

College of Saint Mary
Rule 24 Section 3:
Use of Related Data and Information for
Continuous Program Improvement of Endorsement Program

Endorsement Program: Early Childhood Education

Discuss changes or improvements made to the specific endorsement program since the last visit as a result of documented assessment data analysis findings and other information related to the endorsement program area.

***What did the data indicate and what endorsement program changes were made as a result of assessment data analysis?**

Review of the data over the past two academic years indicates that completers in the Early Childhood Education Supplemental endorsement program had high Graduation and Content GPAs (3.402 and above) and had strong scores on the Praxis II: EECIA. All completers met the criteria for the Case Study providing evidence that the completers were able to identify individual and contextual information about learners, collect and analyze assessment data, design data-driven instruction and use reflection and self-evaluation strategies effectively. All Early Childhood Education Supplemental endorsement program completers Met or Exceeded expectations for Senior Research indicating strengths in conducting research and in professional writing and presentation skills.

Clinical evaluations for these completers were generally rated in the highest two levels (Consistent and Frequent) for the majority of completers with only a few exceptions showing that these completers performed well in the application of knowledge and skills in actual classroom settings. There were no responses to the NDE First Year Teacher Survey for completers in this endorsement program so no conclusions can be made about their first year classroom performance.

The data indicate that candidates in the Early Childhood Education Supplemental endorsement program generally achieve good levels of performance on understanding learners, setting up positive learning environments, utilizing assessment strategies, planning and implementing instruction, gathering and evaluating evidence of student learning and engaging in reflective practices including self-evaluation. Data revealed that candidates generally displayed professional and ethical behavior, modeled professional dispositions and collaborative skills. It is apparent that some students had some challenges in meeting the highest levels of teaching performance in some areas but with regular supervision and collaboration with cooperating teachers these students were supported in the process of moving from developing or beginning levels to more competent levels of skill performance.

In order to continue to have an impact on student performance, the curriculum for the endorsement is constantly monitored to ensure compliance with Rule 24 guidelines and to stay up to date with current and emerging practices in the field. It was apparent that some completers do struggle at times during their program and in the clinical practice semester and it is critical that significant problems are identified early in the program and that students who are challenged get the early intervention that may be needed to aid in their success.

Changes in endorsement requirements were approved in 2014 and these curriculum changes were made and approved through the university-wide review process. The primary change was to discontinue the Early Childhood Education with minors other than Special Education as this program would no longer result in a stand-alone Subject endorsement. The Early Childhood Education major with a Special Education minor was updated to meet the new Rule 24 requirements for the Early Childhood Inclusive endorsement. The Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education double major program was reclassified as an Elementary Education major with an Early Childhood Education minor to appropriately reflect the change to a Supplemental endorsement.

***What other information was included in decision making?**

As changes in the Rule 24 endorsement guidelines were built on National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards, the Early Childhood Program Director conducted a detailed examination of these documents. The guidelines are continually used to monitor course requirements and assignments and to add or emphasize specific areas of knowledge, skills or dispositions as needed.

The Early Childhood Program Director has used the data available from Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Initiatives of the Buffett Institute. The data has indicated expanding need for Early Childhood educators in Nebraska and has identified specific areas that need to be addressed in teacher preparation. The Early Childhood Education Program Director has been involved in a Think Tank project facilitated by the Buffett Institute to identify specific competencies that will have an impact upon teacher preparation content in the future.

***How were decisions made and by whom?**

The decisions are primarily led by the Early Childhood Program Director in collaboration with other full-time Teacher Education faculty and adjunct instructors who offer special expertise in the content and skill areas. The curriculum redesign was shared with and supported by the Teacher Education Program Director and submitted for review through the university-wide curriculum review process. A detailed Curriculum Proposal was prepared, presented to the Curriculum Committee, shared at Division Meeting and approved by the Faculty Assembly. Final approval was granted by the College of Saint Mary Board of Directors.

***What has been the effect of these program changes?**

Students may no longer select the Early Childhood Education major with an English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement or with a minor in Child Life. Students were redirected to the Early Childhood Education major with the Special Education minor (Early Childhood Inclusive endorsement) or to the Elementary Education major with the Early Childhood Education minor (Supplemental endorsement). Only a few incoming students were impacted by this change and selected the major/minor combination that best met their needs and desired career goals.

As a result of reviewing the results of the Key Assessment data for completers of the Elementary Education endorsement program at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, completers overall have demonstrated high levels of skills, however it has been determined that the few students who have had challenges with achieving the desired highest levels of performance often struggle with dispositional concerns. The undergraduate program is considering the adoption of a Dispositional

Checklist based upon the recently added elements in the NDE Clinical Practice Evaluation to be used during clinical practice visits by the clinical practice supervisor and program faculty.

Another challenge that has arisen that have affected the performance of students engaged in the clinical practice semester have been not limiting outside demands, such as work, during this term that has sometimes affected preparedness, timely submission of assignments or the ability to focus strongly on reflection, self-evaluation and goal setting for improvements. As a result, the program faculty will strengthen recommendations to limit outside demands during clinical practice and encourage students to get financial aid support and guidance that will allow them to address these burdens.

The last area of concern has when there has been a significant mismatch between the cooperating teacher and the clinical practice candidate in philosophical foundations, instructional style or rapport. While faculty and advisors in the program encourage students to work with a variety of colleagues including those who may not hold the same belief system or approaches to instruction or guidance, we have determined that upon occasion changes in the placement may be warranted. The program faculty have proposed that challenges in the occasional mismatch be identified and documented earlier and that supervisors, program faculty and directors must be willing to request reassignment on behalf of students when warranted and work successfully with Human Resources (HR) personnel through the positive relationships that have been established.

***What future endorsement program changes are planned?**

No additional revisions to NDE Rule 24 have required recently that would mandate specific updates to update the Early Childhood Education Supplemental endorsement program. Students completing the program demonstrate strong knowledge, skills and dispositions as a whole so no specific areas seem to require immediate attention.

Students in the Early Childhood Education Supplemental endorsement program take the full contingent of Early Childhood methods courses (ECE 231, 232, 233, 234, 235 and 236) and participate in field experiences across all ages groups including Infant/Toddler, Preschool/Prekindergarten, Kindergarten and 1st-3rd grades. A wide variety of settings have been used; however, more intentional planning for wide ranging experiences is planned for the program. School based and community based programs are used, but intentional partnership with Head Start and Educare programs are planned in order to give students the opportunity to better understand and experience the unique features of these programs.

In Spring of 2015, the Early Childhood Program Director was asked to help to develop an Early Childhood Education emphasis for the updated Master of Science in Education (MSE) program. Emphases in Curriculum and Instruction and Early Childhood Education were proposed and approved in June 2015. The intention of the Early Childhood emphasis is to allow individuals who hold Elementary Education endorsements to add the Early Childhood Supplemental endorsement. Graduate students taking Early Childhood Education courses may complete the entire MSE degree program or may take the required 18 graduate credits in order to add the endorsement.

College of Saint Mary offers a Master of Teaching (MAT) program that enables individuals who already hold content degrees to complete their teacher education preparation. Options include Elementary Education, Middle School and Secondary Education endorsements with a current option of an English as a Second Language (ESL) supplemental endorsement. Discussions are underway to allow students seeking an Elementary Education endorsement the option of adding the Early Childhood Supplemental

endorsement through a cooperative arrangement with the MSE program. The Early Childhood course requirements would be the same for MAT students seeking the added endorsement.

Program faculty are involved in ongoing professional development, engage with teachers and students directly in schools and affiliated programs and review course content continuously in order to incorporate new terminology, provide updated legislative and state based changes in school law, assessments and instructional approaches and infuse these topics at the course level and programmatic level as needed.

As a result of feedback from cooperating teachers, clinical practice supervisors and the CSM Teacher Education Advisory Board, the area of co-teaching has been deemed as one of the areas that should be more strongly infused in our methodology courses. As our students enrolled in EDU 353: Teaching Natural & Social Studies and EDU 355: Teaching Math teach in teams in our SMART (Science, Math and Relevant Technology) program on campus to girls ranging from Kindergarten through 6th grades, these courses will provide an excellent avenue for emphasizing the model of co-teaching. Program faculty will determine we will need to adapt and adjust infusing of the model in additional courses and will work with HR and supervisors on refining and evaluating expectations about co-teaching in field experiences and in clinical practice.

One final area that has been suggested by our graduates and advisory board members for possible expansion has been how to work effectively with paraprofessionals and other support staff in school programs. SPE 240 for undergraduates and SPE 540 for graduates (Guidance & Classroom Management) has been identified as a key course to address how to develop positive relationships and guide and supervise personal who work with teachers and students on a variety of projects and instructional support

***What are implications for overall unit improvement initiatives to the endorsement program?**

Several programmatic changes in the Unit have had an impact on the Early Childhood Education endorsement program. These include the additional of Dispositional Reflections for undergraduate students and Dispositional assessments for all students, use of the statewide Clinical Practice evaluation format, updated CSM Student Outcomes, addition of the Case Study project during Clinical Practice, CSM Lesson Plan Format revisions and changes in Praxis II requirements.

Dispositional Assessment

Since CSM's last accreditation review, the program has expanded attention to assessment of professional dispositions in several ways. Although development of the Teacher Education Interview as part of the application for formal acceptance was addressed in the last review, a Reflection of Dispositions has been added to the process. Undergraduate Teacher Education program applicants must complete a self-reflection of the program's stated Professional Dispositions and address their responses as part of the interview process. Applicants for Clinical Practice placement complete another self-reflection as part of that application process. At the end of each semester, a Dispositions Report form is sent to all teacher education course faculty and to faculty in the broader CSM community in order to have early identification of issues and to provide early intervention to support student success whenever possible.

Professional dispositions are addressed during the first semester for undergraduate students enrolled in EDU 101: Introduction to Education or upon entrance to the program if transferring an equivalent course. Students receive and review the Undergraduate Teacher Education Handbook, complete an assessment on the policies and procedures and sign understanding and compliance agreement at that time. Program faculty are reviewing where professional dispositions could be more strongly infused in other teacher education coursework. Compliance with professional behaviors is mentioned in every course syllabus but consideration of listing the areas of dispositional assessment from the NDE Clinical Practice Evaluation is being considered so that students better understand the importance of these dispositions in this final programmatic summative assessment.

Clinical Practice Evaluations

The use of the statewide Clinical Practice Evaluation had impact upon this endorsement program. The evaluation is built on InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and CSM Student Outcomes are aligned with InTASC Standards. Each course in the Elementary Education program was examined and the student learning outcomes were updated using NDE Guidelines for the Elementary Education endorsement. NDE Guidelines and CSM Student Outcomes are aligned with InTASC standards as is the NDE Clinical Practice Evaluation which helps to ensure that students are developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions that will be assessed during Clinical Practice.

Students are evaluated in every field experience assignment. Short form evaluations are completed in early courses in the program while longer versions are used for extended experiences of more than 20 hours in a semester. In order to provide specific attention to the areas addressed on the final Clinical Practice Evaluation, faculty will make adjustments in early evaluations and on longer evaluation forms to link more strongly with CSM program expectations for professional dispositions. One particular challenge to success in field experiences has been student delays in beginning placements in a timely manner. The Clinical Fieldwork Coordinator sets up and communicates all field experiences in an efficient and timely manner each semester. Enforcement of initial start dates will be more strongly documented and check in with cooperating teachers or school personnel will be done to ensure that students do not start out behind in completion of the placements.

Case Study Project

The addition of the Case Study project completed during Clinical Practice provides the use of multiple measures of student performance in assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating students. The complexity and intensity of the Case Study assignment has proved to be demanding for students notably for undergraduate students who are concurrently completing their Senior Research Capstone requirement. The demands of the Case Study will be continuously reviewed.

In order to provide strong preparation for the summative Case Study project, students in the Early Childhood Education Supplemental endorsement program complete assessment projects as a part of EDU 315: Assessment of Learners for undergraduate students. The projects include assessment of data including learning to analyze scores from standardized tests, create rubrics to provide data and review sample data that is used to make decisions about instruction). Students complete Child Case Study project as part of ECE 235: Observation & Assessment in Early Childhood. This Case Study includes conducting a wide variety of observational assessments, completing a formal standardized assessment, gathering evidence of student learning, preparing a summative report, developing a student portfolio and conducting an in-class mock family-teacher conference. This Case Study project will be reviewed in

light of the summative Case Study project to better prepare students' ability to assess and evaluate student data.

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) oversees the accountability system for public schools and districts. The Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT) uses performance on state assessments and the effective use of data along with other key indicators in a system focused on school improvement and support. CSM Teacher Education students are familiarized with the multiple assessments and use of data from these tools used as part of AQuESTT performance measures including individualized/adaptive assessments, classroom-based assessments and state assessments.

Lesson Planning Template Revision

A general CSM Lesson Plan Format was developed in 2000 to be used across all teacher education methods courses. The Lesson Plan Format has been reviewed continuously. The Lesson Plan Format with Reflection was updated in fall 2013 with more detailed instructions and links to resources including stronger attention to accommodations and modifications for differentiating lessons for all learners. At the same time in order to focus on gathering and analyzing student data, a Lesson Plan Format with Evidence of Student Learning Analysis was developed to be used across methods courses program-wide when students are able to plan, implement and evaluate lessons in field experience settings.

Students have had limited opportunities to engage in detailed analysis of student data and take leading roles in planning and implementing classroom instruction. Students placed in fall semester field experiences are in the process of learning instructional design and not yet ready to conduct detailed data-driven assessments. During spring semester field experiences, with heightened focus on test preparation teachers are hesitant to release control of instruction during the semester. Partnerships with specific schools and classrooms will be formed to allow students to complete at least one detailed Lesson Plan with Analysis.

Praxis II Requirement for Certification

The change in the Praxis II requirements to mandate passing scores for the Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment exam (EECIA - #5017) was a significant change dictated by Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) rule changes. Students completing the Elementary Education major/Early Childhood Education minor are only required to take the EECIA to meet NDE certification requirements. No separate Content exam is required to assess Early Childhood Education Supplemental endorsement completers' knowledge and skills that focus primarily on working with young children. The EECIA exam meets the certification requirements for Early Childhood Education Supplemental endorsements and meet the NDE criterion for being identified as a "highly qualified teacher". It would need to be determined if Early Childhood Education Supplemental endorsement completers would be required to complete the Praxis II: Education of Young Children (#5024) exam as a program requirement in order to serve as a Key Assessment of Content Knowledge in the future.