Community Reflection: *Get Fuzzy*
April 22, 2004

Reading the comics is one of my stress-reducing strategies. I love the good laugh I generally get from at least one comic, sometimes find a comic that supports a concept I will be teaching, and/or just nod my head with the connection between what the artist portrays and what I know to be true about human nature. On Monday, April 19, 2004 the *Get Fuzzy* comic strip began a story about his cousin, William, a soldier who lost his leg in Iraq. This morning’s comic brought the two face-to-face at Andrews Air Force Base. When I’d finished reading the last panel I had a lump in my throat and the tears were welling up inside me. As a military family member for more than 30 years, my heart is with the soldiers and their families. I understand what this is all about. Each day I pray for my nephews who are there and my nephew who will soon be there. War is a terrible thing, but what the Iraqi people have experienced is also a terrible thing. I am also so very proud of the American military.

My final thoughts, though, as I finished the comic and played out my emotional reaction were to remember the field of special education reaped a huge benefit because of disabled soldiers who returned from WWI. For the first time in our nation’s history, the federal government recognized the need to provide for the soldiers and compensate them for their sacrifices. What followed was the first vocational rehabilitation act. The ensuing expertise and body of literature that developed to assist veterans cope with their acquired disability and maintain their productive place in American society translated later into knowledge and expertise for persons with physical disabilities. The earliest tenets of special education were built from the success with veterans with disabilities. Plus, it raised public awareness. Additional spin offs from military and other ventures (e.g., NASA) have also benefited persons with disabilities. The development of lightweight, long-lasting batteries for space use translated into the use of the same technology for persons with disabilities.

I will always regret the need for war. I am a peaceful person, but I am exceedingly glad that some good can come from the research and development that has been necessitated by veterans and military needs.