

REVIEW OF THE M.S. IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Curriculum and Instruction

OVERVIEW

The M.S. in Teaching and Learning program at Illinois State University is housed in the School of Teaching and Learning within the College of Education. The School of Teaching and Learning awards degrees in the following programs: Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Middle Level Education. A teacher candidate is able to earn additional endorsements on their professional education license. Early Childhood teacher candidates may earn the following endorsements: bilingual, reading teacher, and/or English as a second language (ESL). Middle level candidates must choose two of the following endorsements for their plans of study: language arts, math, science, social science, or English as a second language (ESL). In addition to the above-mentioned endorsements, Early Childhood candidates may pursue a Special Educator Letter of Approval that is highly desired by Illinois districts, and they may also pursue a minor in bilingual education. The School of Teaching and Learning provides a professional educator sequence for many secondary education programs. Finally, the School offers graduate programs which include: a Master's in Teaching and Learning, a Master's in Reading, and an Ed.D. in Teaching and Learning. The School also offers a post-baccalaureate program for the Library Information Specialist endorsement. The last review of the M.S. in Teaching and Learning program occurred in 2012-2013.

The Master's in Teaching and Learning program is designed for teachers who want to further develop in-depth knowledge and skills. The degree prepares teachers for positions such as lead teacher, curriculum specialist, instructional consultant, peer coach, and department chairperson. They may also continue as teachers, but with the added responsibility of serving as a role model or mentor for their colleagues. Some candidates are also planning to pursue further study at the doctoral level.

Enrollment and Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2012-2019

M.S. in Teaching and Learning, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Enrollments, fall census day	66	82	70	71	71	132	150	141
Degrees conferred, graduating fiscal year	65	29	31	24	38	20	34	64

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.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

The program curriculum is designed to give students a core of relevant courses that form a foundation in curricular and instructional issues, an opportunity to establish a concentration in an area of interest or expertise, and a culminating experience in which students conduct an action research study. Core propositions of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) form the basis of the program curriculum. These propositions are: 1) teachers are committed to students and their learning, 2) teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students, 3) teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, 4) teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and 5) teachers are members of learning communities.

Students learning outcomes

Core propositions of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards

- 1.1: National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students. They believe all students can learn.
- 1.2: They treat students equitably. They recognize the individual differences that distinguish their students from one another and they take account for these differences in their practice.
- 1.3: NBCT's understand how students develop and learn.
- 1.4: They respect the cultural and family differences students bring to their classroom.
- 1.5: They are concerned with their students' self-concept, their motivation and the effects of learning on peer relationships.
- 1.6: NBCTs are also concerned with the development of character and civic responsibility.
- 2.1: NBCTs have mastery over the subject(s) they teach. They have a deep understanding of the history, structure and real-world applications of the subject.
- 2.2: They have skill and experience in teaching it, and they are very familiar with the skills gaps and preconceptions students may bring to the subject.
- 2.3: They are able to use diverse instructional strategies to teach for understanding.
- 3.1: NBCTs deliver effective instruction. They move fluently through a range of instructional techniques, keeping students motivated, engaged and focused.
- 3.2: They know how to engage students to ensure a disciplined learning environment, and how to organize instruction to meet instructional goals.
- 3.3: NBCT's know how to assess the progress of individual students as well as the class as a whole.
- 3.4: They use multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding, and they can clearly explain student performance to parents.
- 4.1: NBCTs model what it means to be an educated person – they read, they question, they create and they are willing to try new things.
- 4.2: They are familiar with learning theories and instructional strategies and stay abreast of current issues in American education.
- 4.3: They critically examine their practice on a regular basis to deepen knowledge, expand their repertoire of skills, and incorporate new findings into their practice.
- 5.1: NBCTs collaborate with others to improve student learning. -
- 5.2: They are leaders and actively know how to seek and build partnerships with community groups and businesses.
- 5.3: They work with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum development and staff development.
- 5.4: They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of resources in order to meet state and local education objectives.
- 5.5: They know how to work collaboratively with parents to engage them productively in the work of the school.

Program curriculum (2018-2019)

The M.S. in Teaching and Learning requires 30 credit hours. This includes 15 credit hours of core courses, 9 credit hours from an area of concentration, and 6 credit hours of research experience.

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.

Department faculty (Fall 2019)

42 tenure track faculty members (12 Professors, 16 Associate Professors, and 14 Assistant Professors)

75 non-tenure track faculty members (12 full-time, 63 part-time, totaling 35.50 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 22 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 40 to 1

Specialized accreditation

There is currently no accreditation or external approval for this program. Previously, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) served as an accreditor of this program. However, as the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) has taken on the role of accreditation for teacher education this program no longer falls under their auspice as it does not lead to initial or advanced teacher certification.

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

There have been no major changes in the academic discipline or the profession that would impact this program. The demand for this program is based on the need for teacher continuing education for licensure reasons and pay increases that come with additional coursework and advanced degrees. One change is a greater demand for online courses/programs. Many competitor programs began to offer online degrees and for that reason, the program has added the online program. The program also offers many elective courses online, even for the on-campus courses.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

The 2012-2013 program review resulted in three recommendations.

1. *Since it has been several years since the program has been revised, the department will review the program, including its admission requirements and courses.* The graduate committee, since the previous program review, has reviewed the program. The committee determined that the program design fits the needs of the program and our students. The five core courses allow for students to dive deeper into learning theory, diversity, curriculum, assessment, and research design. The three area of concentration courses allow for students to concentrate on a topic of interest (generally educational technology, literacy, or science education). The two action research courses help students connect what they have learned to their classrooms through a research process. No major curriculum changes have been made, but program faculty have started to develop additional sequences that may better meet the needs of teachers that are looking for additional areas of endorsements (which the current program does not do).
2. *As the current off-campus cohort is expected to be completed in 2012, the program will continue to consider options for new off-campus cohort sites.* There have been no new off-campus cohorts since the previous program review. The School of Teaching and Learning has spoken with several districts about cohorts, but none have materialized. It is uncommon that a school district has the financial resources to pay for a cohort. However, the online program has allowed the School to reach more students than a cohort typically does, so time and energy have been invested into developing the online program, which has been very successful.
3. *The program will look nationally to identify peer and benchmark programs to which it can aspire and will compare it to the aspirational programs and draw connections to measure of program quality.* This program review provided an opportunity to look at peer and benchmark programs.

Major findings

Based on the program self-study, the program faculty are pleased with the Master's in Teaching and Learning program. Program alumni and current students seem to be pleased with the program and their experiences in the School. Nearly all (95 percent) of the students and alumni that responded to the survey answered that they would recommend the program to a colleague. There are several components of the program that seem to be working well. The program faculty believe that the range and applicability of our courses, the action research sequence at the end, and the online delivery are aspects that are working well. Current students and alumni were asked which courses they found most beneficial and their responses included a range of courses that included all of the core courses and the educational technology courses. Many of the responses focused on how applicable the courses were and how the courses helped them better understand and improve their teaching practices. Many alumni also found the action research sequence at the end of the program to be beneficial. Students can choose either a thesis or action research two course sequence as their culminating project. Nearly all of students chose the action research sequence and the majority reported that it was a helpful and meaningful process. The online track is the last aspect that the program faculty believe is working well. The online option has allowed the program to grow the graduate program and

because the program is a Full Cost Recovery model, it has provided funds that the program has been able to reinvest in graduate students and other projects in the School. The students and alumni seem to be pleased with the online program as well.

While the faculty are proud of the program, there are some areas for improvement and growth. The faculty recognize that the lack of student diversity in the program should be improved and should be a focus as the program moves forward. The program faculty see the need for a more focused recruitment effort and more support for diverse students, including international students. The lack of specific concentrations (especially those that lead to advanced licensure) is an area for improvement. The faculty would like to complete the development of concentrations in Middle Level, ESL, and Library Information Specialist that would lead to licensure and would serve a need for the State of Illinois and Illinois teachers. The program faculty feel like these concentration areas would meet the needs of teachers and the State of Illinois as more teachers would be certified in the above endorsement areas. It would also allow the program to better promote the content that is addressed in this program. Lastly, the faculty have found that the assessment plan needs to be revised to be more compact and meaningful. Currently there are a number of assessments that fit the need for NCATE accreditation but are not as helpful as they could be for program review and assessment purposes.

Initiatives and plans

The main actions that the program faculty intend to take in the next program review cycle are to:

- Develop and implement new concentrations in the Master's in Teaching and Learning program.
- Revise the assessment plan to generate data that is more useful for program review.
- Plan and implement recruitment strategies to increase the size of the on-campus program, including international students, and develop the program to better support those students.

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 M.S. in Teaching and Learning to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks the program for a concise and critical self-study report. The Master's in Teaching and Learning is designed to prepare practicing teachers to be master teachers and leaders within their school districts. As such, program demand is largely driven by practicing teachers who intend to stay in the classroom but want to become teacher leaders in their buildings or in their specific area of expertise. Most students come from the surrounding geographic area, but there has been demand from distant school districts for which previous cohorts have been arranged. The committee commends the program for developing the INTO pathway to help recruit international students and the development of online courses to broaden their reach to meet additional global demands.

The committee commends the program for their success in expanding their enrollments through the addition of an online program (doubling enrollments over two years and increasing graduation rates from an average of 25 to nearly 60 in 2019). However, the program faculty note in their review that their on-campus enrollments have dropped as more applicants chose the online program. The committee encourages the program faculty to examine ways to increase on-campus enrollments through broadened marketing efforts. The committee also suggests that the program faculty examine how their comparator institutions are able to maintain their on-campus enrollments. The committee commends the program on its ability to cap enrollments in their courses to ensure the quality of students' experiences. Additionally, time to degree statistics suggest that most of the students are completing the program within three years.

The committee commends the program faculty work to substantially revise the delivery of the program curriculum, offering the curriculum in both face-to-face and online formats. The committee commends the faculty's participation in the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology's (CTLT) Define, Align, Refine, and Teach (DART) program to facilitate the transition of their courses to the new online format. We encourage the program faculty continue these course revision efforts through CTLT's Align, Improve, and Meet (AIM) Online program. The committee also recognizes the work that the program faculty have done to develop additional sequences (e.g., English as a Second

Language (ESL)/bilingual education and middle level education) to the program and encourages pursuing similar opportunities.

The committee commends the program's efforts to promote a climate of inclusiveness through their varied activities related to diversity, equity, and culturally responsive teaching. 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 growth.

The committee commends faculty members of the program for their scholarly contributions to the M.S. in Teaching and Learning program. All tenure track faculty members in the School of Teaching and Learning are members of the graduate faculty. Accordingly, all tenure track faculty members teach graduate courses, supervise and advise graduate students, and serve on thesis/dissertation committees. Faculty members are active researchers who publish in international peer-reviewed journals. The committee recommends that the program faculty develop further opportunities for their students to present their scholarly work (e.g., explore research symposia using an online format for their action research projects) as well as improved methods of tracking these activities.

Follow-up Reports.

Assessment Plan. The Academic Planning Committee recognizes faculty efforts in developing an assessment plan that aligns with the program's previous accreditation standards. However, the program faculty report that the assessment plan has not been revised since 2009 and needs to be updated to reflect the current program and provide meaningful information for program-level assessment purposes. The committee asks that the program work with University Assessment Services to revise the existing plan so that it provides meaningful information for faculty to use for program revisions. As part of the assessment plan revisions, the committee suggests that faculty consider including assessment procedures that allow comparisons between the two course delivery methods (face-to-face and online). The committee also asks the faculty to implement the revised plan by collecting and analyzing data, utilizing findings to inform programmatic decision, and documenting decisions made and the rationale for them. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to submit a revised assessment plan to the Office of the Provost by May 1, 2021, and to submit a report to the Office of the Provost regarding implementation of the plan and any actions plans that have resulted from the data collected by May 1, 2022.

Comparator Programs. The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational institutions in the self-study report guidelines to provide faculty with opportunities to consider the niche their program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The committee asks that the program revisit the comparator section of the self-study. Although the faculty did provide a table of metrics from comparator institutions, no analysis or interpretation of these metrics was presented. In a subsequent follow-up report, the committee suggests the faculty address this section through an expanded analysis of comparator programs that includes a discussion of how these comparisons have informed the strategic direction of the program. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to revisit their discussions of comparator institutions and to summarize the findings of those discussions in a report submitted to the Office of the Provost by May 1, 2021.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty members of the M.S. in Teaching and Learning program for the opportunity to provide input regarding advanced educator preparation at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with faculty members. 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 to monitor and assess the impact of the addition of the online program. The committee recommends that faculty members closely monitor and evaluate the impacts of the online plan of study on student recruitment, retention, and graduation. Comparability of program requirements across delivery modes is required and monitored by the university, the state, and the Higher Learning Commission (the University's regional accreditation body) through their respective policies and therefore the committee suggests that faculty consider how the different delivery formats and the on-campus and off-campus cohorts may impact program and student success. The plan should also assess the ability to deliver the program online to meet student needs without sacrificing program quality, it should also assess the extent and strength of relations with program alumni. Findings from the

implementation of this plan and student learning outcomes assessment processes embedded in the program can aid faculty in conducting its analyses and identifying the need for subsequent curriculum revisions. The committee suggests that the program broaden the scope of their planning to include feedback from additional key stakeholders beyond alumni (e.g., current students, districts that employ their graduates) for guidance. The committee also urges faculty to look to experiences of other public universities with delivery of online sequences. By studying those programs, faculty might identify practices that could be implemented in the M.S. in Teaching and Learning program at Illinois State. The committee encourages that the program faculty evaluate the effects of online courses made possible through the INTO pathway.

Develop a plan for recruitment and enrollment growth. The committee supports faculty efforts to explore further expansion of program enrollment during the next program review cycle. The committee encourages the program to develop and implement a plan for student recruitment and retention, including in the plan strategies for increasing enrollment of students from racial and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline. Some elements of a recruitment plan have already been identified by faculty in its self-study report, including advertising at state-level teacher conferences and the development of a listserv for alumni. The committee recommends that the program work with University Marketing and Communications to pursue additional methods of recruiting. The committee urges the program faculty to evaluate the effects of recruitment efforts on enrollment and, in turn, on the ability of the college to provide high-quality master's-level education.

Develop a plan for the implementation of changes to the curriculum. The self-study report briefly outlines plans to pursue the addition of new endorsement and sequence courses and new concentrations. The committee encourages faculty to continue developing new curriculum for the program as well as procedures for assessing the impact of the changes to the curriculum.

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.

Develop a plan for alumni tracking and engagement. The committee concurs with faculty in its plan to design and implement a system for tracking program alumni and then using the system to enhance alumni networking. The alumni survey is a good start but developing a broader plan may further strengthen alumni relations through more frequent surveys, an alumni advisory board, newsletters and other web-based information, and special events such as online alumni seminars and research symposia. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program becomes fully online and 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 implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. After the program has revised its existing 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 (including new endorsements, sequences, or concentration courses) 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.