

**Concordia University, Nebraska**

**800 North Columbia Avenue  
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Folio review for:

Reading Specialist – PK-12

Program type: Initial Teaching Certification

Master of Education

NDE and NCATE accreditation - 2005

Initial Review

# **Concordia University, Nebraska – Graduate Education – Reading Specialist - Literacy**

## **Section 1 – Contextual Information**

### **Mission and Vision of the Institution**

Concordia University, owned and operated by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is a coeducational institution of higher learning committed to the Christian growth of its students.

**Concordia University, Nebraska is an excellent academic and Christ-centered community equipping men and women for lives of learning, service and leadership in the church and world.**

By 2015 Concordia University, Nebraska will grow and expand its influence to diverse populations by fostering collaboration and adapting to our changing environment while remaining faithful to our mission of excellent Christian education.

Degree programs in professional education and the liberal arts help Concordia accomplish its goals. In addition, Concordia's faculty, staff, and students are committed to excellence and integrity in performance both in the classroom and in scholarly activity and research, service to the church and community through a commitment to strong partnerships with shared objectives, and a spirit of community within the university family. These programs and activities set forth an explicit value system, which has as its core faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and only Savior of the world. Therefore, this value system adheres to the Holy Scriptures as the communicator of that faith and commits to the Lutheran Confessions as a true exposition of the Scriptures.

Concordia's programs promote intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, physical, and spiritual growth. They nurture religious commitment, enlarge social and cultural understanding, provide insights for Christian action in the world, and facilitate effective communication. The programs provide an opportunity for intelligently selecting vocations of service to God, church, and society. Also, they are designed to develop these professional competencies and communities required for responsible participation and leadership in a complex and diverse society.

### **Special Characteristics of the Institution**

Concordia University – Nebraska, one of 10 schools in the Concordia University System, is owned and operated by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The other nine universities and colleges are:

- 1) Concordia College – Selma, Alabama
- 2) Concordia University – Irvine, California
- 3) Concordia University-Chicago – River Forest, Illinois
- 4) Concordia University – Ann Arbor, Michigan
- 5) Concordia University – St. Paul, Minnesota
- 6) Concordia College – Bronxville, New York
- 7) Concordia University – Portland, Oregon
- 8) Concordia University-Texas – Austin, Texas
- 9) Concordia University- Wisconsin – Mequon, Wisconsin

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod operates two seminaries, one in Ft. Wayne, Indiana and the other in St. Louis, Missouri.

Concordia University founded in 1894 and originally called Concordia Seminary, prepared men as Lutheran day school teachers. This seminary opened with thirteen students, two professors, and one building. Today, the campus is situated on 120 acres with more than twenty academic and service buildings. Current offerings include liberal arts and pre-professional programs in addition to programs in education.

In 1905, Concordia added a two-year normal program to its offerings. Concordia first granted a Bachelor of Science degree for elementary teachers in 1939. The secondary education program was added in 1958 and the graduate program in 1966. Current undergraduate programs in teacher education are early childhood, special education, elementary, middle-level, and secondary education. Graduate-level programs include elementary and secondary school administration, literacy, early childhood education, ELL/ESL, and curriculum and instruction. An initial endorsement graduate level special education program was added in March 2012. All teacher education programs comply with State of Nebraska requirements and all graduates are eligible for state certification. Concordia University enrolls an increasing number of teacher education students seeking public school careers. Besides the Bachelor of Science in Education program other undergraduate programs offered include Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Music, and Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees. Graduate programs include the Master of Education degree, Secondary Education Graduate Teacher Certification program, Master of Science in Family Life Ministries, Director of Christian Education Specialist Diploma program, Master of Parish Education degrees for church professionals, Master of Arts in Gerontology and Aging Studies, Master of Business Administration, Master of Arts in Human Services, Master of Public Health, and a Registered Nurse/Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, the last two of which were begun in 2012.

The legal name of the institution was Concordia Teachers College, until June 30, 1998, although the institution had used the name Concordia College since 1987 for all other purposes. On July 1, 1998, the legal name was changed to Concordia University to enhance the mission of the institution and to better prepare servant leaders for church and world.

From thirteen male students in 1894, Concordia grew to 249 students in 1953. In 1971-72, the full-time enrollment peaked at 1,715 undergraduate students and 400 graduate students enrolled in four summer sessions. In 1992, undergraduate enrollment was 876 students and approximately 150 students enrolled in three summer sessions. Concordia's total student enrollment number for 2011-12 is the largest in its 118 year history, marking the fifth year in a row Concordia has seen an increase. As of the official census date, a total of 2196 students were registered, an increase of 50 students over last year's number. The increase was notable at the Seward campus. The undergraduate total increased by 167 students, 1552 from last year's 1385. Included in that total are approximately 350 dual credit students taking college level courses at 13 different high schools across Nebraska and the United States. At the Fallbrook campus, home to Concordia's graduate programs, 644 students are seeking advanced degrees.

Concordia added a graduate program in 1966 that included principal, reading, and classroom teacher as the three emphases available. Courses were offered during the summers in 2 ½ week sessions with 3 sessions offered each summer. Programs transitioned with new names over time. A curriculum and instruction emphasis was added and later dropped for lack of extensive enrollment. In 2009 K-12 Teachers Alliance (KTA) was hired to recruit for graduate education programs. Enrollment increased almost 3-fold during the next academic year as courses were offered online, in Lincoln at our Fallbrook

location, and in two locations in Omaha. Additional adjunct instructors were hired to teach the rapidly expanding enrollment in programs.

Educational administration (elementary and secondary), literacy (reading specialist), and early childhood were the three largest programs at the time. A post-baccalaureate English Language Learners endorsement was available. Programs in Curriculum and Instruction and Special Education (initial endorsement) were added along with a second-career Graduate Secondary Teacher Certification program. A partnership has been formed with Omaha Public Schools to offer a para-educator to teacher program that prepares non-certificated para educators (teacher aides) to become certificated teachers. Concordia has also formed a partnership with EduCare to provide coursework for early childhood workers to obtain their teaching certificates.

## **Definition and Description of the Professional Education Unit**

### **Mission of Teacher Education**

Educated people in a democratic society promote a congenial community where its citizens put the common good above self-interest. Empowered by the Gospel, the church in mission strives to nurture its members through God's revelation. Education, one role of the church in mission, assists people in becoming less self-centered and more responsible to society's and the church's aims. Capable Christian teachers, qualified to meet the needs of children, youth, and adults, aid society and the church in achieving their goals.

### **Statement of Goals and Commitments**

The Graduate College of Concordia University, Nebraska demonstrates its commitment to its institutional mission through degree programs in professional education and the liberal arts. In addition, Concordia's faculty, staff and students are committed to service to the church and community and to scholarly activity and research.

At the core of the programs of the Graduate College is an explicit value system that has as its heart faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and only Savior of the world. Concordia's programs promote intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual growth. They nurture religious commitment, enlarge social and cultural understanding, provide insights for Christian action in the world and facilitate the ability to communicate effectively. The programs provide an opportunity for intelligent selection of vocations for service to God, church and society, and they are designed to develop the professional competencies and commitment required for responsible participation and leadership in a complex and diverse society.

Concordia University demonstrates its acceptance of this mission by developing and maintaining quality graduate education programs. Current programs designed to train professional educators are:

- Elementary School Administration (advanced)
- Secondary School Administration (advanced)
- Literacy Education – Reading Specialist (advanced)
- English Language Learners Endorsement (undergraduate and post-baccalaureate)
- Early Childhood Education (initial at both the undergraduate and graduate level)
- Curriculum and Instruction – Curriculum Supervisor (advanced)
- Secondary Education (initial at both the undergraduate and graduate level)
- Special Education (initial at both the undergraduate and graduate level)

## **Organization of Teacher Education – The Unit**

The College of Education, the professional education unit of the University, is primarily responsible for preparing teachers and other professional education personnel. The College of Education organizes, unifies, and coordinates all professional education programs. The College of Education is responsible for policy development, evaluation, and coordination with other units on the undergraduate level. When changes in programs and courses will have an impact on the College of Arts and Sciences their input is sought. The Undergraduate Council deals with issues that cut across departments and programs that affect both the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences. The Graduate Council develops policy, evaluates, and coordinates programs at the graduate level. The Dean of Education is the head of the College of Education – Undergraduate and Graduate Studies. The faculty elects members and leadership of the Undergraduate Council and the Graduate Council.

The Dean of Education administers graduate programs in elementary and secondary administration, curriculum and instruction/curriculum supervisor, literacy/reading specialist, special education/mild-moderate initial certification, secondary graduate teacher certification, and early childhood education. Graduate candidates include those in a graduate program, those who have an undergraduate degree and are adding a teaching endorsement, and those in diploma programs leading to ecclesiastical certification.

The College of Education first sought accreditation from NCATE in 1959. The Graduate Studies program first received accreditation in 1977.

## **Description of the Conceptual Framework**

Concordia University's Conceptual Framework was developed over two decades ago as a collaborative effort of faculty and P-12 practitioners. After the 2005 NDE/NCATE visits it was reviewed and revised into its current form. It continues today as the standard for our teacher education programs. A graduate version of the conceptual framework was developed in 2007.

The Conceptual Framework has as its core the three themes of teacher education at Concordia University, Nebraska – Teaching – Leading – Learning. These three themes are expanded in the areas of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The Conceptual Framework is aligned with InTASC standards.

The model describes teacher education as dynamic, individual, and corporate. Teacher-educators are continually analyzing and refining their own conceptual framework by engaging in meaningful interaction with other educators and in valid collaborative dialogue with learners.

## **The Concordia University, Nebraska Conceptual Framework**

### ***Teaching knowledge***

#### **T-K1: Student Development – InTASC 1 Learner Development**

The graduate candidate understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support a child's spiritual, intellectual, social, and personal development.

### ***Teaching skills***

#### **T-S1: Multiple Instructional Strategies – InTASC 8 Instructional Strategies**

The graduate candidate understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage student development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills.

#### **T-S2: Planning – InTASC 7 Planning for Instruction**

The graduate candidate plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.

#### **T-S3: Assessment – InTASC 6 Assessment**

The graduate candidate understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.

#### **T-S4: Motivation and Management – InTASC 3 Learning Environments**

The graduate candidate uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

### ***Teaching dispositions***

#### **T-D1: Passion for Teaching**

The graduate candidate demonstrates a passion for teaching and motivation to spread the Gospel and/or strengthen the child's value system as evidenced in preparation and performance in his/her classroom.

#### **T-D2: Personal Characteristics**

The graduate candidate displays positive personal characteristics such as respect for others, dependability, punctuality, perseverance, appropriate sense of humor, social awareness, organization, management of paperwork, personal appearance and hygiene, and energy and health.

### ***Leading knowledge***

#### **LD-K1: Content Pedagogy - InTASC 4 Content Knowledge**

The graduate candidate understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.

### ***Leading skills***

#### **LD-S1: School and Community Involvement – InTASC 10 Collaboration**

The graduate candidate fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the Christian community as well as the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

#### **LD-S2: Diverse Learners – InTASC 2 Learning Differences**

The graduate candidate understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

**LD-S3: Communication and Technology – InTASC 5 Innovative Applications of Content**

The graduate candidate uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

***Leading dispositions*****LD-D1: Character / Faith Development**

The graduate candidate models a value system which emphasizes moral and ethical character; the Lutheran school teacher integrates faith and learning while modeling Christian mission and service according to the doctrines and teachings of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

***Learning knowledge*****LR-K1: Depth of Knowledge in Endorsement Area – InTASC 4, Content Knowledge**

The graduate candidate possesses a depth of subject/content knowledge for his/her endorsement as well as knowledge of teaching the faith for the LTD candidate.

***Learning skills*****LR-S1: Reflective Practice: Professional Growth – InTASC 9 Reflection and Continuous Growth**

The graduate candidate is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.

***Learning dispositions*****LR-D1: Lifelong Learning – InTASC 9 Reflection and Continuous Growth**

The graduate candidate can articulate the value of lifelong learning and has implemented a professional development plan.

**Standards for Admission, Retention, and Exit from the Program**

A student may be admitted to the Graduate College after the following have been submitted to the Graduate College:

1. new applicants)
2. **Official Transcript** of credits showing bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university and at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average. Additional transcripts may be required to substantiate fulfilling prerequisites or program requirements if the applicant attended additional institutions.
3. **Essay (specific criteria provided on the application form)**
4. Following admission to the graduate college, **degree-seeking graduate students must apply for regular admission to their specific degree program.** See the catalog pages that refer to your desired program for additional admission requirements that may apply to your particular program.

## Retention in the Program

Candidates must maintain a 3.0 GPA in their program with no grade below a C. Candidates admitted as provisional (by recommendation of the program director and approval of the graduate dean) must have a cumulative 3.0 GPA after their first 9 hours of coursework.

## Exit from the Program

All candidates at the graduate level complete a portfolio that addresses the state and national standards of their program. Portfolios are reviewed by program directors and readers chosen from the profession. Program completers are approved for graduation by the graduate faculty.

## Graduate – Advanced – Program Completers

*Information based on PEDS reports*

	2008-2009			2009-2010			2010-2011		
	men	women	total	men	women	total	men	women	total
<b>Elem. Admin</b>	5	9	<b>14</b>	3	11	<b>14</b>	14	31	<b>45</b>
<b>Sec. Admin</b>	5	0	<b>5</b>	4	1	<b>5</b>	22	13	<b>35</b>
<b>Early Childhood</b>	0	12	<b>12</b>	0	13	<b>13</b>	0	26	<b>26</b>
<b>Reading Specialist</b>	2	28	<b>30</b>	3	25	<b>28</b>	1	129	<b>130</b>

The rapid growth in the advanced level programs is due in great part to the partnering of Concordia University, Nebraska with K-12 Teacher Alliance (KTA) as a recruiter for our graduate level education programs. In the fall of 2009 Concordia opened off-campus sites at Fallbrook in Lincoln and at two Omaha Public School locations in Omaha. The class of 2011 was the first one to graduate from the 2-year programs.

## Section 2 – Alignment of NDE Rule 24 Standards and Assessments

Students begin their program as part of a cohort. Each cohort has a schedule of courses which, if taken, will earn them the desired degree/endorsements. The schedule of courses is the student's entry program of completion. This program is monitored through the use of an Access database. An example of a student's program of completion table is given below. Transfer courses, completed courses, and schedule changes are tracked through this process. The Student Program of Completion is used to generate a report for each student which lists the courses they still need to complete. Also given are start/end dates and times, instructor email address, textbook information and advising announcements.



Student Program of Completion Table							
FName	LName	CrsNum	CrsDone	CohortCode	TransCrs	TransFrom	TCrsYrsOld
Sample	Sample	EDUC501		OLMar12			
Sample	Sample	EDUC519		FBSep12			
Sample	Sample	EDUC520		FBSep12			
Sample	Sample	EDUC565		FBSep12			
Sample	Sample	EDUC566		FBSep12			
Sample	Sample	EDUC568		FBSep12			
Sample	Sample	EDUC594	Y	OLSep12	EDUC604	Peru State	2000
Sample	Sample	ENG521		BLAug11			
Sample	Sample	ENG535		OLSep12			
Sample	Sample	PSY511	Y	FBSep12	EDUC640	Peru State	2005
Sample	Sample	SOC565		FBSep12			

### Section 3 – Key Assessments and Findings

#### Major Transition Points and Key Assessments

Admission to the Program		
<i>Type of Data</i>	<i>Source of Data</i>	<i>Collection of Data</i>
Application Essay	Candidate	Application documents
Undergraduate and Graduate coursework GPAs	Transcripts provided by candidate institutions	Application documents
Practicum Review		
GPA	Candidate Records	Registrar
Practicum Record	Candidate	Program Director
Portfolio Review		
Portfolio	Candidate	Completion of Program Standards
GPA	Candidate Records	Registrar
Program Completion - Approval for Graduation		
GPA	Candidate Records	Registrar

## Application Essay

A document titled Rule 24 Graduate Admission Application Essay and Scores is included as a link on the site. This contains more information about the purpose, rubric, and scores of the essay.

Essay Score	15	16	17	18	19	20	#
Ed Admin	2	2	14	13	14	6	51
Literacy	1	3	5	17	18	10	54
Total	3	5	19	30	32	16	105
Percent of total essays	3%	5%	18%	29%	30%	15%	

## GPA at Admission

Part of the requirement for admission into the graduate program is an undergraduate GPA of 3.00 or better or a GPA of 3.00 or better for graduate work at another institution. Candidates are fully admitted if they meet the 3.00 minimum. They are admitted provisionally if the GPA is below 3.00. This is done with approval of the graduate Registrar, the program director, and the Dean. The candidate must have a 3.00 GPA after nine hours of coursework in order to continue in the program.

## GPA in the Program

GPA is used to monitor progress through the program. Using consistent data from year to year at the end of the academic year we have compiled the following results of candidates in the programs listed.

	Educational Administration		Reading Specialist Literacy		Early Childhood Education	
	N=	GPA	N=	GPA	N=	GPA
09-10	115	3.85	260	3.89	108	3.97
10-11	166	3.81	290	3.90	133	3.94
11-12	135	3.77	201	3.92	79	3.89

## Unique Program Assessments

The Reading Specialist program uses a Professional Portfolio analysis as its primary means of program assessment. Each graduating student must submit a Professional Portfolio prior to graduation from the program. This Portfolio contains a vita, professional resume, practicum case study report, a copy of a presentation given during the program of study, and either the

research proposal from EDUC595 or the research proposal outline from EDUC594. Portfolios provide examples of student work, student reflection upon their program of study, and implicit approval from the student's instructors since they have successfully completed the coursework required of the program.

The current program director joined the Reading Specialist program in June 2010, just after a phenomenal jump in enrollments. The entire graduate program grew from 250 students to over 800 students in about one year's time. Approximately 25% of those students were in one of the Literacy programs, Reading Specialist or Reading & ESL Specialist. Due to the increase in enrollments and the time it takes to add staffing to serve those students portfolios were read but a formal reading assessment with rubrics and tabulation of results was not accomplished.

Staffing will soon be available to implement a formal assessment procedure for the portfolios and the program. This summer five adjunct faculty members from the program have been recruited to read and assess portfolios. This will be done at a one-day setting at our Fallbrook Center. Readers will also be working with Educational Administration program assessments. We are doing this at one setting in order to train our readers on the use of the rubrics and the feedback we need. We expect this to become an annual event, part or not only our assessment process but our faculty development efforts as well.

**Additional data from the June 19<sup>th</sup> evaluation workshop will be included as an attachment to the report in these documents:**

**2012 Literacy (Reading Specialist) Graduate Program Summary**

**2012 Literacy (Reading Specialist) Portfolio Rubric**

**2012 Literacy (Reading Specialist) Portfolio Assessment Guidelines**

## **Section 4 – Program Improvement**

Informal reading of portfolios, student evaluation feedback and instructor feedback led to a number of program changes over the last seven years.

Integration of core courses was occurring as the current program director joined the program. This change creates classroom situations whereby reading specialist students are exposed to education graduate students in early childhood, educational administration and curriculum & instruction. This is beneficial to our students in several ways, especially exposure to thoughts and concerns of those specialty areas. It also helps to challenge any group-think that might be forming as a result of sharing twelve classes with the same cohort.

Student portfolios, student evaluation feedback and instructor input caused us to change our philosophy and content for our research course. Students were unprepared for the research

design course previously offered. We found that focusing upon finding, reading, and evaluating research articles from a research process perspective would better serve our students' needs. A new course was designed and implemented. Not only did the new course address research from a consumer perspective it also contains a unit on APA style. Student feedback from early offerings of the course caused us to move the course to the start of the program so that students have these skills as they enter courses in the program that require heavy locating and reading of research articles. Currently our Research Evaluation and Design course is offered in the second or third timeslot for the cohorts.

Student and instructor feedback helped us to confirm the need for two additional reading courses in the program. Both recent graduates and faculty were asked about the need for additional content. The results of those two studies led to the addition of EDUC519-Word Study: Decoding, Comprehension & Fluency and EDUC520-Literacy Assessment & Intervention to program requirements. Students entering the program with the September 2012 cohort will be required to complete those courses.

With the approval of the new Rule 24 work is underway to align our courses with the revised Standard, Evidence and Indicators required. This will also give us the opportunity to reconsider the course and program artifacts required in the proposal. The curriculum mapping for our courses will be redone over the next year. Faculty will be involved in this process. The process will be integrated with the Portfolio reading experience started this summer and continuing next year.