

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

Endorsement Program: Early Childhood Inclusive

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

Review of the data over the past two academic years indicates that completers in the Early Childhood Education Inclusive endorsement program had high Graduation and Content GPAs (3.225 and above) and had strong scores on the Praxis II: Education of Young Children exam providing evidence of strong Content Knowledge. All completers met the criteria for the Case Study providing evidence that the completers were able to identify individual and contextual information about learners, collect and analyze assessment data, design data-driven instruction and use reflection and self-evaluation strategies effectively. All Early Childhood Inclusive endorsement program completers Met or Exceeded expectations for Senior Research indicating strengths in conducting research and in professional writing and presentation skills.

Clinical evaluations for these completers were generally rated in the highest two levels (Consistent and Frequent) for the majority of completers with only a few exceptions showing that these completers performed well in the application of knowledge and skills in actual classroom settings. Although the responses to the NDE First Year Teacher Survey were limited, the teachers evaluated received strong ratings and no specific areas of concern were noted.

Therefore, the data indicates that completers in the Early Childhood Inclusive endorsement program generally achieve high levels of performance on understanding learners, setting up positive learning environments, utilizing assessment strategies, planning and implementing instruction, gathering and evaluating evidence of student learning and engaging in reflective practices including self-evaluation. Data revealed that completers generally displayed professional and ethical behavior, modeled professional dispositions and collaborative skills.

In order to continue to have an impact on student performance, the curriculum for the endorsement is constantly monitored to ensure compliance with Rule 24 guidelines and to stay up to date with current and emerging practices in the field. It was apparent that some completers will struggle at times during their program and in the clinical practice semester and it is critical that significant problems are identified early in the program and that students who are challenged get the support that is needed to aid in their success.

Changes in endorsement requirements were approved in 2014 and curriculum changes were made and approved through the university-wide review process. The primary change was to add SPE 221: Foundations in Early Childhood Special Education and modify SPE 330: Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Settings. The addition of SPE 221 allows a stronger focus on early childhood intervention and special education programs including the study of laws and regulations. The course includes targeted

study and projects aimed at understanding the role of families. The Family Focused Interview Assignment was added and the course requires 10 field experience hours that include interactions with families. The curricular change allowed SPE 330 to focus solely on direct interventions and services within inclusive settings including preparing detailed IFSP and IEP documents, assessing learners, adapting learning environments and modifying instructional strategies for all learners.

***What other information was included in decision making?**

As changes in the Rule 24 endorsement guidelines were built on National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards and Council for Exceptional Children: Division for Early Childhood (DEC) guidelines, the Early Childhood Program Director conducted a detailed examination of these documents. The guidelines are continually used to monitor course requirements and assignments and to add or emphasize specific areas of knowledge, skills or dispositions as needed.

The Early Childhood Program Director has used the data available from Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Initiatives of the Buffett Institute. The data has indicated expanding need for Early Childhood educators in Nebraska and has identified specific areas that need to be addressed in teacher preparation. The Early Childhood Education Program Director has been involved in a Think Tank project facilitated by the Buffett Institute to identify specific competencies that will have an impact upon teacher preparation content in the future.

***How were decisions made and by whom?**

The decisions are primarily led by the Early Childhood Program Director in collaboration with other full-time Teacher Education faculty and adjunct instructors who offer special expertise in the content and skill areas. The curriculum redesign was shared with and supported by the Teacher Education Program Director and submitted for review through the university-wide curriculum review process. A detailed Curriculum Proposal was prepared, presented to the Curriculum Committee, shared at Division Meeting and approved by the Faculty Assembly. Final approval was granted by the College of Saint Mary Board of Directors.

***What has been the effect of these program changes?**

The revised course sequence of SPE 221: Foundations in Early Childhood Special Education in Fall semesters followed by SPE 330: Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Settings and SPE 372: Field Experiences in Early Childhood Inclusive Settings was carried out during the 2015-2016 academic year. These courses were taught by an adjunct instructor who has special expertise in the area of early childhood inclusive practices. She had taught the courses, SPE 330 and SPE 372, prior to the curricular change. The instructor reported considerable improvements in students' understanding of families and importance of contextual considerations. The course reorganization allowed increased time and practice for preparing IFSP and IEP documents which resulted in students demonstrating increased skills and confidence.

As a result of reviewing the results of the Key Assessment data for completers of the Early Childhood Inclusive endorsement program, completers overall have demonstrated high levels of skills, however it has been determined that the few students who have had challenges with achieving the desired highest levels of performance often struggle with dispositional concerns. The undergraduate program is

considering the adoption of a Dispositional Checklist based upon the recently added elements in the NDE Clinical Practice Evaluation to be used during clinical practice visits by the clinical practice supervisor and program faculty.

Another challenge that affected the performance of students engaged in the clinical practice semester was student reluctance to limiting outside work demands during this term. This issue affected preparedness, timely submission of assignments or the ability to focus strongly on reflection, self-evaluation and goal setting for improvements. As a result, the program faculty will strengthen recommendations to limit outside demands during clinical practice and encourage students to get financial aid support and guidance that will allow them to address these burdens.

The last area of concern, in some cases, is a significant mismatch between the cooperating teacher and the clinical practice candidate in philosophical foundations, instructional style or rapport. While faculty and advisors in the program encourage students to work with a variety of colleagues including those who may not hold the same belief system or approaches to instruction or guidance, we have determined that occasionally, changes in the placement may be warranted. The program faculty have proposed that challenges in a mismatch be identified and documented earlier, and that supervisors, program faculty, and directors must be willing to request reassignment on behalf of students when warranted. This will require collaboration with Human Resources (HR) personnel in partner districts.

***What future endorsement program changes are planned?**

Courses and affiliated assignments will continue to be reviewed and updated as needed. The new course sequence of SPE 221 followed by SPE 330 and SPE 372 will allow expanded time for student practice with Teaching Strategies GOLD which is the designated assessment tool used in Nebraska under Results Matter. An annual contract for Teaching Strategies GOLD is part of the annual Teacher Education Program budget. This training version of the tool allows students to create documentation entries, examine developmental criteria and explore reporting features of the program.

Students in the Early Childhood Inclusive program take the full contingent of Early Childhood methods courses (ECE 231, 232, 233, 234, 235 and 236) and participate in field experiences across all ages groups including Infant/Toddler, Preschool/Prekindergarten, Kindergarten and 1st-3rd grades. A wide variety of settings have been used; however, more intentional planning for wide ranging experiences is planned for the program. School based and community based programs are used, but intentional partnership with Head Start and Educare programs are planned in order to give students the opportunity to better understand and experience the unique features of these programs.

***What are implications for overall unit improvement initiatives to the endorsement program?**

Several programmatic changes in the Unit have had an impact on the Early Childhood Inclusive endorsement program. These include the additional of Dispositional Reflections for undergraduate students and Dispositional assessments for all students, use of the statewide Clinical Practice evaluation format, updated CSM Student Outcomes, addition of the Case Study project during Clinical Practice, CSM Lesson Plan Format revisions and changes in Praxis II requirements.

Dispositional Assessment

Since CSM's last accreditation review, the program has expanded attention to assessment of professional dispositions in several ways. Although development of the Teacher Education Interview as part of the application for formal acceptance was addressed in the last review, a Reflection of Dispositions has been added to the process. Undergraduate Teacher Education program applicants must complete a self-reflection of the program's stated Professional Dispositions and address their responses as part of the interview process. Applicants for Clinical Practice placement complete another self-reflection as part of that application process. At the end of each semester, a Dispositions Report form is sent to all teacher education course faculty and to faculty in the broader CSM community in order to have early identification of issues and to provide early intervention to support student success whenever possible.

Professional dispositions are addressed during the first semester for undergraduate students enrolled in EDU 101: Introduction to Education or upon entrance to the program if transferring an equivalent course. Students receive and review the Undergraduate Teacher Education Handbook, complete an assessment on the policies and procedures and sign understanding and compliance agreement at that time. Program faculty are reviewing where professional dispositions could be more strongly infused in other teacher education coursework. Compliance with professional behaviors is mentioned in every course syllabus but consideration of listing the areas of dispositional assessment from the NDE Clinical Practice Evaluation is being considered so that students better understand the importance of these dispositions in this final programmatic summative assessment.

Clinical Practice Evaluations

The use of the statewide Clinical Practice Evaluation had impact upon this endorsement program. The evaluation is built on InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and CSM Student Outcomes are aligned with InTASC Standards. Each Early Childhood Education course was examined and the student learning outcomes were updated and aligned with NAEYC Standards, InTASC Standards, NDE Guideline and CSM Student Outcomes. This alignment built on InTASC standards helps to ensure that students are developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions that will be assessed during Clinical Practice.

Students are evaluated in every field experience assignment. Short form evaluations are completed in early courses in the program while longer versions are used for extended experiences of more than 20 hours in a semester. In order to provide specific attention to the areas addressed on the final Clinical Practice Evaluation, adjusting are being considered in the early evaluations and updated on the longer evaluation forms to link more strongly with CSM program expectations for professional dispositions. One particular challenge to student success in field experience has been failure to be the placements in a timely manner. Our Clinical Fieldwork Coordinator sets up and communicates all field experiences in an efficient and timely manner each semester. Enforcement of initial start dates will be more strongly documented and check in with cooperating teachers or school personnel will be done to ensure that students do not start out behind in completion of the placements.

Case Study Project

The addition of the Case Study project completed during Clinical Practice provides the use of multiple measures of student performance in assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating students. The complexity and intensity of the Case Study assignment has proved to be demanding for students notably

for undergraduate students who are concurrently completing their Senior Research Capstone requirement. The demands of the Case Study will be continuously reviewed.

In order to provide strong preparation for the summative Case Study project, students in the Early Childhood Inclusive endorsement program complete assessment projects as a part of EDU 315: Assessment of Learners for undergraduate students. The projects include assessment of data including learning to analyze scores from standardized tests, create rubrics to provide data and review sample data that is used to make decisions about instruction). Students complete Case Study projects as part of ECE 235: Observation & Assessment in Early Childhood and in SPE 330: Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Settings. Students complete Child Case Study project as part of ECE 235: Observation & Assessment in Early Childhood. This Case Study includes conducting a wide variety of observational assessments, completing a formal standardized assessment, gathering evidence of student learning, preparing a summative report, developing a student portfolio and conducting an in-class mock family-teacher conference. Students enrolled in SPE 372 complete a Case Study that includes Child Profile, Developmental Profile, IFSP/IEP Goals and Activity plans. These course level Case Study projects will be reviewed in light of the summative Case Study project to further develop students' ability to assess and evaluate student data.

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) oversees the accountability system for public schools and districts. The Accountability for a Quality Education System Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT) uses performance on state assessments and the effective use of data along with other key indicators in a system focused on school improvement and support. CSM Teacher Education students are familiarized with the multiple assessments and use of data from these tools used as part of AQuESTT performance measures including individualized/adaptive assessments, classroom-based assessments and state assessments.

Lesson Planning Template Revision

A general CSM Lesson Plan Format was developed in 2000 to be used across all teacher education methods courses. The Lesson Plan Format has been reviewed continuously. The Lesson Plan Format with Reflection was updated in fall 2013 with more detailed instructions and links to resources including stronger attention to accommodations and modifications for differentiating lessons for all learners. At the same time in order to focus on gathering and analyzing student data, a Lesson Plan Format with Evidence of Student Learning Analysis was developed to be used across methods courses program-wide when students are able to plan, implement and evaluate lessons in field experience settings.

Students have had limited opportunities to engage in detailed analysis of student data and take leading roles in planning and implementing classroom instruction. Students placed in fall semester field experiences are in the process of learning instructional design and not yet ready to conduct detailed data-driven assessments. During spring semester field experiences, with heightened focus on test preparation teachers are hesitant to release control of instruction during the semester. Partnerships with specific schools and classrooms will be formed to allow students to complete at least one detailed Lesson Plan with Analysis.

Praxis II Requirement for Certification

The change in the Praxis II requirements to mandate passing scores and the transition to the Education for Young Children exam (#5024) instead of the Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction and

Assessment exam (EECIA - #5017) were significant changes necessitated by Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) rule changes. The use of the Education for Young Children exam as a certification requirement has been positive as the targeted areas of knowledge and skills addressed are consistent with the curriculum requirements in the program.

One area of challenge related to Praxis II testing for Early Childhood Inclusive endorsement program completers is that they must take and pass the Praxis II: EECIA in order to be considering “highly qualified teachers” under current NDE requirements. This exam proves to be more challenging because the test includes grade level content and pedagogical knowledge for grades higher than 3rd grade which is beyond the scope of the Early Childhood Inclusive endorsement program. Completers have been successful in passing the exam but are provided with review of testing strategies regarding questions that address upper elementary grade levels and a review of educational theories and instructional strategies covered in the EDU 312: Educational Psychology.