

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

Endorsement Program: Special Education K-6, 7-12

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

Undergraduates

Review of the data over the past two academic years indicates that undergraduate completers in the Special Education endorsement programs met required Graduation GPAs and Content GPAs and had strong scores on the Praxis II. 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 Special Education endorsement programs 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. Although the responses to the NDE First Year Teacher Survey were limited, the teachers evaluated received good ratings and no specific areas of concern were noted.

Graduates

Review of the data over the past two academic years indicates that graduate completers in the Special Education endorsement programs had strong Graduation GPAs and Content GPAs (3.5 or above) and all but one completer received strong scores on the Praxis II. Nearly 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. A few graduate completers only partially met or did not meet specific sections of the Case Study and in the future, increased requirements for revisions and consistent scoring from instructors will be considered. All but one of the Special Education graduate completers Met or Exceeded expectations for the HPT Literature Review Paper, indicating strengths in considering research and 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. The program now requires a written reflection following careful review of the evaluation by each candidate to make a connection to the feedback he/she is given from his/her cooperating teacher. All incoming evaluation

data is reviewed by the program director and the supervisor for each teacher candidate. The use of two different forms of Clinical Evaluations over the two years made interpretation of the data and trend analysis challenging, but the continued use of the NDE Clinical Practice Evaluation will allow better comparison in the future.

Although the responses to the NDE First Year Teacher Survey were limited, the teachers evaluated received good ratings and no specific areas of concern were noted.

Summary

The data indicated that completers in the Special Education endorsement programs achieved high levels of performance on understanding learners, setting up positive learning environments, utilizing assessment strategies, planning and implementing instruction, gathering and evaluating evidence of teacher candidate learning, and engaging in reflective practices including self-evaluation. Data revealed that completers displayed professional and ethical behavior, modeled professional dispositions, and collaborative skills.

In order to continue to have an impact on teacher candidate 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 will struggle at times during their program and in the clinical practice semester. It is critical that significant problems are identified early in the program and that teacher candidates who are challenged get the support that is needed to aid in their success.

How were decisions made and by whom?

Undergraduate Level

Decisions about undergraduate program improvements are primarily led by the Undergraduate Teacher Education 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 the Division Chair and Vice-President of Academic Affairs 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.

Graduate Level

The MAT Program Director and Assistant Program Director meet regularly to evaluate data and information received. There is an opportunity to meet with adjunct instructors at least once a semester to strategically plan for upcoming semesters and program adjustments. Additionally, the education department meets as a whole at least once a month and any program changes are proposed to the College of Saint Mary Graduate Council for consideration for approval. Following approval from Graduate Council, program changes are sent to the VPAA's office for additional approval.

What has been the effect of these program changes?

As a result of reviewing the results of the Key Assessment data for completers of the Special 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 teacher candidates who have had challenges with achieving the desired highest levels of performance often struggle with dispositional concerns. The MAT program has piloted a Dispositional Checklist based upon the added elements in the NDE Clinical Practice Evaluation as a more formal means of gathering information about possible concerns during each clinical practice visit by supervisors or other CSM faculty. The undergraduate program is planning to implement use of the Disposition Checklist during clinical practice visits.

Other challenges that affected the performance of teacher candidates engaged in the clinical practice semester was teacher candidate reluctance to limiting outside work demands during this term and teacher candidates teaching on provisional permits. This issue 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 teacher candidates to get financial aid support and guidance that will allow them to address these burdens. Program faculty are also looking at additional support for teacher candidates teaching on a provisional permit.

The last area of concern, in some cases, is 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 teacher candidates 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 occasionally, changes in the placement may be warranted. The program faculty have proposed that challenges in a mismatch be identified and documented earlier, and that supervisors, program faculty, and directors must be willing to request reassignment on behalf of teacher candidates when warranted. This will require collaboration with Human Resources (HR) personnel in partner districts.

What future changes are planned?

No major revisions to NDE Rule 24 have been required recently that would mandate specific updates to update the Special Education endorsement programs. Teacher candidates completing both undergraduate and graduate programs demonstrate strong knowledge, skills, and dispositions, as a whole, so no specific areas seem to require immediate attention.

Program faculty are involved in ongoing professional development, engage with teachers and teacher candidates 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. Undergraduate K-6 candidates take EDU 353: Teaching Natural & Social Studies and EDU 355: Teaching Math and they teach in teams in our SMART (Science, Math and Relevant Technology) program on campus so these courses will provide an excellent avenue for emphasizing the model of co-teaching. All Special Education candidates take SPE 331/531:

Instructional Strategies: Inclusive Practices with a strong emphasis on co-teaching methodology. Program faculty will infuse the model in additional courses and will work with districts and supervisors to clarify expectations about co-teaching in field experiences and in clinical practice.

Content suggested by graduates and advisory board members for expansion focused on effective use of paraprofessionals and other support staff. SPE 240/SPE 540: 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 teacher candidates 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 Special Education endorsement programs. These include the addition of Dispositional Reflections for undergraduate teacher candidates and Dispositional assessments for all teacher candidates, 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 teacher candidate success whenever possible.

Professional dispositions are addressed during the first semester for undergraduate teacher candidates enrolled in EDU 101: Introduction to Education or upon entrance to the program if transferring an equivalent course. Teacher candidates 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 teacher candidates better understand the importance of these dispositions in this final programmatic summative assessment.

In MAT, professional dispositions are addressed throughout the program in every course through the course to course dispositions document. MAT students are given weekly disposition feedback and support from their instructors. At the conclusion of each course, they are asked to reflect on their own dispositions. The course to course documents are reviewed as needed by the program directors. Any continued dispositional concern is addressed in a conference with a student which results in an improvement plan.

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 Early Childhood Education course was examined and the teacher candidate learning outcomes were updated and aligned with NAEYC Standards, InTASC Standards, NDE Guideline, and CSM Student Outcomes. This alignment, built on InTASC standards, helps to ensure that teacher candidates are developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will be assessed during Clinical Practice.

Teacher candidates 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, adjustments are being considered in the early evaluations and updated on the longer evaluation forms to link more strongly with CSM program expectations for professional dispositions. One particular challenge to teacher candidate success in field experience has been failure to be in the placements in a timely manner. Our 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 teacher candidates 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 teacher candidate performance in assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating teacher candidates. The complexity and intensity of the Case Study assignment has proved to be demanding for teacher candidates notably for undergraduate teacher candidates 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, teacher candidates in the Special Education endorsement program complete assessment projects as a part of EDU 315: Assessment of Learners for undergraduate teacher candidates and in EDU 512: Educational Psychology and Measurement for graduate teacher candidates. 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). Candidates complete a Language Arts Case Study in SPE 430: Diagnosis & Evaluation of Reading for undergraduate teacher candidates and SPE 530: Diagnosis & Remediation of Reading for graduate teacher candidates in the Special Education endorsement program. This Case Study includes assessing teacher candidate interests and skills, designing and conducting lessons, and using formative and summative assessments. SPE 331/531 candidates complete a Case Study based on IEP goals, instruction, and outcomes. These course level Assessment and Case Study projects will be reviewed in light of the summative Case Study project to further develop teacher candidates' ability to assess and evaluate teacher candidate 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 teacher candidates 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 teacher candidate data, a Lesson Plan Format with Evidence of Student Learning Analysis was developed to be used across methods courses program-wide when teacher candidates are able to plan, implement, and evaluate lessons in field experience settings.

Teacher candidates have had limited opportunities to engage in detailed analysis of teacher candidate data and take leading roles in planning and implementing classroom instruction. Teacher candidates 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 teacher candidates 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 certification was significant. Teacher candidates in the program have taken the Special Education exam. The program now requires teacher candidates to take the Praxis II exam the semester prior to clinical practice to provide sufficient time for any teacher candidate who may need to take it a second time prior to completion of clinical practice and application for certification.