

**A Proposal
To Improve
the
Master of Education
Reading Specialist Program
At
Concordia University – Nebraska**

February 2012

The Problem:

Our current Master of Education, Reading Specialist program consists of courses totaling 30 credit hours. Our Reading Specialist endorsement consists of the same courses. I frequently have students ask me 'where are the reading courses?' This concerns me. Other Reading Specialist Masters programs in the State of Nebraska consist of 36 hours. We have room to add substance to our program and still be competitive.

Proposal:

After visiting with Dr. Uffelman and others on campus, seeking input from a select group of Literacy adjunct instructors, and asking our 2011 Literacy graduates for input, the following changes to the program are proposed.

1. Two new courses will be created and added to the Master's program making it a 36 hour program as are other Master's programs. The same two courses will be added to the Endorsement program. However, to keep it a 30 hour Endorsement program as offered by other Nebraska institutions of higher education, we will remove EDUC594 and SOC565, two core courses, from the Endorsement program. The two new courses proposed are:

EDUC??? – Literacy Assessment and Intervention

This course emphasizes the assessment and intervention process involving "striving" readers from diverse ability, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Special emphases include: identification of literacy difficulties, formal and informal assessment tools, evaluation, data analysis and appropriate intervention.

EDUC??? – Word Study: Decoding, Comprehension & Fluency

This course will examine recent research-based instructional practices regarding phonics, vocabulary, spelling and fluency. Special emphases include: phonemic awareness, print awareness, alphabetic knowledge, alphabetic principle, decoding, reading practice with decodable text, irregular and high frequency words, fluency, development spelling and

comprehension. The graduate student will research current theory, instructional practice and assessment related to each of the word study components within specific literacy developmental stages.

2. Several courses will be modified to better sequence and insure coverage of several program topics. Those improvements are:
 - ENG521 will discuss writing assessments and interventions.
 - ENG535 will include finding literature, finding critical assessments of literature, and applying literature in the PK-12 classrooms.
 - EDUC565 will be modified since the new Word Study course will cover some of the material now included in EDUC565. This will take some of the pressure off of a course that several instructors and several of our graduates felt had too much content.
 - EDUC568 will not have to cover interventions and assessment due to that new course. This will allow instructors to include issues dealing with the role of the literacy coach.
3. The State Department of Education is changing the requirements for an ELL/ESL Endorsement. For programs beginning September 2012 they will require students to complete an internship with a minimum of 45 hours of classroom work for each level(s) of endorsement, elementary and/or secondary. To comply with this requirement we need to change our 1 semester hour EDUC527 ELL/ESL Internship to a 3 semester hour ELL/ESL Internship. This will cause the ESL Endorsement program to increase to 15 semester hours.
4. CUNE also offers a Masters of Education, Reading and ESL specialization. This degree will be impacted by increasing the Reading Masters to 36 hours and the ESL/ELL endorsement increasing to 15 hours. Currently we substitute ESL endorsement courses for Reading courses making the current program a 34 hour program. While I would like to wait until we have the ELL/ESL associate professor/program director in place to assist with the determination of substitute courses, I don't believe that we have the time to wait before our marketing and recruiting efforts for new September 2012 cohorts launch. I propose that we substitute ESL courses for ENG521 and ENG535 making the combined program a 45 hour program. This is not without precedent. Our Educational Administration program has a dual endorsement option. Students seeking a second endorsement are required to complete nine additional graduate hours at the second level making it a 45 hour program. Should we decide after our ESL expert is in place that a third class substitution is appropriate, that can be dealt with at that time.

Implementation of Changes:

These changes are proposed for Literacy cohorts beginning study September 2012. To implement these changes it is further recommended that the program director seek and hire a Literacy consultant to assess and organize the content of our Master of Education, Reading Specialist program. A stipend of \$2,400.00 is proposed for this Literacy consultant. A stipend of \$800.00 each is proposed for the instructors that develop our two new courses. The Literacy consultant's work shall be completed by August 1, 2012. Course development shall be completed two months prior to the first offering of each of the new classes. Class offering dates are tentatively planned for March 2013 and July 2013 making completion dates for the new courses January 2013 and May 2013.

As soon as approval is received from the Dean of Education and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, a summary of this proposal will be distributed via the Curriculum Chat network for campus wide consideration. After a reasonable time for feedback from the Concordia community, the Dean of Education and Associate Provost will make the decision to implement or deny this proposal.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A includes a list of current and proposed courses.

Appendix B includes the course descriptions for current and proposed courses.

Appendix C includes feedback from the selected adjuncts.

Appendix D includes a summary of feedback from the 2011 graduates of our Literacy program.

APPENDIX A: Master of Education, Reading Specialist Course List

Current Courses

EDUC501 – Contemporary Thought in Education

EDUC565 – The Young Child: Language and Literacy Development

EDUC566 – Reading in the Middle and Secondary School

EDUC568 – Practicum in Reading

EDUC594 – Research Evaluation and Design

ENG521 – Teaching Writing PK-12

ENG535 – Survey of Contemporary Literature from PK-12

PSY511 – Psychological Foundations of Teaching & Learning

SOC565 – Serving and Leadership in Society

Proposed Courses

EDUC???A – Literacy Assessment and Intervention

EDUC???B – Word Study: Decoding, Comprehension & Fluency

APPENDIX B: Master of Education, Reading Specialist Course Descriptions

Current Courses

EDUC501-Contemporary Thought in Education

An examination of the theoretical and philosophical bases for contemporary educational patterns; current educational issues are researched. Interests of the participants will determine the areas of application to private and public office.

EDUC594-Research Evaluation and Design

The evaluation of various forms of existing information, with emphasis on the ability to relate this information to personal professional growth. Development of skills in qualitative and quantitative research methods.

PSY511-Foundations of Teaching and Learning

The course includes study of selected theories of learning and their implications for the classroom setting. Applications of psychological principles and research will be made to instructional situations with an emphasis on cognitive psychology and biological brain research. The student will apply knowledge of such principles when examining specific instructional methods.

SOC565-Serving and Leadership

An in-depth examination of vocation, professional and organizational development and the ways educators, building on their personal beliefs and values, enact authentic service and leadership in a variety of contexts. Using the framework of evangelical Lutheran Christianity, participants explore, analyze and clarify, and apply vocation to their community and to the world.

EDUC565-Emergent Literacy Development: The Young Child

Designed for early childhood educators and reading specialists, this course examines theory, research, and practice as it pertains to the processes by which young children learn to read, speak, listen, and write in preschool and primary classrooms. Topics include language, literacy, and concept development, with an emphasis on factors that influence children's growth in these areas. The course also addresses the relationship between thought and language, as well as integrative methods for literacy assessment

that build on these relationships and contribute to the acquisition of literacy during early childhood.

EDUC566-Adolescent and Content Area Literacy

This course will address the basic components of reading, writing, and the other language arts at the middle and secondary level and provide the reading specialist with strategies to help students of diverse abilities and backgrounds to construct meaning from both expository and narrative texts across the various disciplines. Emphasis will be placed on research-based instructional techniques, student-to-text match, student attitude and engagement, learning theory, differentiation in lesson planning, and alternative forms of assessment.

ENG521-Teaching Writing PK-12 (Possible drop from the program)

A close examination of the writing of children and youth, and the techniques for teaching writing. Special emphasis on the relationship of writing to literature, reading, language, and other language arts.

ENG535-Survey of Contemporary Literature PK-12

A survey of contemporary literature for readers from pre-kindergarten level through grade 12. Students will become familiar with contemporary youth poetry and fiction, explore societal issues in literature, develop skills of literary analysis, and connect the use of literature to research in literary study and literacy learning.

EDUC568-Reading Specialist Practicum

This course consists of a practicum experience in which the graduate student formally and informally assesses the literacy abilities of students experiencing literacy difficulties, accelerated students, those with cultural differences, and/or varied linguistic backgrounds. Emphasis is placed on: gathering data for a holistic understanding of the literacy proficiency of a student; use of diverse assessment tools; examination and modification of the learning environment, methods, and materials; appropriate intervention based on assessment, and the development of a case study report that is shared with parents and educational professionals. The course adds specialty knowledge in the areas of assessment, intervention, and correction of literacy difficulties and providing for the unique needs of diverse students.

Proposed Courses

EDUC???-Word Study: Decoding, Comprehension & Fluency

This course will examine recent research-based instructional practices regarding phonics, vocabulary, spelling, and fluency. Special emphases include: phonemic awareness, print awareness, alphabetic knowledge, alphabetic principle, decoding, reading practice with decodable text, irregular and high frequency word, fluency, development spelling, and comprehension. The graduate student will research current theory, instructional practice, and assessment related to each of the word study components within specific literacy developmental stages.

EDUC???-Literacy Assessment and Intervention

This course emphasizes the assessment and intervention process involving “striving” readers from diverse ability, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Special emphases include: identification of literacy difficulties, formal and informal assessment tools, evaluation, data analysis, and appropriate intervention.

APPENDIX C: Feedback from Selected Adjunct Faculty

Thirteen current adjunct faculty were asked for their reactions to the basic concepts of the proposal. Five responded. Their suggestions are given below.

General

A must-have text for the reading specialist program – get early and use throughout: Meeting the Common Core Standards with Literacy Assessment and Intervention for Classroom Teachers, Beverly DeVries.

EDUC565

The 565 course includes decoding, comprehension, and fluency. How will the new course look different?

I agree and wondered the same thing.

The Young Child is a very thorough look at all the elements you propose in the new WORD STUDY option. Rather than add a new “Reading” class, I would rather see 566 reworked to better address the needs of students in that age group.

After teaching EDUC565, I almost wonder if that course should be split into 2 somehow. When you read the syllabus it is SOOOO long and there are many objective – too many to cover well in one course.

EDUC568

I would like to drop the QRI and add a textbook, The Reading Specialist, by Bean and show our grad students what a Reading Specialist does and the many hats one must wear.

Having a course in literacy coaching would be great; but in order to be effective, I really think it should not be part of EDUC568. Literacy coaching has a lot of components and really needs to be in a course all by itself. Requirements would need to include adult learning theory, instruction of adult learners, how to develop and deliver effective staff development, how to communicate effectively with teachers and administrators, how to hold grade level literacy meetings, how to use data to establish a school-wide plan for literacy development, possibly how to set up an RTI plan in the school, etc.

ENG521 & ENG535

The 2 ENG classes (writing & lit) are PreK-12. NOTHING could be more different from teaching emergent readers to intermediate/high school students. If those classes were split into a more concentrated grade level, they could be more powerful. Maybe..PK-2, 3-6, secondary?

EDUC???-Word Study

Regarding the proposed Word Study course, fabulous course, especially a focus on phonics. This would be an excellent class to share different inventories for the 5 pillars.

Many schools, I am finding, are teaching more phonics based and are a more “scripted” curriculum in this area and many teachers are not as confident in the word study area.

EDUC???-Literacy Assessment and Intervention

PERFECT! I think it would be a great idea to put the QRI5 in this class. It would be very valuable to have it presented and practiced before the practicum.

The Literacy Assessment and Intervention course sounds like the 568 course. What will be different with this course?

A literacy assessment offering is definitely needed....and I would like to take it myself. I know that assessment was covered in several different classes during my course work, but the files and notes I kept are quite rusty and probably out of date. Since most teachers are mired in state and possibly national testing issues, an assessment course is a definite must.

Literacy assessment would also be a very large plus. Students are coming with various backgrounds and language/learning abilities and teachers need to have the knowledge and information to work with the individual.

APPENDIX D: Feedback from 2011 Literacy Graduates

One hundred and sixteen 2011 Literacy graduates were invited to offer feedback regarding the proposal. A summary of their feedback follows.

We are considering adding two reading classes to the program. The Master's program, reading specialization will become a 36 hour program as most masters are. Two of the core courses will be removed from the Reading endorsement and the two new courses added leaving the Reading endorsement program as a 30 hour program?

2 indicated agreement here

Question #1: Do you feel this would be a good move and improve our programs?

Yes - 14

The two courses considered as additions to the programs are:

EDUC??? – Literacy Assessment and Intervention

This course emphasizes the assessment and intervention process involving “striving” readers from diverse ability, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Special emphases include: identification of literacy difficulties, formal and informal assessment tools, evaluation, data analysis and appropriate intervention.

Yes – 7

Maybe – 2

Extend the Practicum rather than add this course

EDUC??? – Word Study: Decoding, Comprehension & Fluency

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Yes - 11

We are also considering adding the role of the literacy coach to the Practicum course.

Yes – 4

Question #2: Do you feel that these courses are the right courses to add to the program? Is there other content that should be added to the program? Is there content that should be removed?

Yes – 8

Remove

The one that tells you how to do a basic reading assessment - 1

Contemporary Thought course - 1

SOC565 - 5

ENG535 – 1

The one on Unit by Design – 1

ENG521 – 1

The outcome based lesson - 1

Question #3: What other suggestions do you have for us as we consider these changes to our Reading programs?

Practicum is good – 1

J Uffelman is a great teacher – 2

Teacher-friendly program – 1

A lot of busy work – 2

Flexibility of the program – 1

Parent involvement is important – 2

The program didn't prepare me in a way I needed – 1

Make sure admissions counselors are fully aware of Rule 21 – 1

There are other districts than OPS – 1

I would have appreciated completing a research project - 1

Have a winter graduation ceremony – 1