate general, and special education knowledge and classroom experience and who are well-equipped to work in settings that implement more inclusive practices.

Typically, general and special education teachers are most often prepared in two separate tracks isolated from one another. General education pre-service teachers receive little or no exposure to theory and practice on meeting the needs of students with disabilities, and are generally only required to complete one or two courses in special education. At San Francisco State, general education students are not required to take any courses in special education to complete requirements for a level 1 elementary credential. Preparation for special education teachers focuses on special education curriculum and instructional approaches employed in isolated or segregated settings such as resource rooms or self-contained classrooms. As a result, neither general nor special education graduates are prepared to work effectively in the inclusive programs that are evolving in our nation's schools. On the contrary, most general and special education teacher education programs actually model exclusion by separating students with disabilities. This is also true for dual-credential programs. Candidates of dual-credential programs concurrently enroll in general and special education courses. However, the curriculum tends to remain discipline specific, and instructors rarely work together in selecting curriculum emphasis and designing overall program outcomes. General and special education faculty continue with their standard practice, each teaching their courses, with little communication and/or collaboration, therefore leaving it the candidates' responsibility to integrate this sometimes disparate information. For example, the general education program may emphasize the use of a whole language approach for the teaching of reading; the special education program, the adoption of a more skills-based approach -- leaving candidates with the uncertainty of which program is most effective -- rather than the understanding that both approaches offer effective means for teaching a diverse group of learners, and that both have a place in the classroom. Therefore, this program represents a step forward in the preparation of teachers of elementary-aged children. First, because it moves beyond traditional dual-credential programs by integrating course content across general and special education and by presenting that content through co-teaching by general and special education faculty. Second, students are given the opportunity to work in multiple inclusive settings during their student teaching experiences.

There is a need to provide opportunities that allow for teacher candidates to earn credentials in California. At the turn of the century approximately 6 percent of the teaching force nationwide lacked full certification in 2000-2001 (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2002). Nine of those states reported having more than 10 percent of their teachers on waivers for that year, with Arizona, California, and North Carolina leading the way with 16 percent. The proposed program clearly addresses the following California's state goals:

- To increase the percentage of special education staff who are fully certified,
- To decrease the percentage of special education teachers operating under emergency permits or credential waivers,
- To increase the percentage of students in special education who return to general education.
- To attain high percentages of special and general education teachers accessing trainings, resources, and/or technical assistance reporting that these activities have helped them implement research-based strategies in the classroom, particularly those related to increasing reading/language arts skills, academic achievement, and post school results; improving transitions; ensuring positive behavioral supports, and increasing involvement/collaboration of parents in their child's education.
- To increase the amount of time that California's students with disabilities spend in the general education environment, and
- To improve the equity of placement across ethnicity and socioeconomic status by disability.

Although California is facing a teacher shortage, dual credential programs in special education are very rare. In the Bay area these programs are almost nonexistent. When people did combine programs for the purpose of integration, it was often in early childhood (Hanson, 1987; McCollum & Thorp, 1988). The University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University, and University of California, Santa Cruz do not even offer programs in special education. California has started to develop undergraduate programs that integrate content and education courses. These programs do not focus on special education or the education of English language learners, and none of them are located in the Bay area. The bottom line is that none of the universities in the Bay area offer programs that prepare teachers to work in integrated and inclusive elementary and special education programs that also address linguistic and cultural diversity. To improve teacher education programs educators suggest strongly that teacher educators need to streamline their programs while improving their quality (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2002). This program does just that; it allows students to earn two credentials and a certificate faster and prepares them for working with diverse students – all in a higher quality program.

Program Design

Designing the Program based on Research on Effective Teacher Educatio.

A number of studies in the 1980's and early 1990's documented a set of longstanding problems in teacher education (Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1996; Howey & Zimpher, 1989; Zeichner, 1993). Because much of the research criticizing teacher education has been conducted in general education classrooms, special education programs often ignore problems with traditional designs. The problems that predominated between 1950 and 1990 are summarized as follows:

- **Inadequate time.** Elementary and special education is considered weak in subject matter; secondary preparation was weak in knowledge of learning and learners.
- **Fragmentation.** Key elements of teacher learning are disconnected from each other. Coursework is separated from practice teaching; professional skills are segmented into separate courses.

- **Uninspired teaching methods.** Many believe that for prospective teachers to learn active, hands-on and minds-on teaching, they must have experienced it for themselves.
- **Superficial curriculum.** “Once over lightly” describes the curriculum. Traditional programs focus on subject matter methods and a smattering of educational psychology.
- **Traditional views of schooling.** Most prospective teachers work in isolation, rather than in teams, (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996, p 32).
- **Fieldwork.** While it is often a core portion of student-teachers’ experiences Guyton & McIntyre, 1990), fieldwork has often been divorced from coursework, inadequately designed, and placements have often failed to reflect standards for good teaching.

Spurred by these critiques, teacher education reforms have led many programs to raise admission standards, focus more on subject matter preparation, lengthen clinical experiences, place greater emphasis on learning theory and its implications for teaching, develop curriculum that better addresses issues of diversity, culture, and context, and create partnerships with schools (Imig & Switzer, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Some of these new teacher education program designs represent more integrated, coherent programs that emphasize a consistent vision of good teaching. These programs also create stronger links between clinical experiences and more formal coursework and use pedagogies in coursework that are connected to real classroom practices (Cabello, Eckmier, & Baghieri, 1995; Graber, 1996; Grossman, 1994; Grossman & McDaniel, 1990; K. Hammerness & Darling-Hammond, 2002; J. Oakes, 1996; Ross, 1989; Darling-Hammond; 2006; Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, & McIntyer, 2008).

It is widely believed that exemplary teachers need to be able to think pedagogically, reason through dilemmas, investigate problems, analyze student learning to develop appropriate curriculum, all the while being able to do so with a diverse group of learners. A number of successful traditional and alternative teacher education programs have shown that it is possible to design, develop and maintain high quality teacher preparation programs despite the barriers associated with program, university, and regulatory contexts (e.g., Cabello, B., Eckmier, J., & Baghieri, H., 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Novak, 1994; Oakes, 1996; Sockett, Demulder, LePage & Wood, 2001; Valli, 1992; Darling-Hammond; 2006). For example, a recent study of seven such programs found common features among a group of large and small programs located in both public and private colleges and universities. These features include:

- A common, clear vision of good teacher in all course work and clinical experiences;
- Well-defined standards of practice and performance that are used to guide and evaluate coursework and clinical work;
- A curriculum grounded in substantial knowledge of child and adolescent development, learning theory, cognition, motivation, and subject matter pedagogy, taught in practice;
- Extended clinical experiences (at least 30 weeks) which are carefully chosen to support the ideas and practices presented in simultaneous, closely interwoven coursework;
- Strong relationships, common knowledge, and shared beliefs among school-and university-based faculty; and
- Extensive use of case study methods, teacher research, performance assessments, and portfolio evaluation to ensure that learning is applied to real problems of practice (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

For the proposed program, we have examined the research on effective practice in teacher education and have used that knowledge to design a high quality program (e.g., Marilyn Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, & McIntyer, 2008) The program follows the guidelines for teacher preparation programs spelled out in the “Teacher Preparation in California Standards of Quality and Effectiveness document” (California Commission on Teacher credentialing, 1998, 2008), as well as the “California Standards of Quality and effectiveness for education specialist credential programs document” (California Commission on Teacher credentialing, 1996, 2008). It is cohort-based and is designed with a common, clear vision of inclusive practice. The curriculum was designed based on the recommendations of the Committee on Teacher Education, which provides research-based suggestions for curriculum content (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness, & Duffy, 2005). The program requires participation in clinical internships in three diverse settings that span over three semesters. The curriculum coursework is grounded in knowledge of child development, learning theory, and subject matter pedagogy, and will be developed and co-taught by general and special education faculty from both the university and the public schools. These educators will make extensive use of case methods, teacher research, and portfolio assignments in order to connect theory with practice. Finely, well-defined standards of practice and performance will be used to guide and evaluate coursework and clinical work.

Years 1-3. In the first three years of this program, general and special education faculty who integrate information across disciplines taught courses. The program provided extensive field-based experiences in each of the three areas targeted, general and special education, and the education of English language learners. Students completed 180 hours of clinical work in each of these three areas. The program addressed issues of ethnic and language diversity for both general and special education students. Ultimately, the main goal of the project was to prepare teachers who were capable of working with general and special education students in inclusive programs and/or better prepare special education and/or English language learners for entry into inclusive programs. To that end, the program emphasized reading and literacy development for children in the early grades, and the students were given extensive pedagogical training in other content areas including social studies, science, and math. Content specific methods courses will be aligned with content standards for California public schools.

The students attended the university full time for two years (four semesters) and earn 62 units to earn a multiple subjects credential with a ELL certificate and an educational specialist credential (45 units of coursework and 15 units of student teaching). In summary, the program was unique because it, 1) included courses collaboratively designed and taught by general and special education faculty who will integrate information across disciplines, 2) provided extensive field-based experiences in each of the three areas targeted, 3) emphasized reading and literacy development for children in the early grades, 4) emphasized content knowledge and pedagogy aligned with California state standards (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/standards>), 5) addressed issues of cultural and language diversity, and 6) prepared teachers who are capable of working with general and special education students in inclusive programs. Table 1 lists the courses required in the existing programs.

Course Sequence-Combined Credential Program: Elementary and Special Education (CCP)

#	Fall 07		#	Spring 08	
SPED 704	Ethics and Professionalism in integrated settings: Opportunities for Inclusion	3	EED 682	Teaching reading and language arts	4
EED 783	Analyzing Child Behaviors in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse School Settings Learning and development)	3	SPED 774	Positive behavior supports (will add content from elementary ED management)	3
EED 749	Second Language Acquisition in the Elementary School	3	SPED 772	Assessment, curriculum and instruction (mild to moderate disabilities—focus on assessment)	3
EED 701	Social, Cultural, Historical Foundations of Education	3	EED 657	Teaching Practicum Seminar-Phase II	4
EED 763	Integrating Language, Literacy, and Technology in Elementary School Curriculum	3	EED 647	Teaching Practicum- Phase II	2
EED 701	Technology and teaching	1		Take RICA (reading exam)	
	Fall 08	16		Spring 09	16
EED 658	Teaching Practicum Seminar – Phase III	4	EED 737	Teaching social studies, social justice, and literacy	3
EED 648	Teaching Practicum-Phase III	2	SPED 726	Student teaching seminar (Reflective practice, analysis of teaching and action research: systematic inquiry into effective teaching)	3
EED 642	Curriculum and Instruction in Mathematics (CLAD emphasis)	3	SPED 730	Student teaching in special education settings	6
EED 679	Curriculum and Instruction in Science	3	SPED 775	Advanced methods in mild to moderate disabilities (will add content for English Language	3

				learners)	
SPED 775	Advanced methods in mild to moderate disabilities (will add content for English Language learners)	3			
		15			15
	For a Master's degree -- in Special Education			Add 9 units summer courses/extended courses	
ISED 797	Educational Research	3	SPED 788	Connecting research and literature with the world of practice in special education	3
SPED 803	Research and Practice in Language and Literacy Education (or 801) Families	3	SPED 894	(Students need to complete a thesis, creative work project, or field study)	3

Year 4. The classes were considered difficult to schedule, so in the 4th year, the department chairs of the elementary and special education departments decided to try a new course sequence for the fourth cohort. For the fourth cohort, which started in 2008 and will end in 2010, the students will first take elementary courses during the first three semesters and then start their special education courses. The courses and internships are the same, only the sequence has changed. The students have just started this program in the Fall of 2008, so researchers need to determine how this sequence will work out in practice.

Autism Spectrum Graduate Program

The *Autism Spectrum graduate program* is designed to prepare highly qualified educators and related professionals to meet the unique needs of learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in diverse settings. This interdisciplinary program is offered at an advanced level to students in any area of special education or a related field. The program enables candidates to earn a (a) Master of Arts (b) Clear Education Specialist Credential Autism and (c) Autism Spectrum Certificate. Through participation in this program, students demonstrate working knowledge of state-of-the-art training models, strategies and philosophies to guide them in implementing appropriate educational programs for learners with ASD at the early childhood, elementary and secondary/transition level. A heavy emphasis of this program is on inclusive practices that support learners with ASD in diverse educational settings.

Need to Prepare Educators with Specialized Knowledge and Skill in ASD

Autism is the fastest growing special education eligibility category for public education across the nation (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Within the past decade, autism increased at a disproportionate rate of more than fifty times higher than other identified disability groups served under IDEA. Moreover, the number of these students who spend a major portion of the school day in general education has tripled. Currently, over 280,000 children with autism ages 3

to 22 receive special education services at an annual estimated cost of 8.4 billion dollars (fightingautism.org).

In California, since 1996, the rate of autism skyrocketed from 4,000 to over 46,000 children, with over half attending public schools within Northern California. The highest concentration of this population is in the San Francisco Bay Area, one of the largest U.S. urban areas, spanning three major cities (California Department of Developmental Services, 2009; California Department of Education, 2009). Because not all students with ASD receive special education services under the classification of “Autism,” it is likely that these child count data underestimate the actual prevalence of students with autism served under IDEA.

As autism continues to rise at an epidemic rate and schools face chronic teacher shortages, there is an unprecedented need to prepare educators who are qualified to work with this population. According to the National Research Council (NRC) (2001), “Personnel preparation remains one of the weakest elements of effective programming for children with autism spectrum disorders and their families (p. 225).” The complex nature and wide spectrum of variability in autism poses a distinct set of challenges for preparing educators to work effectively with this population (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Without adequate instruction, students with ASD may not only fail to learn, but also risk regressing (Scheuermann, Webber, Boutot & Goodwin, 2005).

A major challenge in personnel preparation pertains to credentialing patterns in states where special educators receive preparation in non-categorical programs without additional disability-specific training or certification. This is the case in California where teachers earn non-categorical credentials in a two-tiered entry (preliminary level I) and advanced (clear level II) post-bachelors program. While such programs offer basic preparation to teachers, it is highly unlikely that they can adequately prepare educators with the specialized knowledge and skill needed to effectively work with students with ASD (Scheuermann et al, 2005).

Another challenge with personnel preparation is the lack of universally accepted professional standards in ASD (Yell, Drasgow & Lowrey, 2005). While there is a growing body of research that has prompted efforts to reach consensus on guidelines for effective evidence-based practices at the national and state level, the impact on personnel preparation is yet unknown. As such, existing teacher preparation programs with an ASD emphasis may vary widely in training content (Scheuermann, Webber, Boutot, & Goodwin, 2005).

In assessing the needs of schools in California, special education administrators report that districts carry much of the burden of compensating for the gap in the knowledge and skill of teachers serving students with ASD. To counteract this problem, each district has pieced together their own in-service training programs, as well as hired outside contractors to provide services at premium costs. The training content is often piecemeal and fragmented, focusing on a single approach without presenting the larger picture of how such approaches may fit (or not fit) to guide educators in meeting the unique needs of students with ASD and their families (Iovannone, Dunlop, Huber, & Kincaid, 2003; NRC, 2001; Scheuermann, et al, 2005). With such a pervasive demand for the most up-to-date training, there has been a tremendous amount of overlap and duplication of professional development activities across districts within the same geographic region.

Accumulated evidence underscores the significant need to prepare educators in specialized knowledge, skills and competencies for working effectively with students with ASD in inclusive settings. Of critical importance for personnel preparation is providing a comprehensive competency-based curriculum that is grounded in up-to-date empirical research and evidence practices shown to be effective in improving outcomes for students with ASD. Further, it is essential to integrate specialized courses with highly relevant field experiences to optimize opportunities to translate research into effective and meaningful practice. By preparing highly qualified educators in partnership with schools, families and other specialists, students with ASD have the potential to make great progress. In contrast, with inappropriate responses from teachers, these students can experience devastating setbacks and difficulties.

Program Design

The Autism Spectrum graduate program at SFSU is designed to offer advanced preparation to educators and related professionals in partnership with local schools, university/medical centers and community based programs serving and advocating for children, families and adults with ASD. Through specialized coursework (4 core methods) and supervised field experiences (in diverse settings) candidates receive preparation in research-based knowledge, skills and competencies for working effectively with students with autism. The program of study is streamlined allowing for the integration of courses across the master's, credential and specialized areas without additional requirements or cost.

Research-based curriculum and pedagogy The program's curriculum and pedagogy are grounded in the most up-to-date empirical research and evidence practices documented in the professional literature with a strong emphasis on inclusive education (for reviews, see Dunn Buron & Wolfberg, 2008; Iovannone et al., 2003; NRC, 2001; Scheurmann et al., 2003). The curriculum is also aligned with national and state accreditations standards (CEC, 2006; CCTC, 1996; NCATE).

The program also draws on research on effective teacher education pedagogy and practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Sockett et al., 2001; Zeichner, 2006) by incorporating features of high quality programs: (1) addresses diversity and culture in partnership with schools; (2) common, clear vision of good teacher practice; (3) well-defined standards of practice and performance; (4) curriculum grounded in development, learning theory, and subject matter pedagogy; (5) field experiences connect to real classroom practices, interwoven with coursework; (6) extensive use of case study methods, teacher research, performance assessments, and portfolio evaluation.

Integration of Competencies, Coursework, Field Experiences and Portfolio

Figure 1 depicts a seamless curriculum that integrates (1) *professional competencies* in autism related knowledge and skill, (2) *coursework* dove-tailing autism courses with master's and credential courses, (3) *field experiences* in multiple settings and contexts, and (4) *portfolio documentation* as evidence of knowledge and skill. Each area is discussed in detail as follows.

(1) ***Professional competencies in autism related knowledge and skill*** draw on findings and recommendations of a number of state and national autism projects including: *Professional Autism Standards Project* (Autism Society of America); *National Autism Standards Project*

(National Autism Center); *Committee on Educational Interventions for Children with Autism* (National Research Council); *ASD Guidelines for Best Practices in Assessment and Intervention* (California Department of Developmental Services and California Department of Education). The fourteen identified core competency areas explicitly address the role of families, culture and language, diagnosis and assessment, goals for and characteristics of effective education and intervention, team collaboration and integrated services, public policies that ensure individuals and families access to appropriate education and services, and research to further efforts to validate and expand knowledge and practice.