

REVIEW OF THE B.S.ED. IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 13.1001
Special Education and Teaching, General

OVERVIEW

The B.S.Ed. in Special Education program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of Special Education within the College of Education. At the undergraduate level the Department of Special education houses the B.S.Ed. in Special Education with three sequences: Learning and Behavior Specialist I (LBS), Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH), and Low Vision and Blindness (LVB). At the graduate level, the Department offers a Master of Science in Education (M.S.Ed.) and a Master of Science (M.S.) in Special Education. The Department also offers Advanced certificates in multiple areas including an LBS II Behavior Intervention Specialist, LBS II Curriculum Adaptation Specialist, LBS II Transition Specialist, LBS II Multiple Disabilities Specialist, and an Early Intervention Vision Specialist. These programs are typically completed as part of a M.S. degree program, combining core courses and electives. They can also be taken as a stand-alone non-degree program. The Department offers a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.). Finally, as part of the Special Education Doctoral Program, students have the opportunity to take courses that can lead to the Director of Special Education (DOSE) endorsement, a Post-Master's Graduate Certificate. The last review of the B.S.Ed. in Special Education program occurred in 2012-2013.

All undergraduate students spend a significant number of hours getting clinical experience prior to graduating. All three undergraduate programs infuse instruction on Assistive Technology (AT). Course instructors are also encouraged to model effective use of instructional technology. Throughout the program, teacher candidates are given multiple opportunities to engage with technologies commonly found in schools today. All three of the undergraduate sequences are entitlement programs for teacher licensure through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). By completing graduation requirements, students are eligible to apply for a Professional Educator License (PEL) with ISBE.

Enrollment by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2012-2019 **B.S.Ed. in Special Education, Illinois State University** First Majors Only

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	127	117	106	113	98	83	87	88
Learning and Behavior Specialist	730	674	675	658	659	663	676	638
Low Vision and Blindness	37	23	29	33	26	20	21	22
No subplan	0	0	0	22	8	0	0	0
Special Education, B.S.	39	46	34	15	5	--	--	--
Total	933	860	844	841	796	766	784	748

Table notes:

Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, Graduating Fiscal Year 2012-2019
B.S.Ed. in Special Education, Illinois State University
 First Majors Only

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	19	16	17		24	13	12	10
Learning and Behavior Specialist	147	180	140		136	130	119	132
Low Vision and Blindness	6	8	5		6	5	5	6
Total	172	204	162	171	166	148	136	148

Table notes:

Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018. Degrees conferred by FY 2015 by sequence was not available

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

Goals identified for the program include:

Goal 1: Develop and support graduates that are globally minded, socially and culturally competent.

Goal 2: Develop partnerships with stakeholders across the state and country.

Goal 3: The Department will provide support for scholarly, teaching, service and professional development.

Goal 4: Provide resources to create an environment that is supportive for student learning and scholarly, teaching, service productivity.

Students learning outcomes

Student learning outcomes identified for the program include:

- Program completers demonstrate the dispositions required of educators:
 - Collaboration
 - Honesty/Integrity
 - Respect
 - Reverence for Learning
 - Emotional Maturity
 - Reflection
 - Flexibility
 - Responsibility
- Program completers demonstrate mastery of content knowledge in special education
- Program completers demonstrate application of content knowledge with diverse learners
- Program completers demonstrate knowledge and professional standards set by professional association (Council for Exceptional Children, CEC) as evaluated by rubric based on Danielson Framework
 - CEC standards:
 - Development and characteristics of learners
 - Individual learning differences
 - Instructional strategies
 - Learning environments/social interactions
 - Instructional planning
 - Assessment
 - Professional and ethical practice

- Collaboration

Program curriculum (2018-2019)

Graduation requirements (Specialist in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Sequence):

127 credit hours including 88 credit hours in the major, 39 hours in General Education. The 88 credit hours in the major include 33 credit hours of special education core courses, 36 credit hours of sequence specific courses, 7 credit hours of field experiences, and 12 credit hours of student teaching. Requirements of the specialist in deaf and hard of hearing sequence include requirements that are part of the entitlement program leading to the Illinois Professional Licensure for deaf and hard of hearing Specialist.

Graduation requirements (Specialist in Learning and Behavior Sequence):

121 credit hours including 82 credit hours in the major, 39 hours in General Education. The 82 credit hours in the major include 33 credit hours of special education core courses, 25 credit hours of sequence specific courses, 12 credit hours of field experiences, and 12 credit hours of student teaching. Requirements of the specialist in learning and behavior sequence include requirements that are part of the entitlement program leading to the Illinois Professional Licensure for Learning Behavior Specialist I.

Graduation requirements (Specialist in Low Vision and Blindness Sequence):

124 credit hours including 85 credit hours in the major, 39 hours in General Education. The 85 credit hours in the major include 33 credit hours of special education core courses, 32 credit hours of sequence specific courses, 8 credit hours of field experiences, and 12 credit hours of student teaching. Requirements of the specialist in low vision and blindness sequence include requirements that are part of the entitlement program leading to the Illinois Professional Licensure for Visual Impairment Specialist.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face or blended face-to-face/online instruction.

The School of Teaching and Learning sponsors short-term cultural immersion experiences through partner institutions in Costa Rica, Spain, Ireland, Russia, and England.

Department faculty (Fall 2019)

19 tenure track faculty members (3 Professors, 6 Associate Professors, and 10 Assistant Professors)

41 non-tenure track faculty members (23 full-time, 28 part-time, totaling 29.40 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 16 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 41 to 1

Specialized accreditation

During the period of review, the Special Education programs were recognized by the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC; the special education field's primary professional organization) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE has merged with Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) to form the Council for Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP). The self-study report to CAEP was submitted in July 2018 and was granted accreditation November 2019.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

Faculty noticed several changes in the field since the last report. The first change is in the needs of this generation of college students. Teacher candidates today are primarily from Generation-Z, which brings a new set of challenges. Among these challenges are steadily rising concerns related to the mental health of college students. The department is looking for ways to support the mental health and soft-skills development of this group of learners in a way that does not encourage learned helplessness, but rather helps them gain the skills and dispositions they need to be successful in life.

Another change is the increasing teacher shortage in the United States that is very noticeable in the state of Illinois. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) reported nearly 2,900 unfilled positions in the state in 2018, which makes recruitment and retention in the department even more important. Recent legislation has resulted in some licensure requirement changes to help address the teacher shortage. One notable change is the removal of the basic skills test requirement in August 2019. Additionally, other program areas, including elementary education, are slated to have paths to add-on endorsements that did not exist before. Unfortunately, special education still remains at a 12-credit hour add-on, but this state of affairs gives some options for an innovative approach to dual licensure in the future. Creating a path to both elementary and elementary-limited LBS I licensure may help enrollment needs for both the Department of Special Education and the School of Teaching and Learning.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

The 2012-2013 program review resulted in five recommendations.

1. *Maintain effective enrollment management of a program to continue to respond to a shortage in the field; Study the departmental opportunities and recruitment options for honors students; Explore strategies to recruit students from underrepresented groups, including targeted communication and utilization of existing grant projects such as the Chicago pipeline, etc.; Increase recruitment efforts for the low vision and blindness sequence.* In recent years, the department has increased recruitment events in urban areas by connecting with their Chicago pipeline. They have also increased faculty and current student involvement in recruitment events. Enrollment declined for a few years but was not impacted to the extent that other states and universities were impacted. It appears recruitment efforts were effective.
2. *Increase endowments and alternative resources; Refine the system for grant support; Improve connections with alumni.* Faculty continue to interact with program alumni through social media, letter writing, advisory council, and email to help maintain a healthy endowment fund.
3. *Create and maintain unique K-12 partnerships.* Relationships with K-12 schools continue to be strong. Through the National Center on Urban Education (NCUE), the department has partnered with urban districts like Chicago, Peoria, and Decatur for the STEP-UP program. They are working on an initiative through the Continuous Improvement Communities of Practice (CICP) that partners them with the Decatur district to create a pilot program that will result in both elementary and elementary grades LBS-I licensure for a new group of students.
4. *Proactively engage in the emphasis on increased accountability in teacher education; Manage state assessment systems and demonstrate teacher candidates' effect on K-12 learning.* A former SED faculty member, who served as an interim Associate Dean and is now the Director of the Teacher Education Center, is actively engaged in teacher education advocacy with the state. The second part of this goal is somewhat unclear to the department so they cannot comment on progress of managing state assessment systems. They can report, however, that teacher candidates perform well on state assessments related to their impact on the learning of K-12 students.
5. *Support the pursuit for excellent teaching by all faculty; Utilize the proposed Illinois State University Strategic Plan for Teaching (University Teaching Committee).* Reflecting on the many departmental initiatives of the last eight years, the department note they were truly driven by feedback from stakeholders and program evaluation. The department has learned the importance of documentation and transparency. A lot of information and data were in the heads of different faculty, staff, and administrators, making it difficult to track down. The department is working hard to create systems of managing all of these data that are collected each year so that they become more useful to informing program development. They also want to ensure that the decisions based on these data are more transparently communicated to faculty and staff.

Major findings

Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention

- A slight decrease in total enrollment over the years, but fairly steady enrollment as compared to other institutions, given the decreasing number of high school graduates and instability in the state government. The program is seeing increases in first time college student enrollment during the most recent years.

- The program have an excellent show rate (i.e. 70% and over) for both first-time college students and transfer students who end up enrolling at Illinois State.
- Awards conferred have been decreasing and do not match incoming class sizes, so the program has challenges with retention.
- The freshman-sophomore and first-second year transfer retention rates are similar or higher than the university rates in recent years.
- The program faculty do not know enough about retention of students from traditionally underrepresented/minority groups.
- The percentage of minority students for total enrollment is steadily increasing, though it is still lower than the university level.

Alumni, Stakeholders, Program Reputation

- The field speaks highly of the program's students and graduates; the program has an excellent reputation.
- Cooperating teachers, though generally happy with the program and students, have some concerns with the amount of work for courses while students are in field placements. They report that the scope of work takes away from teachable moments and learning about the big picture of the job of special education teacher.
- Program faculty interact with alumni through social media, conference events, and the advisory council.
- The department is ranked in top 10 programs for undergraduate special education.
- Illinois State University is one of the largest traditional institutions for undergraduate special education preparation.

Faculty and Faculty Support

- The program's faculty have strong teaching, service, and scholarship records.
- The number of tenure-line faculty has decreased in recent years, despite some new hires.
- There has been an increase in peer-reviewed publications by faculty over the past couple of years, which could be attributed to some of the financial incentives (e.g., Reach Forward/Back).
- The program provides financial and educational support to faculty in a variety of ways:
 - GROWTH mentorship program
 - "Reach" initiatives for publication
 - Coffee Conversations (individual meetings with the Chair to gather feedback/needs)
 - Technology and materials provided as requested
 - Conference support

Curriculum

- Faculty regularly meet as course/program teams to review and revise curriculum.
- This year the program faculty are doing a five-year curricular review of all three sequences and have formed workgroups to address curricular priorities related to foundational courses, practicum semester (second semester Junior year for LBS), and the DHH curriculum.
- Faculty use feedback gathered from a variety of sources (e.g., edTPA, advisory council, faculty retreat, PEP) to guide curricular decisions.

Initiatives and plans

Based on these major findings, program faculty have set goals for each of the areas listed above. Upon reflection on the results from the self-study, the department noticed that program faculty have a lot of innovative initiatives and ideas to address the Department's areas for growth, but the department does not always collect data and document the results of these initiatives. It was a challenge to track down all that the faculty do, and a number of details were likely missed. Throughout all of the initiatives in the future, the program faculty will have an ongoing theme of documentation and transparency. In the future, the faculty intend to:

1. Use the results of this self-study to develop the next five-year strategic plan
 - a. Send faculty, alumni, students, cooperating teachers, etc. a summarized version of the self-study and ask them to give feedback about future goals based on these data
 - b. Create a workgroup to use this report and feedback gathered to draft some goals aligned to the College and University strategic plans

- c. Collect information about existing initiatives/actions related to the new strategic plan that are already happening before developing any new initiatives
- d. Develop procedures for systematically collecting data on all initiatives/action items
- 2. Continue to support faculty (i.e. emotionally, financially, educationally) in their work
 - a. Continue to allow GROWTH to evolve based on feedback from faculty
 - b. Link workshops to areas identified on this self-study, along with other areas identified through feedback such as:
 - i. Supporting soft-skills development and mental health needs of students
 - ii. Culturally responsive practices
 - iii. Revising the edDisposition system
 - c. Increase the number of tenure-line faculty through both retention and new hires, particularly of faculty of color and faculty from traditionally underrepresented groups
 - i. Continue offering professional development opportunities (e.g., GROWTH, NCFDD) related to culturally responsive practices, which also aligns with recruitment and retention of students of color
- 3. Increase enrollment and retention, particularly of students from minority or traditionally underrepresented groups
 - a. Continue offering scholarships for students of color, non-traditional students, students with high financial need, and students from other under-represented groups
 - b. Continue efforts to have a strong relationship with alumni
 - c. Collect and analyze data related to the SETT-W tuition waiver, examine trends related to recruitment, diversity, retention, mental health, etc., and use the results of this analysis for advocacy initiatives at the state level
 - d. Collect and analyze data related to students exiting the program (e.g., When do they leave? Where do they go? Age? Minority status? Etc.) to help better understand this challenge
 - e. Continue offering professional development opportunities (e.g., GROWTH, NCFDD) related to culturally responsive practices, which also will support the recruitment and retention of faculty of color
- 4. Develop better methods for data collection, documentation, and dissemination
 - a. Evaluate the data included in this report annually
 - b. Discuss data with faculty and stakeholders at the advisory council meeting and faculty retreat

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.S.Ed. in Special Education to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks the program for a comprehensive and critical self-study report that included stakeholder input over a period of three semesters. The B.S.Ed. in Special Education is the largest special education teacher preparation program in Illinois and is the only program approved to prepare special education teachers in all three initial certification areas: Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Learning and Behavior Specialist I, and Low Vision and Blindness. The program curriculum is an initial preparation for students who seek certification as special education teachers by providing core coursework that all students complete as well as specialty courses for each certification area/program sequence. All three of the sequences are entitlement programs for teacher licensure through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). By completing graduation requirements, students are eligible to apply for a Professional Educator License with ISBE. The curriculum is delivered by faculty members who collaborate to provide foundational courses, specialized courses, field experiences, and student teaching experiences.

The committee congratulates the program on educating nearly half of the State's special education teachers and being ranked within the top10 of the College Factual national rankings of special education teacher preparation programs. We commend the thorough analysis of enrollment trends spanning the time since the last program review. We recognize the program's excellent show rates (i.e., the number who are accepted and then enroll) for both First-Time-In-College (FTIC) and external transfer students. We note that while enrollment numbers for FTIC students have remained fairly steady, external transfer student enrollments and total program enrollment numbers have trended downward (although not as dramatically as at comparator institutions). The committee supports faculty efforts to explore further expansion of program enrollment during the next program review cycle, especially within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Low Vision and Blindness sequences. We commend the development and use of several unique recruitment strategies identified in the self-study report that the program has begun using (e.g.,

scholarships, student ambassadors, increased communication with community colleges, tuition waivers through the State of Illinois, social media video campaigns). The committee encourages the program to continue refining and implementing their plan for student recruitment, including in the plan strategies for increasing enrollment by students from gender, racial, and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline.

The committee commends the program faculty's commitment to activities to support student success beginning with the creation of a new departmental administrative position designed to provide leadership in this area. We commend the program on its ability to continue to limit enrollments in its courses. This is in keeping with the University's commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities and continues to set the program apart from options at other institutions. We note that the department's advisory board reports student-faculty relationships as a strength of the program. The committee commends the program faculty for their support of activities that foster student engagement through immersive experiences such as the Innovative Network of Urban Special Educators (INFUSE), civic engagement and community service within field-based clinical experiences, and participation in scholarly/research opportunities. The committee also recognizes program faculty support of study abroad opportunities and commends the efforts to reduce student costs through the use of tuition waivers provided by the State to students who intend to teach special education in Illinois upon graduation. The committee notes that time-to-degree and fall-to-fall retention rates are generally at or above university-wide rates. However, as the self-study report highlights, the pattern of total graduates compared to enrollments suggests a retention gap. The committee supports the effort of the program faculty to develop a system to track data for students who leave the program to inform future planning. We also recognize the high rates of employment within two years of graduation from the program and note that the program recognizes and will continue to monitor the recent declining trend in employment rates.

The committee commends the close working relationship the department has with the subject liaison librarian and your willingness to embed library resources more closely into the department and curriculum through providing office space in close physical proximity to the department, integrating a variety of library instruction options (e.g. video modules), and creating a journal wish list as a way to identify potential journals that Milner Library can purchase. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the department and library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among special education faculty and students.

The committee commends the program's efforts to promote a climate of inclusiveness through its varied activities related to diversity, equity, and culturally responsive teaching. We commend the program faculty for their development and participation in the department's GROWTH peer-to-peer mentoring and INFUSE course redesign programs. The committee applauds the program's multifaceted plans to increase and support both student and faculty diversity and strongly encourages the faculty to pursue the self-identified areas of improvement in these areas. The committee notes the leadership role that many of the faculty have taken with the Culturally Responsive Campus Community Conference held at Illinois State University.

The committee commends the program faculty for their work to substantially revise the program curriculum in response to program assessment information, advisory council feedback, and changes to the discipline. We note the carefully planned roll-out of the substantial revisions to the Learning and Behavioral Specialist curriculum as well as the changes to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Low Vision and Blindness curricula. The committee commends the efforts to align the curriculum with the High Leverage Practices in Special Education recommendations put forward by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). We recognize the program faculty's work to maintain recognition by the CEC and accreditation (as part of the Teacher Education unit at Illinois State University) by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for most of the current review cycle and for their preparations for recognition by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty and staff of the B.S.Ed. in Special Education program for the opportunity to provide input regarding special educator preparation at Illinois State University through consideration of the submitted self-study report. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with Special Education faculty and staff. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2027, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Develop a plan for student success. The committee recommends that the program faculty, in conjunction with the new departmental administrative position, develop a plan for student success. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around “student success” by defining the program’s goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other plans (e.g., recruitment, retention, curriculum, alumni engagement).

Continue to monitor enrollment trends and refine the plan for recruitment and enrollment growth. In light of ISBE’s concerns related to statewide teacher shortages, the committee encourages faculty to continue to actively evaluate the program’s recruitment plans to ensure that Illinois State University is meeting the needs of both the program and the State. The committee supports faculty efforts to explore further expansion of program enrollment. The committee encourages the program to continue to develop and implement a plan for student recruitment, including in the plan strategies for increasing enrollment by students from gender, racial, and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline.

Develop a student retention plan. The committee recommends that the program continue monitoring student retention, particularly of students from minority or traditionally underrepresented groups. While the first-to-second-year retention rate for the program consistently exceeds the average across all undergraduate programs at the University, there have been some downward trends in 2016 and 2017. The committee encourages the program to continue its efforts to retain first-year students while also monitoring retention of its upper-division students. The committee supports the program faculty’s efforts to develop a system to collect and analyze data related to students exiting the program to identify challenges related to retention.

Complete a review and evaluation of the changes to the curriculum. The committee encourages faculty to complete a comprehensive review of coursework in the program as they prepare for CAEP accreditation. As part of this review, the committee asks that the program faculty examine the differences between FTIC and transfer students with respect to time-to-degree and average hours-to-degree. We also encourage that the faculty explore ways to expand clinical supervision areas by using technology (e.g., developing online and/or hybrid offerings) and developing placement sites for low incidence programs through alumni relationships.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library’s journals and monograph collection related to special education to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. We also recommend that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to develop a tiered approach for information fluency learning outcomes for the department, align those outcomes to the curricula, and integrate those outcomes into the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program.

Continue to refine a plan for alumni tracking and engagement. The committee encourages the program faculty to continue to refine their plan for tracking program alumni and use this system to enhance alumni networking. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program’s alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students.

Continue to focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity. As indicated in the self-study report, the committee encourages the program to pursue its goals related to further developing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.