

Becoming an Adolescence Inclusive Teacher
at The College at Brockport

A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for graduation in the College Honors Program

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The College at Brockport
May 2010

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Phase I – Introductions to the Program and Middle School Content

Congratulations on choosing the career of an adolescence inclusive teacher. There are many rewarding and humbling experiences you will gain here at The College at Brockport, and in the schools where you will observe and student teach. The purpose of this guide is to provide you an outline of what to expect in the next two years of your Brockport experience.

To apply for the Adolescence Inclusive Certification Program, you will need a minimum of 45 completed credit hours, and should apply in the spring semester of your sophomore year. Additional requirements are posted on the Education and Human Development's Webpage.

Scheduling Your First Semester in the Education Program

Phases I – III each require that you complete a 50 hour field experience. You must schedule these hours in addition to your classes and other responsibilities. There are several ways in which you may create a flexible class schedule. Essentially, you will need several hours between 7 am and 3 pm free during the week so that you may observe teachers and their classes at your given placement. Consequently, teacher candidates generally schedule the majority of their core classes for the evenings and many education classes are held during the late afternoon or evening blocks.

There are other alternatives if you absolutely refuse to take multiple night classes. You may *attempt* to schedule your classes in daily blocks; Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, or Tuesdays and Thursdays. Although you will have full mornings and/or afternoons of classes, you will have a minimum of two full days to schedule your observations. There are several advantages to attending a full day of school. First, you can complete your required hours quickly. In fact, you can complete approximately 7 ½ hours per day should you choose to stay after school and assist your teacher with any grading or preparations. Averaging approximately ten hours per week will complete your

placement in about five weeks. The Field Experience Office recommends that you remain with your placement for a period spanning at least eight weeks. They believe that the longer you attend your experience, the more opportunities you will have to witness changes in your students, yourself, and the curriculum.

Personally, I have always completed my observation hours as quickly as possible. One placement I completed in just three weeks. This was done because we did not receive our placements until nearly half way through that semester, and time was extremely limited. Additionally, I knew that I had several major final examinations and projects due at the end of that semester, all of which would require lots of attention. Unfortunately, this time constraint required me to use my spring break that year to complete observations, but I did enjoy attending that full week of school days. I believe completing hours quickly ensures that you will complete all the responsibilities you have during any given semester. I strongly encourage you to use any time left at the end of your semester to observe beyond the fifty hour requirement. You will certainly benefit from it.

My schedule for the Fall 2009 semester consisted of classes Monday through Thursday. However, I only had one late afternoon class on Mondays and Wednesdays, and the bulk of my classes were on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This schedule allowed me to observe for full class days on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Consequently, I completed the required hours well before finals week and could, if needed, cancel an observation in order to focus upon a special assignment or project. This may be problematic however, if your district runs on a block schedule, as you only see one group of students every other week.

You can, of course, build a schedule which does not allow you to be there for the whole day. When planning your observation schedule, first determine the number of hours you will observe per

week, then determine if that number will surpass 50 by the end of the semester. Should you find that this schedule encroaches upon finals week, or that you will not complete the requirement, you must adjust your schedule accordingly. Also, really pay attention to the travel time you will need in getting to and from your school. Several days I actually did more driving than I did observing during my experience at Pembroke Intermediate. Therefore, you should schedule as many hours as you can per day when you have a long drive to your experience. Multiple trips with shorter observation times are practical when you are at a local area school, such as Brockport, Hilton, Spencerport, or Holley.

Teacher candidates may carpool when attending the same building for their observations. However, this option requires that your schedules match perfectly. The Field Experience Office will attempt to place you in the Brockport Central School District if you do not have a vehicle, but there are no guarantees. You will need a means of transportation for your high-needs field experience and typically for your student teaching placements as well.

Working Part-Time While in the Education Program

Many Teacher Candidates must support themselves throughout their college career. Lindsay Brice, currently a Phase III Candidate, recently reduced her work schedule to 20 hours per week in order to accommodate her observations and coursework. During previous field experiences, she only scheduled six hours of observations per week, requiring her to observe for the majority of the semester. This schedule provided time during the week for her to complete coursework, since she typically worked weekends. Further, Lindsay noted that balancing coursework, observations, and the workplace distanced her from her friends, as she had very little time available for recreation.

Although the G.I. Bill covered much of Matt Hennard's tuition and college related expenses, it was still necessary for him to work 22 to 26 hours per week. Matt stated that he was fortunate to

find an employer who allowed him to adjust his work schedule whenever he had upcoming projects. However, his schedule limited the after school opportunities in which he could participate, such as parent-teacher conferences, faculty meetings, and other district events.

Consider Your District's Class Schedule

Genesee and Monroe county districts follow one of two daily class schedules: 1) Block Scheduling – class periods are 60 to 90 minutes long and there are 4 to 5 classes per day. Students usually attend their core subjects on an every other day basis. 2) Eight Class Periods – districts have eight to nine class periods per day, each being 42 to 55 minutes long. Students usually attend their core subjects everyday. When planning your observations, you will need to know your district's schedule so that you may attend a class from start to finish, rather than walking in or out of a class in session.

Getting to the School

Obtain accurate directions to your assigned school well before the first day of observations. Using a road going GPS is fine, as long as it is programmed with the **correct** address (check your school's website). Map Quest and Microsoft Streets are also useful programs. Take at least one trip to your school **before** your first observation. This will help you determine if the estimated travel time is accurate, and note any road construction projects. This will help you feel more comfortable for your first day of observations and ensure that you arrive early. Finally, do not forget to plan for the weather. You can use either Google Earth/Maps or vpike.com to provide a "bird's eye view" of your building and surrounding landmarks. I have located many of the local schools using these programs, and they provide the layout of the buildings, parking lots, and entrances.

You will need to know the location of the main building entrance, because all of the side entrances will be locked during class hours. Districts practice this policy for the safety of their students and faculty, and all visitors are required to sign in when entering the building. When you are meeting your School Based Teacher Educator (SBTE) for the first time, he or she may need to come to the front office and escort you to his/her classroom. In other schools, security may guide you to your SBTE's room, or you will just be given directions and a room number. All of this depends upon the individual district.

Other Concerns Before Your First Day of Observations

Take time to read through your district's mission statement, code of conduct, and any other information provided on its website. Many schools use metal detectors, and removing any restricted devices or items will prevent any embarrassments with security. Many schools require clip lanyards for identification. You will need to check with your SBTE as to whether or not your district will provide you with some form of identification, be it a visitor sticker or an actual ID badge. You may consider purchasing a teacher candidate ID from the BASC office located in Brockway, but many teacher candidates use their Brockport Student ID, which is sufficient for most districts. The Field Experience Handbook advises that you dress professionally. However, all districts have their own dress codes which you must follow. Some teachers may wear jeans or flip flops throughout the week, but this is not appropriate for teacher candidates. Dress professionally and while a jacket or a suit is not necessary, you do want to make a good impression. Your appearance will play a role in how you are perceived by your SBTE, the faculty, and administrators of that building.

The First Week of Observations – Key Locations

One of your first unwritten assignments as you begin your observations is to familiarize yourself with the location of several important places in your building. The main entrance, main office, and your SBTE's classroom(s) are essential. This may appear simplistic, yet some teachers work from a cart and others move from classroom to classroom, depending upon the subject or the class period. At Brockport High School, I worked with both a special education teacher and a Global Social Studies teacher who used carts for their class materials. While their desk may be located in a room shared with another teacher, these teachers are usually found in as many as four different rooms throughout the day.

Bathroom locations are always a priority. Districts may or may not require that faculty use only faculty restrooms, but using them is always best. Remember that many districts have their faculty restrooms locked so you must ask your SBTE for the access key. While some districts may allow you to use student bathrooms, they may be locked during class periods. Some lock all but one student bathroom for easier monitoring of students while in the hallways, and to encourage students to remain in the classroom.

The copy room may also be a location that you visit frequently during your field experience. Your SBTE may ask you to help out by making copies. Although this may appear to be a form of corporal punishment, knowing the ins and outs of the copy room and its copiers will be immensely important for your student teaching. I have regularly loaded paper, cleared jams, changed toner cartridges, and programmed the copier to produce the exact copies needed by my SBTE or for myself. Several districts within this area have staff who handle all copying for a building. This scenario requires you to specify exactly what you want copied, the amount of copies you would like, whether

they are front-to-back or single-sided; and if a packet, how you would like it stapled. Districts may even enforce copy limits for their teachers – anywhere from just 10,000 per year, up to 1,000,000+.

The faculty lounge remains a controversial subject among teachers. Only in one of the four districts that I have attended while observing or student teaching, have I used the faculty lounge. Teachers, that I have respected, generally avoid these lounges because there are usually teachers who inappropriately discuss their problems with students and the administration or are there generating support for union issues. During the few instances when I have ventured into a lounge, primarily to use the backup copier, I have found that their comments are true. Overall, it has been my experience that the teachers who are considered good would rather eat lunch in their rooms and try to get some work done rather than go and gripe with their coworkers.

The nurse's office should also be in your top ten known locations. Fortunately, I have never had an incidence where I have needed the nurse to come to my classroom; but you may have a student who needs to go there, and students will usually be able to go by themselves. However, my one experience with the nurse occurred when the building was in lockdown during state testing; and the student had to be escorted. Luckily, the student knew where he was going, so I just followed him.

The students' cafeteria is also an interesting place to visit if you have time during your field experience or student teaching. The conversations you will overhear will definitely add to your understanding of your students, and inform you regarding their current interests. During my special education student teaching, I found that several of my students did not eat lunch regularly. I then discovered that these students were not given lunch money. Not only did I now have a better understanding of their home environment, but I also understood why they were so distracted during their afternoon classes.

Keep a Journal

Make certain that you are prepared to jot down notes and comments during your field experience. Many of your education courses will require that you reflect upon your observations and interactions with your SBTE and students, and your journal will be invaluable when completing these requirements. This also provides additional documentation of your observations along with your Field Experience Hours Log. When you teach a lesson during your field experiences, immediately write down any comments or concerns that you have. This will help you establish a benchmark for your fundamental teaching skills, and provide you with a method to track your improvements.

Track Your Hours

It is required that you keep an accurate log of your observation hours. The Field Experience Guide found on the Education and Human Development Webpage has a sample log for tracking your hours. You may also create your own using Excel, or even create a table in Word. Be certain to include the date and the start and end times of your observation, along with a description of the activities that you witnessed and/or performed that day. Finally, each day, both you and your SBTE should sign the log for verification.

Finishing Your First Field Experience

Copy everything. Each field experience will require several documents to confirm your completion of this phase. Lost or missing documents may require you to repeat the field experience. You must turn in your Field Experience Hours Log to the Field Experience Office, and will need to complete the accompanying online Professional Educational Unit Assessment. Your SBTE will be required to complete a mid-term and final assessment, and you must stay in contact with your SBTE

until it is finished. Without this assessment, you will be marked incomplete for that field experience and will not receive certification until completed. You may consider getting your SBTE a small gift or thank you card to show your appreciation for allowing you to attend his/her class, but this depends upon the relationship that you have built with him/her.

Phase II – High School Content

Oh My Golly!!! I'm Making Lesson Plans...

For your Literacy Elements course this semester, you will have perhaps one of the biggest projects of your undergraduate career – the Capstone Project. This project contains a minimum of six lessons, specified for your content, which integrate literary strategies into each lesson. You will discover during your field experiences that many students in all grades struggle with reading and writing. Incorporating literacy strategies and tools in your lessons will help your students strengthen those skills and make them more successful students. Much of the experienced frustration and outright refusal of students when reading in the classroom is not due to laziness, but rather because they do not possess the vocabulary and have not developed a set of strategies for decoding the material.

The Capstone Project requires you to script your lessons as well. This means that you are writing what you will be saying to your students, and providing what you believe will be their answers and responses. It is an excruciating amount of work, but it will help you to develop your abilities to anticipate the problems that students may have with your lessons. Further, you will have a model laid out to see how you are meeting or, possibly not meeting, the lesson's objectives, and whether you have fully met the requirements for your content's New York State Learning Standards.

The lessons that you design throughout this semester are the lessons you will place into your Capstone. This creates a unit within your content that is heavily reinforced with literacy mini-lessons and strategies. All contents require a sound knowledge of reading and writing, and it is critical that you realize this prior to student teaching.

Field Experience Round Two

You will be completing your high school placement this semester, and meeting new students, new faculty, and a new building. Once again, you will need to look up directions, take an early trip, contact your SBTE, set up a schedule for observations, and begin a new journal to record the new experiences you will have. You will also be working with course content that is preparation for a New York State Regents Exam. Unlike your middle school observation, you will be required to teach at least one lesson to a class. You will be using your lesson planning skills and will work with your SBTE to design specific and obtainable student objectives and assessments. Overall, during this phase, you will have a larger role in the classroom.

You should really make every effort when you design your course and work schedule to attend at least half of the school day for this observation. Allowing at least three hours per observation should foster a sound relationship with your SBTE and your students. Remember to continue a journal, track your hours, and complete the required paperwork and online assessments as needed.

Identifying Your Ideal Grade Level

Education professors comment that there *is* a distinction between a middle school teacher and a high school teacher. This difference mainly depends upon whether you have a passion for working with children, or working with your content. Mr. Akers, a Social Studies teacher at Brockport Middle School, stated that a middle school teacher when asked about his/her career will often reply, “I teach children (Social Studies, Science, ELA, etc).” A high school teacher, however, replies, “I teach (Social Studies, Math, ELA, etc.).”

During your middle school observation, study how your SBTE presents the information to his/her students. A good middle school teacher will provide students with many examples and activities and allow them to develop strategies and tools for becoming independent learners. This may not become apparent until your middle school student teaching placement, but there is a definite difference in the type of instruction used in middle and high school classrooms. As a middle school teacher, you will be impacting students at a fundamental period in their academic career, and you must teach them these skills in order for them to have success in high school and beyond.

A high school setting allows for more opportunities to work with your content. Many of your students will need to review the basic strategies used in your content, but they should be able to complete more rigorous work. As a teacher, if you enjoy working more in-depth with your content and engaging students in developing their critical-thinking skills, high school instruction will match your teaching style.

Teacher Certification Exams and TEACH

Sometime during this phase, you should begin the certification process, particularly if you are planning to teach immediately following graduation. You will need to create an account on TEACH; the online education credential portfolio used to track your fingerprinting, certification exams, and course work. Additionally, you will have four certification exams to complete through NYSTCE, the New York State Teacher Certification Exams. This organization also requires that you create an online account.

A certification exam day is held on a Saturday and consists of a morning and afternoon session. Usually exam days are scheduled once every two months. Each session provides four hours for the candidate to complete the exam. I delayed on completing these exams until my student teaching semester, which left me with no choice but to schedule four exams within four months. You

can space your exams out over an eight month period and take only one at a time if you begin this process in your junior year. Spacing out the exams may also be important financially, as each exam currently costs approximately 88 dollars.

The exams you will need to complete to become a certified adolescence education teacher are the following: Your LAST, CST for your content, CST for Special Education, and the ATS-W. Each includes a multiple choice section, along with a short and/or long essay response. The Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST) is an assessment of your general knowledge. You could compare it to a glorified SAT or ACT exam. Most teacher candidates do not have any problems with passing this exam. The Content Specialty Tests (CST) will assess your knowledge of the content you will be teaching, and your ability to manage and plan for a special education classroom. Prepare for these exams. Essays for these two tests typically require specific knowledge, especially your content test, so a solid understanding of your content curriculum and the strategies for differentiating instruction for students' needs is necessary. The CST for Special Education will also ask questions regarding the legalities involved in meeting students' needs, their IEP goals, and their annual CSE meetings. Study these topics if they are unfamiliar. The Assessment of Teaching Skills- Written (ATS-W) evaluates your ability to manage and present content to a diverse classroom. Reviewing excellent teaching practices, along with the methods and assessments presented in your education courses, will provide you with the information necessary to perform well on this exam.

Can I Wait to Take My Exams?

While waiting for my first certification exam to begin, I chatted with a graduate student. When I asked her how many exams she had left to take, and she stated that this would be her last one, a CST in Environmental Science. She had decided to continue directly on with graduate school

rather than attempt full-time teaching while taking graduate courses. Because she waited to complete her certification exams, she will now have a full five years of initial certification to substitute teach, or to find a full-time position without the distraction of coursework. This may be a viable option to consider when evaluating your career opportunities when considering immediately continuing with your master's degree.

Fingerprinting

You will also want to consider completing New York State's fingerprinting requirements for certification early in the program. This may be accomplished at a police station, school district, or private business and processing can take up to four months. This is required if you intend to substitute teach. Some school districts may cover the cost of fingerprinting, but check with your district's human resources staff. Currently, fingerprinting costs approximately 95 dollars, and may cost more if done through a private company. Once your criminal background check is cleared, this will be registered to your TEACH account.

Phase III – Special Education

You're Making an Impact

Teaching special education can be an extremely difficult, nerve racking, frustrating, rewarding, wonderful, and emotional all at once. These students come from an extreme range of backgrounds - differ slightly from their cohort; others come from very difficult family situations. Your SBTE should provide you with the opportunity to review students' IEPs, as this provides great insight regarding each student. Should your Phase III occur during a spring semester, ask if you may attend a CSE meeting. These meetings with the parents/guardians of your students provide unique opportunities to learn about the culture of your students' homes.

During her special education field experience, Lindsay answered a student's question about life after high school and college. The student responded by thanking her for talking with him/her. Few faculty or other students in the district spoke with this student, and the appreciation demonstrated by this student was incredibly rewarding for Lindsay. She also attended several field trips with the students, participated in classroom parties, and even taught the class a cooking lesson. These activities not only provide you with opportunities for student interaction, but also may have a very positive and lasting impact on the lives of your students.

Last Chance!

This Field Experience will be your final opportunity to participate in a classroom prior to student teaching – unless you plan on substituting over the break. Make every opportunity to beg, borrow, and steal ideas for teaching strategies, content plans, and other information from the teachers with whom you work. The special education placement has much more to it than meets the eye – your SBTE will probably not discuss with you all of the myriad of responsibilities and tasks s/he

must complete on a regular basis. Special education teachers usually receive three days to plan and submit updated IEPs for their students. This is a monumental process, but is required by both state and federal law.

Ask to help your SBTE with his/her planning for an upcoming day of instruction. This will provide an example of how a teacher differentiates a lesson to meet all of the students' needs. Should your SBTE also teach multiple contents, be certain to ask how s/he learned the curricula, and how s/he plans multiple lessons for one day. This experience will be invaluable should you be placed in a similar setting for your special education student teaching.

Individualized Educational Plan(s) – IEPs

Each student within a self-contained classroom will have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that delineates their educational needs and details how these needs must be met. Class size varies from eight to fifteen students and is determined by individual student needs. Many students with an IEP are placed in inclusive classrooms, and learn with general education students. Many factors are used to determine the level of support students will have while in the inclusive class, ranging from no additional assistance, to having a teacher's aide, an aide and consultant teacher, or a one-on-one aide.

Each IEP is continually revised and edited throughout the academic year as a student meets his/her goals. Once a year, the school district is required to hold a conference comprised of the principal or assistant principal, the parents/guardians of the student, the student's special education teacher, one of the student's general education teachers, and often the student. Other professionals and paraprofessionals who have direct contact with the student are also usually invited to participate in the Committee on Special Education (CSE) meeting as well.

Collaborating with Parents

During your special education field experience, you may have the opportunity to meet or talk with the parents of the students in your classroom. Your SBTE may also share with you parental concerns regarding the performance of their child. Since you are only observing, however, you will have a limited role in collaboration. Your SBTE may conduct an open house or a parent – teacher conference while you are attending, but they probably will not invite you. A teacher candidate, however, would be asked or required to attend these events when student teaching. Should the opportunity to talk and/or meet with a parent occur, act professionally, and always end the conversation with a positive compliment or comment regarding their child.

Don't Forget Your Other Courses

Teacher candidates in Phase III are usually in their senior year at Brockport. Ideally, you will be completing the remainder of classes in your major, along with your Phase III education courses. Seniors have several 400 level courses to fulfill, and usually one of these will involve either a research intensive project, or a large lab assignment. Take every opportunity you have to complete your work as soon as possible. Matt found that using a planner helped him manage his research and drafting, especially with his large projects. This organization enabled him to complete major assignments and prepare for final exams and projects while both working and observing.

Phase IV – Student Teaching

Scheduling Your Final Semester

Ideally, you should be at the point in your undergraduate career where you only have the student teaching placements to complete. The amount of work you will be required to do, along with the millions of important decisions you will make during every class, will drain you. However, should you need to take classes this semester, remember that you will only be able to take classes after three PM; so make certain that you schedule them either as late afternoon or night classes. Many teacher candidates hold one or more part-time jobs as well, and plan their work schedules around evenings and weekends. Be aware that you will need time after school hours to finish grading, planning, and preparing material for future classes.

Can You Dig It?

Your first student teaching placement may be a familiar environment, or something resembling a foreign planet that you hope to never visit again. It all depends upon how you utilize what you have learned from your field experiences, and the type of placement you are given.

I have discovered your SBTE will use one of two approaches for Student Teaching: 1) Being thrown to the wolves, into the fire, or some other connotation for the world collapsing and thinking that you're descending into the seventh layer of Hell. Or, 2) an easy, gradual, transition of responsibilities which allows you to become familiar with your environment, places the least amount of pressure upon you, and provides you with a pleasant student teaching experience.

The Pros and Cons of the Approaches to Student Teaching

Thrown to the Wolves

Both have significant benefits and disadvantages. With this approach, although it may seem incredibly overwhelming, it is a sobering reminder that you are in no way prepared to take over a classroom at this point in time. Your first day of substitute teaching, if you have had the opportunity, simulates this fear. This was the approach used during my first student teaching placement at Brockport High School. I had several key advantages, however. I knew the teacher, the school, and the students; since I had completed my final field experience in this classroom. From the first day, I ran the classroom. I was required to fabricate all of the needed materials, design classroom activities, assign homework, grade, put grades in *Infinite Campus*, return graded work, present the day's curriculum, and monitor the hallway between class periods. This left me completely overwhelmed for the first three weeks. I spent many hours after school completing upcoming student activities, worksheets, fill-in notes, *PowerPoint* presentations, and reviewing material so that I actually understood what we would be discussing.

One significant benefit to this approach exists. Teaching and preparing course work from the very first day provides you with an experience which most closely resembles what you might expect as a first year teacher or as a long term sub. Thrown to the Wolves requires that you either fabricate your own or use your SBTE's lesson plans to meet the mandates of your class curriculum. Consequently, this method provides you with the most time to practice every aspect of teaching and best prepares you for that day when you stand alone in your own classroom.

Baby Steps

The transition approach works well for a teacher candidate in a new setting. For my special education placement, I was unfamiliar with the Greece Arcadia Middle School – how it operated, the culture of its students, and the overall responsibilities of a seventh grade special education teacher. I can say honestly, had this been my first student teaching placement and were I given all of the responsibilities on the first day, I would have not returned the second day. Each special education placement will be extremely unique; determined by the roles of the teacher, the class setting, the students, and the class scheduling used by the district. During my eight weeks at Arcadia, not once was I able to complete all of the roles my SBTE was assigned to perform. However, neither was she. There were simply too many needs to fulfill during the course of the day. The main benefit of the transition approach is that it provides a period of familiarization which is valuable for your future success. No one is perfect – even teachers with 30 years of experience – but there is no reason for you to be placed into a situation where there is no hope for a positive outcome.

Which Approach is Best?

Determining which approach will provide you with the most rewarding experience is up to you and your SBTE. Part of this decision may be based upon the personality of your SBTE; but, when you feel ready to be challenged, ask to take on all of the responsibilities for several days and then reevaluate. Ultimately, it boils down to this – come September (if hired), you will be teaching on your own, and you will not have someone else in the room to take over if you feel incapable of performing your duties.

Contact your SBTE several weeks in advance if you would like to take over as soon as possible. This will give you time to acquire the district's curriculum material and begin preparing lesson plans,

classroom activities, and any other material you will use. Ideally, attempt to stay at least one to two weeks ahead in the preparation of materials. This will allow time for you and your SBTE to review and revise material, and to identify those areas requiring improvement.

There Needs to be More Time in the Day

Depending upon the type of scheduling used by your SBTE's district, you may find that you are able to plan all of your material during school hours, or that you have absolutely no time at all. Content placements lend themselves to allowing you to stay ahead of your planning and preparing of materials. You will be teaching (relatively) the same lesson throughout the course of the day, which allows you to tweak it when necessary. Special education, however, does not lend itself as well to this schedule. My middle school special education placement allowed for two periods of planning in the morning. Classes were then held throughout the rest of the day, covering all four contents areas. This resulted in no repetitions of lessons. The two self-contained courses that I was required to teach were Math and English – neither of which were my content specialty. For the periods when I was not teaching, I acted as a consultant teacher; pushing in with my students into the general education classrooms. Adding to this complexity, students also needed to be tested in specialty areas; primarily reading, listening, and writing, in order to demonstrate their performance towards meeting their annual IEP goals. However, the only time to perform these tasks was in the morning during planning, since we did not want to pull the students from their content courses later in the day. CSE meetings also take time from instruction, requiring two to three full afternoons of meetings with students' parents, lasting anywhere from 30 minutes to a full hour. Department and district meetings vary, but usually meet at least once per week or every two weeks.

What if I Need to Work Part-time While Student Teaching?

Elaina Freeman is perhaps the most busy teacher candidate I know. She has managed to complete both of her student teaching placements while working two part-time jobs. Elaina enjoys being busy. She regularly plans out her weeks to anticipate upcoming assignments and events. While student teaching, she devoted Sundays as work days. She found that having one planning day per week provided her with sufficient time to complete her lessons for the following week, grade any papers or assignments, and even provided a small amount of personal time. Elaina commented that living, working, and student teaching all within Brockport for her first placement contributed to her successful time management. She concluded that if you are a teacher candidate who is organized and practices time management, working while student teaching is “definitely doable.”

However, the Education and Human Development Department strongly advises teacher candidates to avoid working part-time while student teaching. They believe that employment severely impinges upon your classroom performance. You must seriously consider this issue and limit the number of hours to those only needed to meet your financial needs. I, personally, would not have been as effective had I worked during this semester.

Work Smarter, Not Harder

This quote remains the only piece of information that I have retained from my 11th Grade Math class, but it speaks volumes. Efficient work is essential for you to keep your sanity and to prepare for upcoming classes and projects. The absolute key to working efficiently during school hours is to use every minute to its maximum potential. If you have an hour to plan, do so. Spending time checking emails or upcoming sales at your favorite store are tasks that you can do at home. As you advance through your placement, you will become faster in the preparation of your materials,

notice the pitfalls within your plans and either prepare for them or eradicate them, and generally find that you have more “me” time outside of school hours. My first SBTE recommended taking a short nap prior to completing any additional work necessary for the following school day. Be aware of procrastination. ***I highly recommend completing any work at the first opportunity.***

Mind Your Body and Mind

In the first few weeks of your student teaching, you will probably be physically and mentally exhausted. Teaching is hard work. Just as your cell phone needs to be recharged, so do you – get enough sleep. You might survive one or two late nights a week, but sleep deprivation will only make you sick, irritable, and ineffective.

Fueling your body is another major concern. Make every effort possible to eat breakfast. This will make a monumental difference in your day. I have found that I am more alert in the morning, even when I have had just a few granola or breakfast bars. Breakfast will also jumpstart your metabolism, so it is particularly beneficial if you are concerned about your weight. Although you may need to work or plan during your lunch breaks, take enough time to eat something healthy to keep your metabolism going. The extra energy will also get you through the rest of the day.

The Student Teaching Seminar

An important component of the student teaching program, this seminar consists of a weekly meeting with your college supervisor and with a small group of your peers; usually from the same content. Meetings are held following the school day, and most groups meet for approximately one to two hours. Occasionally, your supervisor may require that each candidate of the group submit additional work as well; such as readings and reflection essays. Your supervisor will prove a vital

resource throughout your student teaching experience. S/he will assist you in updating your teaching portfolio, the interview process, classroom management, designing meaningful student objectives and effective lessons, and will make every effort to answer any of your questions.

Scheduling Your Observations with Your College Supervisor

You will need to be observed twice at each placement during your student teaching semester. Plan these observations around student-centered lessons, such as station activities, group discussions, etc. However, should your schedule require that the observation is conducted during a teacher-centered lesson, such as a notes day, make the notes or material as interactive as possible. Simply put – avoid talking for long periods of time. Use probing questions whenever possible and engage your students. Keeping the class energy high will put you on track for a good lesson and good feedback from both your Supervisor and your SBTE. Most importantly, make certain that you are completely comfortable with the lesson you will be teaching for your observation. Discuss your plans with your SBTE, and ask for advice regarding its improvement. When you are prepared and have anticipated any possible concerns with your lesson, and corrected them, you should deliver an effective lesson.

Videotaping Yourself

One requirement of Phase IV involves two videotaping sessions of your instruction. It is best to use a lesson where there is a combination of both teacher and student-centered instruction. Videotaping may be an embarrassing process, but keep this in mind... what you see in the video is exactly what your students see. There are many good and bad habits one will develop when learning how to present. The use of your hands to accentuate key words, filling time using words such as

“like,” “um,” “basically,” “so,” and “what-not,” the positioning of yourself within a room, your movement about the room, the direction and pitch of your voice, eye contact, ... these are all habits which are extremely hard to monitor by yourself. By videotaping yourself, you will be able to see these traits, good and bad, and either eliminate or improve them. Students may also point out habits that you use while teaching, so be receptive to their comments as well. Currently, these video tapes may be viewed by you and your supervisor, or just by yourself. Either way, enjoy the laughs as you make your list of strengths and weaknesses. It will make a difference in how you handle yourself in front of any class.

Content vs. Special Education

The differences between these two fields are immense. Your content placement has some very unique advantages compared to a special education placement. First, you are working with the content you (should) know and love. Your in-depth knowledge of the core components of your content’s curriculum also enables you to generate lessons, develop meaningful and obtainable objectives, and allows you to effectively evaluate your students’ performance within the classroom. Content placements provide you with multiple opportunities to teach the same lesson as well, perhaps the biggest perk of this placement. Rarely did I ever enjoy a lesson that I presented for the first time. To remedy this, I made modifications and adjustments for each subsequent class until I was satisfied. Once this process is accomplished, you will be able to focus upon other teaching strategies beside content material and delivery. Classroom management, for instance, cannot be learned anywhere but in a classroom. Once you feel comfortable with the delivery of your lesson, you can then monitor your management skills, transitions, and any other concerns specific to that particular class. However, these reflections were only possible during my content placement; due to

my SBTE's schedule. First block consisted of an eighty minute U.S. History class. Second block was either advisement or a Sociology course, but I could plan during this period. Planning filled in third block, leaving me with just one more eighty minute U.S. History class for fourth block. Unfortunately, in many placements you may have back-to-back classes and must make any adjustments on the fly.

Your special education placement may be more difficult to anticipate. Should you be placed with the teacher and classroom from your Phase III field experience, you will have a huge advantage in both expectations and in preparation. The exact construct of your placement may vary in many ways. Several teacher candidates were working in a resource room with very little opportunity to teach formal lessons. Others were placed in 8:1:1, 15:1:1, 15:1, or co-teaching within their content. My placement at Greece Arcadia was officially a 15:1 setting, yet a teaching assistant had been assigned to the class, due to the behavior problems of some of these students. This placement required that I, a History major, was required to teach modified 7th grade Math and English. Fortunately, my major requires English proficiency; however, I had not taken a Math class since my senior year of high school. Additionally, I was required to act as a consultant teacher when our students joined an inclusive classroom for Science and Social Studies. No co-teaching ever took place. My role involved monitoring student work, assisting them when needed in re-explaining concepts, strategies, and answering questions. Essentially, I became an additional teaching assistant.

Do not panic if you are put into a special education placement, or a content area for that matter, where you are required to teach material completely unfamiliar to you. It is possible to learn the necessary content within a reasonable period of time. Attempt to remain at least a week ahead in planning lessons. You will need the additional time to double check your material and to develop strategies for your students to aid them in retaining this information. This is critical considering you will have only one opportunity to teach the lesson. Otherwise, being unprepared for the lesson will

only cause you to frustrate your students and lose an instructional day which will need to be made up.

You need to be extremely adaptable to succeed in your special education placement. Every day, lessons must be modified to meet individual student needs. For instance, what do you do when the examples you have given do not make sense to your students? During the same period, you discover that one of your students has not taken his medication. How will you adjust for his hyperactivity? Because students with disabilities have continually changing needs, you must adapt accordingly to maintain classroom management and student progress.

Show Some Common Courtesy

Regardless of your day, smile and acknowledge everyone you meet as you move about the halls. You usually get what you give. Another important form of courtesy resides in the copier room. Whenever making a large amount of copies, check to see if the loading trays need paper. I have found that on any given day, I have loaded anywhere from 1,000 to 4,000 pages. Teachers do appreciate your effort in keeping the copier running smoothly. This experience also familiarizes you with the most dreaded and most used office tool you will use throughout your career. When I found copies printed for a teacher in a room near mine, I delivered them on my way back to my room. Brownie points maybe, but networking with as many teachers as possible will pay dividends in the future.

Many students also respect courtesy, and extending yourself for them does not go unnoticed. Students you assist will often advocate for you among their peers; thus building a level of respect, which facilitates your classroom management and discipline. Remember, you are always modeling

appropriate behavior. These same principles apply with the secretaries, custodians, and other faculty you meet.

Issues of Facebook

Professors always tell you, and the Field Experience Office reiterates it, at the start of every placement – be wary of Facebook. Perhaps the most awkward moment of my second placement involved a conversation with several students in our science class. One student asked me how old I was and I did not think it a problem to tell her that I was 22. Her response, however, nearly floored me. She replied, “That’s cool! I have a 20 year old sister who is coming back from Las Vegas. I should hook you two up.” How am I supposed to respond to this? The conversation continued, “We’ll look you up on Facebook and send you a friend suggestion.”

Nearly all of us have a Facebook profile, consisting of a wide range of applications, wall posts, pictures, videos, friends, etc. The issue with the site today is that a non-privacy set profile can be seen by ANYONE – even a 7th grader. It is strongly suggested that, if you do not want to limit your profile’s search-ability on the site, delete any pictures or picture tags of yourself that may come back to haunt you. Employers check for you, other teachers check for you, and students check for you. I have yet to have a student, including the 7th grade matchmaker, send me a friend request; but that does not mean they haven’t been to your profile, or at least searched for it. If your profile pictures or photo galleries are not blocked from non-friends searching through them, you can guarantee that they will take at least one look through. And if they find anything that they think their friends would want to see, they can either copy the image and send it to their friends, or take a picture of it with their cell phone and send it to as many of their friends as Verizon decides. ANYTHING about you on the internet is accessible, so be aware.

Several solutions exist to help limit your profile. Perhaps the most reasonable method involves blocking your profile search abilities to just within your network and among your friends. I personally despise the massive number of friends who have changed their names to avoid student searches, but there is no need for this if you limit your search privacy.

Perhaps you are thinking of friending one or more of your students following your placement. This action will permanently open a flood gate to a river of problems, and blurs the boundary between the teacher and the student. Further, parents would most definitely question your relationship with their child and may place you in legal jeopardy.

Honesty Isn't Always the Best Policy

"Talk low, talk slow, and don't say too much." - John Wayne

Most teacher candidates find that they enjoy and need a good venting session with their SBTE, their college supervisor, or their peers to relieve some of their tension and to hopefully find solutions to their problems. However, when you feel like venting, it is actually the time when you should be doing anything but venting. My mother was the first to tell me that I reveal more about situations than I really need to; and I realized that if this was happening with family, it most certainly was happening with peers and supervisors. When you feel stressed, bothered by the actions of a day, or annoyed by a student who has mastered pushing your buttons, delay any discussion of the day's events. Allowing yourself to calm down will enable you to articulate your frustrations in a professional manner and will hopefully allow you to develop some solutions to these problems.

Students want to discuss everything, and the topics vary by age level. During the first day of my eleventh grade high school field experience, a student asked me how much partying I did. Tell them you do not participate in such activities. This sets a standard, regardless of whether or not they

believe you. Again, remember you are a role model. Sharing personal information with your students is always a risky business, especially when the maturity level of your students is considered. The example given regarding my seventh grade matchmaker demonstrates that even minimal personal information can undermine your professionalism. It all depends upon the situational context. The basic rule of thumb – sharing personal information is a bad idea.

Gaming Consoles & Email

If you have a PS3 or Xbox 360 with a gamer tag (multiplayer profile name), it may become inevitable that eventually you will have a conversation with one or more of your students on the latest and greatest games, or share stories of Red Rings of Death and the hassle of Microsoft. This occurred during my first placement with eleventh graders, and they continually hounded me for the remainder of the placement asking for my gamer tag so that we could play Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 on Xbox Live.

The main issues of console gaming and “Facebook friending” are that they may jeopardize your student teacher professionalism. In a high school setting, you may also need to use discretion when students express an interest in the College at Brockport, and/or entering the teaching career and wish to ask you questions at a later time. In these instances, it would be more appropriate to give them either your WebMail or personal email than to friend them on Facebook. Another solution would be to leave your contact information with your SBTE. This way s/he may forward any student questions to you.

Those College “Weekend Activities”...

For those of us who wish to have a good time on the weekends and take a little break from our stressful lives, be mindful of where you are and what you are doing. For example, when you are student teaching at Brockport schools, you may go out to Main Street on a Friday or Saturday night and run into one of your students. Also, when you are purchasing alcohol at 11 pm on a Saturday evening, one of your students may be your cashier. A student once shared that he had observed a former student teacher stumbling down Main Street in Brockport late one evening. I have also overheard high school students discuss the house parties they have gone to; one girl even mentioned partying at the campus town homes. Be observant of your surroundings and plan your activities accordingly.

Traveling to local stores, theaters, malls, etc., all present opportunities for you to run into your students, and possibly their friends and families. Think of these as surveillance cameras that are watching you all the time. Everything you do in public could affect you in the classroom, especially when most of your students have camera or video phones. Again, act professionally and be a role model.

Completing Student Teaching

The paperwork required for your student teaching placement is actually quite minimal compared to your field experiences. Your SBTE will be required to complete a mid-term and final assessment of you online, while you will need to complete a mid-term assessment and the final professional assessment located on Banner. However, if you are finishing your second placement, there are several surveys and other forms you will need to fill out. Your college supervisor may also require additional work to be completed. Typically, you will need to put together an updated

teaching portfolio using a unit you have taught in the classroom, an updated resume, mission and vision statement, and an updated philosophy of education. Some supervisors also require teacher candidates to complete readings and reflection essays, so you will need to meet these requirements as well.

Letters of recommendation will need to be obtained from at least your SBTEs and your college supervisor. To store these letters, you may open a credential file through the College's Office of Registration and Records, located on the second floor of Rakov. The college will add any letters of recommendation they receive to your file, making copies of them available to employers at your request when you are applying for employment. When you set up your account, you will be asked if you would like it to be an open or closed account. The difference is that with an open account, you may personally add letters of recommendation you receive and have access to any which have already been submitted. A closed account means that you have no direct contact with the submitted material, as it is considered confidential. Professors and other education professionals recommend this type of account because it implies that you have not screened the enclosures. When you apply for a teaching position, you may call the Registration and Records Office and ask them to forward your credentials to the appropriate school(s) or to an online web recruitment site. There are nominal fees associated with these transactions.

Nearing Graduation and Beyond

There are several key tasks that you must complete for college offices prior to graduation. You will need to complete a Graduation Application form, which can be found either on the Registration and Records Office Webpage or at the office in Rakov. The Education Department also requires that you complete several online exit surveys. Notifications of these and other assignments

will be sent through email, usually with attached links. Many of the messages you receive toward the end of the semester will have deadlines. Keep track of these if you cannot complete them immediately. Frequently check back through your messages to make sure that you have not forgotten something with an upcoming due date.

At this point, if you are seeking employment as a teacher for the following fall, you have begun submitting resumes and cover letters to surrounding schools, either directly or through online application websites. Graduating with three certifications will give you an advantage over some of the competition, but you may face a low demand for inexperienced teachers due to budget cuts. You may also be competing for positions not only with your graduating cohort, but also with seasoned teachers who have years of experience and may even possess multiple content certifications. Demand for specific contents may fluctuate greatly. Currently, both Social Studies and English Language Arts have a large surplus of certified teachers in Western New York. To aid in expanding your job search, you should be given material for searching for work outside of New York State and how to begin networking at one of your student teaching workshops. A teaching certification from New York State is a plus, but it is not a guarantee for any position.

There's Always Grad School

When faced with a slow job market, continuing your schooling may be a viable alternative. Once you have completed your initial certification requirements, you will have five years, beginning with the September immediately following graduation, to complete three years of teaching experience and your Masters Degree. Choosing an appropriate master's program can be daunting. In order to obtain professional certification, you may complete either a master's program in Education, or one in your major (i.e. History, English, Chemistry, etc.). Completing a master's in Education will

make you more marketable among school districts, especially if you decide to concentrate in either Literacy or Special Education. Choosing an master's related to your major will provide you with in-depth knowledge of your curriculum, and the option to teach at the college level, although a professorship will require a doctorate. Most master's programs will take two years to complete as a full-time student.

While working on your graduate degree, you may substitute teach. In this way, you could accrue a maximum of two of the three years of teaching experience required to obtain professional certification. Since you have five years to obtain three years of experience, you may accomplish this goal by subbing a minimum of 90 days per year. This means that after four years, you will have the maximum of 360 days necessary for professional certification in New York State. The final year of your experience would need to be completed in a mentor program. Therefore, you must be hired as a full-time first year teacher in order to be assigned an experienced teacher who will act as your mentor.

Long term subbing will not meet the requirement for mentored teaching, but it will provide you with many days of substitute teaching. A social studies long term sub at Greece Arcadia Middle School commented to me that, although she would be out of work in June, she was looking forward to returning to her graduate program. She also noted that, since she had completed several months of subbing full-time, she would be able to devote the next semester to her courses, subbing only when she had the time.

New York State is also usually accommodating to new teachers who have not completed the three years of experience within five years. When necessary, you may apply for an extension to your initial certification if you have not met the experience requirements. This accommodation, however, is only reserved for those individuals who have made a commitment to finding full-time positions.

Consequently, if you decide to take two years off from teaching to pursue another line of work, it may be difficult to obtain an extension. When you begin substituting following graduation, keep documentation of submitted cover letters and copies of screening interview letters, emails, and even rejection letters; these all demonstrate that you have been making a concerted effort in finding work. These actions also ensure that you will not have to, once again, pay for and take your certification exams.

Closing Remarks

Regardless of the choices that you make following graduation, your completion of the adolescence inclusive teacher program demonstrates that you possess a passion for scholarship. Ideally, everyone should always remain a 'student.' It is up to all of us to ensure that society recognizes and embraces the intrinsic value of education.

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(<http://www.brockport.edu/ehd/Programs/undergrad/Adolescence/Adolfactsheet.htm>)

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Education and Human Development Resources

Field Experience Handbook for Teacher Candidates

Teacher Candidate Handbook for Student Teaching

Interviews with Teacher Candidates (Permission Granted)

Lindsay Brice, Adolescence Inclusive Social Studies

Elaina Freeman, Adolescence Inclusive Social Studies

Matt Hennard, Adolescence Inclusive Social Studies

Glossary

IEP – Individualized Education Plan – A packet compiled for a student with disabilities outlining provided supports, instruction and testing modifications, and goals and evaluations for the current academic year

SBTE – School Based Teacher Educator – This will your primary teacher whom you work with during your field experience and/or student teaching

TEACH – Online portfolio associated with NYSED.gov to track your certification

Teacher Candidate – Title for college students in one of the College’s education programs

Program Information

The Adolescence Inclusive Education Program offers initial dual certification in Adolescence and Special Education with Middle Childhood Extension in grade 5-12. Program applications are available online at www.brockport.edu/ehd. The Adolescence Inclusive Education Program with Middle Childhood Extension offers initial certification in grade 5-12 in the following subject areas: English, foreign language (French or Spanish), mathematics, science (Biology, Earth Science, Physics, and Chemistry), and social studies (History). Teacher candidates with dual certification will be qualified to teach in their content area of certification and in special education/inclusive classrooms in grade 5-12. Enrollment into the program is based on current enrollment as an undergraduate at Brockport in one of the nine content majors: Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, English (Literature Track), French, History, Mathematics, Physics, and Spanish. While most academic majors are 36 credit hours, some majors have additional hours and co-requisites as requirements. The General Science extension in the science content majors of Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science and Physics is an option, no longer a requirement in the revised program. The General Science Extension requires completion of 18 credits in at least two science areas other than the declared science major. Acceptance to the college does not guarantee acceptance to the program. A separate application is required to apply for admission to the Adolescence Inclusive Education Program. Application review dates are September 15 and February 15. In times of high demand, not all applicants meeting minimum requirements may be accepted.

Admissions Requirements at Time of Application

1. Completion of a minimum of 45 hours of college-level course work.
2. Completion (or in progress) of 15 credits in the content major prior to Phase I.
3. Minimum cumulative ≥ 2.5 GPA both at Brockport and at prior colleges.
4. Minimum cumulative ≥ 2.5 GPA in the content major.
5. Submission of three recommendations: two academic recommendations from recent college professors, at least one recommendation must be from a professor in the content major; and the third professional recommendation from a volunteer or work experience.
6. Submission of the application essay.

Note: While the 40 hour entry experience is no longer an admission requirement for the Adolescence Inclusive Education Program, the department strongly encourages applicants to gain a volunteer or work experience with adolescents prior to program admission.

Chart 1 – Outline of Required Courses for Adolescence Inclusive Education

Adolescence Inclusive Education with Middle Childhood Extension

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
<p>Foreign Language equivalent of 2 semesters of the same language. Completion at the 112 level. (3-6) PSH 484 Adolescence (3) PRO 370 Health & Drug Ed. for Teacher Candidates (1) (or HLS 301) EDI 413 Intro to Special Ed. (3) EDI 431 Lang. Skills in Middle and High School Content Area I (3) *EDI 445-449 (Fall semester only) Inclusive Middle Level Teaching in English, Math, Science, Social Science, Foreign Language (3)</p>	<p>*EDI 465-469 (Spring semester only) Teaching English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Lang. Inclusively (3) EDI 430 Education and Society (D, I,W) (3) EDI 432 Lang. Skills in Middle and High School Content Area II (3)</p>	<p>*EDI 414 Methods in Special Education (3) EDI 419 Assessment in Special Education (3)</p>	<p>EDI 475 Practicum in Adolescence Education with Seminar (12) (Fall and Spring Semesters)</p>

- Foreign Language, PSH 484, PRO 370, & EDI 413 can be completed prior to acceptance.
- Foreign Language at 112 level, PSH 484 and PRO 370 require a grade \geq C.
- Phase I courses EDI 445-449 Inclusive Middle Level Teaching and EDI 431 Language. Skills in Middle and High School Content Area I require program acceptance.
- EDI 445-449 offered fall semester only and EDI 465-469 offered in spring semester only. EDI 445-449 is pre-requisite for EDI 465-469. EDI 431 is pre-requisite for EDI 432.
- EDI 413 is pre-requisite for EDI 414 and 419.
- *Course requires a 50 hr field experience.
- All EDI courses require a grade \geq C+ for program continuation.
- Cumulative Brockport GPA \geq 2.5 required for program continuation.

Chart 2 – Sample of Phase I Course Schedule, Spring 2009

[Previous Week](#)

Week of May 04, 2009 (141 of 193)

[Next Week](#)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9am							
10am	SOC 100-05 6504 Class 9:30 am- 10:30 am DAILEY 0203		SOC 100-05 6504 Class 9:30 am-10:30 am DAILEY 0203		SOC 100- 05 6504 Class 9:30 am- 10:30 am DAILEY 0203		
1pm							
2pm		PHL 101-03 6256 Class 1:15 pm- 2:45 pm HARTWL 0031		PHL 101-03 6256 Class 1:15 pm-2:45 pm HARTWL 0031			
3pm		EDI 431-02 7458 Class 3:00 pm- 4:30 pm COOPER C0002		EDI 431-02 7458 Class 3:00 pm-4:30 pm COOPER C0002			
4pm							
5pm							
6pm			EDI 448-01 7456 Class 5:45 pm-9:00 pm COOPER C0004	HST 421-01 6254 Class 6:00 pm-9:15 pm HOLMES 0107			
7pm							

Chart 3 – Sample of Phase II Course Schedule, Fall 2009

[Previous Week](#) Week of Nov 09, 2009 (168 of 193) [Next Week](#)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9am							
10am		HST 344-01 4130 Class 9:45 am- 11:15 am HARTWL 0122		HST 344-01 4130 Class 9:45 am- 11:15 am HARTWL 0122			
11am							
12pm							
1pm		EDI 430-02 3235 Class 1:15 pm-2:45 pm COOPER C0006		EDI 430-02 3235 Class 1:15 pm-2:45 pm COOPER C0006			
2pm							
3pm		HST 354-01 4869 Class 3:00 pm-4:30 pm HOLMES 0107		HST 354-01 4869 Class 3:00 pm-4:30 pm HOLMES 0107			
4pm	EDI 468-01 4894 Class 3:45 pm-5:15 pm COOPER B0005		EDI 468-01 4894 Class 3:45 pm-5:15 pm COOPER B0005				
5pm							
6pm		EDI 432-01 3292 Class 5:45 pm-9:00 pm COOPER					

Chart 4 – Sample of Phase III Course Schedule, Fall 2008

	Previous Week	Week of Nov 10, 2008 (116 of 193)					Next Week
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8am							
9am				HON 395-02 3703 Class 8:30 am-9:30 am HOLMES 0205			
10am	CSC 356-01 4716 Class 9:30 am-10:30 am HOLMES B0006	HST 416-01 3202 Class 9:45 am-11:15 am HARTWL 0002	CSC 356-01 4716 Class 9:30 am-10:30 am HOLMES B0006	HST 416-01 3202 Class 9:45 am-11:15 am HARTWL 0002	CSC 356-01 4716 Class 9:30 am-10:30 am HOLMES B0006		
2pm							
3pm							
4pm	EDI 419-06 4827 Class 3:45 pm-5:15 pm COOPER C0002		EDI 419-06 4827 Class 3:45 pm-5:15 pm COOPER C0002				
5pm							
6pm	EDI 414-03 4798 Class 5:45 pm-9:00 pm COOPER C0008		PSH 484-01 2950 Class 6:00 pm-9:15 pm EDWARD 0106				
7pm							

Honors Thesis- Self Reflection Piece

My first three topics for my Honors thesis project centered upon historical research-based papers. Although these were interesting topics, I wanted to create a project which would hopefully benefit others. I turned my attention toward my experiences in the education program, and determined that designing some type of teacher candidate manual would be most beneficial for education students. Many of my peers and I voiced concerns after classes regarding how unprepared we felt to be teaching as we neared the completion of the certification program. Possessing some sort of guide would at least provide us with an idea of what to expect next in our certification program.

Originally, I envisioned this project as a teacher candidate's comprehensive guide to the adolescence inclusive education program. Its design was a treatise which explained where to locate specific information on the Education and Human Development departmental website, provided a brief collection of student and faculty accounts regarding the education courses, and tips for the field experience and student teaching placements. However, Dr. Murray, my thesis project advisor, and I agreed that format plan was uninteresting and of no real value. Dr. Murray proposed a new approach which would embellished personal accounts that I had included in my first attempt when discussing field experiences and student teaching. This collection would then provide teacher candidates with 'dos and don'ts,' and a compilation of suggestions and tips to succeed in the education program.

This new direction changed the focus of my thesis from the education courses, to issues directed by the Field Experience Office. I then became concerned that many of the suggestions

offered could already be found outlined in the field experience and student teaching handbooks. I then reviewed these documents to ensure that my material was not already memorialized. For instance, the field experience handbook states that a teacher candidate should find directions to the school where s/he is placed. I improved upon this by explaining, through personal accounts, why more than just accurate directions are needed, suggesting driving to your placement and determining rush hours.

Throughout my first year in the program, I remained frustrated with the Education department since I never really knew what to expect. My hope is that, by compiling these unexpected 'Education Life Lessons,' incoming teacher candidates will transition more effectively between phases than I did.

I intended to interview several candidates who had completed either phases three or four to add some diversity to the collection of accounts. However, I had to discuss this matter with Dr. Murray, since I was not certain IRB clearance was required. Fortunately, due to the nature of this project, we determined that no such approval was necessary.

This guide is organized by the four phases of the Adolescence Inclusive Certification Program. At first, I thought that information should be evenly distributed among each of the four phases, but I soon discovered that this was just not practical. Most of the tips that teacher candidates must learn for this program are required during their first fifty hour observation. These strategies and hints can then be applied and improved upon during their subsequent observations and placements. For phase two, I outlined the initial certification process; discussed the exams needed, and any additional New York State requirements. Phase three covered special education, as both the education courses and the field experience completed during this phase are required for 7-12 special education certification. I included specific subtopics, such as IEPs and collaboration with parents, because these are critical

issues for every teacher and are not always addressed during the field experiences or student teaching placements. Student teaching, the final phase, comprises approximately one half of my entire thesis. Candidates are subjected to a sixteen week crash course in the actual roles and responsibilities of a teacher. It is here that candidates learn classroom management; how to work with other faculty, monitor hallways, prepare materials for lessons, grade student work; and the myriad bureaucratic responsibilities teachers face every day.

My original time table for creating and finishing this project constantly evolved. My initial goal was to complete its draft prior to student teaching. However, I soon recognized that each experience and placement provided new material important to my treatise. My progress on this project ground to a halt during my first student teaching placement; and it was only during the school breaks when I was able to complete a rough draft. Concurrently, during our first student teaching workshop, a fellow Honors teacher candidate apprised me that she had dropped out of the Honors Program because she had decided that she could not complete her thesis and successfully student teach – an action that I actually considered eight weeks before graduation.

Ultimately, two factors motivated me to complete my project: my long involvement with the Honors Peer Mentor Program, and my belief that I might create a resource for future teacher candidates. Because I hope that this project will not just occupy a shelf in the basement of Drake; Diane Maurer, Director of Field Experience and Student Teaching, and I will discuss how me might further improve both its content and accessibility.

In retrospect, I believe that had I practiced better time management, I would have enjoyed this endeavor more. However, the completion of my student teaching placements was critical to its ultimate value.

Overall, I believe that I successfully accomplished the obtainable goals established by Dr. Murray and myself. I created a compilation of tips and recommendations to help future teacher candidates successfully complete the adolescence inclusive education program. This summer I will be working with Mrs. Maurer and the Field Experience Office to format this material for the Education and Human Development departmental website.

While it took a long time for me to choose my thesis topic, I found a sense of purpose. This experience caused me to reexamine my career goals as well. I am now contemplating both a master's and a doctorate, so that I might teach at the collegiate level.