Reading Specialist M.Ed/ Grad Cert Program Overview

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1. **Program Overview**

1.1.   Degrees, diplomas, certificates, and/or minors and the mission and goals of each. Source: UAS Catalog.

The graduate programs in Reading offer a Masters of Education (M.Ed.) in Reading-Reading Specialist and a Graduate Certificate (and institutional recommendation for an Alaska State Endorsement) in Reading

The M.Ed. in Reading program is designed specifically to deepen K-12 teachers' pedagogical content knowledge with the aim of improved student (K-12) literacy achievement. This program is delivered in e-Learning formats so that it is possible to complete the degree while teaching in one's own district. Technological tools facilitate course delivery, communication, and research. Candidates in the reading program focus on developmental, cognitive, and sociocultural aspects of reading acquisition, instruction, and assessment. Professional and caring attitudes and beliefs about teaching lead to responsive and rigorous instruction in reading and literacy for all K-12 students, including those who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Accomplished teaching professionals promote collaboration with students, colleagues, parents, families, and the larger community to improve literacy learning and student achievement in their contexts. Students prepare an exit portfolio that is aligned to the program standards of the International Literacy Association (2017 Standards) to demonstrate levels of knowledge and pedagogy commensurate with the skills and dispositions of highly competent advanced teaching professionals.

All reading courses are delivered via synchronous methodology, meeting once a week for two hours using Zoom. Additional professional interaction related to professional readings is required via a discussion board and video analysis platform. The supervised summer practicum course moved online in the Summer of 2020 and remains online. Candidates study instruction and assessment, demonstrate their practical skills for assessment, and receive feedback to improve their pedagogical practice, while working one on one and with small groups of students in their home community.

The Reading M.Ed. serves teachers throughout the state of Alaska who wish to know more about teaching reading and literacy, either to do a better job within the classroom assignment they already have, to become a reading/literacy specialist, teacher leader or curriculum specialist. The role of the reading specialist has been shifting nationally from solely that of additional instructor to being an instructional coach, or a mix of both (Bean, 2015). The UAS M.Ed. Reading program has shifted its content to reflect these professional trends and appropriately prepare its graduates.

The UAS Reading M.Ed. serves an important role in the State of Alaska. The ability to read effectively is a student's cornerstone to success. Those students who struggle with reading

become frustrated and often do not wish to or are unable to complete a K-12 education. While many people assume that initial preparation for teaching should be sufficient training for a teacher to teach reading effectively, this is not the case. Especially in Alaska, students come to school with varied needs, and teachers require a depth of understanding that requires a substantial period of learning time. Teachers need continual learning to be effective in matching reading and writing instruction to student needs. Reading specialists are needed to act as coaches with classroom teachers in their building or their district, to facilitate the professional change needed by each teacher to provide effective reading instruction to their K-12 students.

Lastly, because we have received an NPD grant in conjunction with colleagues at UAA, we have also aligned the first 18 credit hours of the M.Ed. in reading to also align with the TESOL standards. These standards are congruent with those of the International Literacy Association, particularly in meeting the needs of diverse learners (Standard 4) and designing curriculum and instruction (Standard 2) and understanding the theories of language and literacy that serve these outcomes (Standard 1).

1. Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Beginning in 2019 to the present, each course in the program has been updated to align with the 2017 International Literacy Association Standards. These are as listed below:

STANDARD 1. Foundational Knowledge Candidates demonstrate knowledge of major theoretical, conceptual, historical, and evidence-based foundations of literacy and language, the ways in which they interrelate, and the role of the reading/literacy specialist in schools.

1.1: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of the major theoretical, conceptual, historical, and evidence-based components of reading (e.g., concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) development throughout the grades and its relationship with other aspects of literacy.

1.2: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of the major theoretical, conceptual, historical, and evidence-based aspects of writing development, writing processes (e.g., revising, audience), and foundational skills (e.g., spelling, sentence construction, word processing) and their relationships with other aspects of literacy.

1.3: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of theoretical, conceptual, historical, and evidence-based components of language (e.g., language acquisition, structure of language, conventions of standard English, vocabulary acquisition and use, speaking, listening, viewing, visually representing) and its relationships with other aspects of literacy.

1.4: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of the historical and evidence-based foundations related to the role of the reading/literacy specialist.

STANDARD 2. Curriculum and Instruction: Candidates use foundational knowledge to design literacy curricula to meet needs of learners, especially those who experience difficulty with literacy; design, implement, and evaluate small-group and individual evidence-based literacy instruction for learners; collaborate with teachers to implement effective literacy practices.

2.1: Candidates use foundational knowledge to design, select, critique, adapt, and evaluate evidence-based literacy curricula that meet the needs of all learners.

2.2: Candidates design, select, adapt, teach, and evaluate evidence-based instructional approaches, using both informational and narrative texts, to meet the literacy needs of whole class and groups of students in the academic disciplines and other subject areas, and when learning to read, write, listen, speak, view, or visually represent.

2.3: Candidates select, adapt, teach, and evaluate evidence-based, supplemental, and intervention approaches and programs; such instruction is explicit, intense, and provides adequate scaffolding to meet the literacy needs of individual and small groups of students, especially those who experience difficulty with reading and writing.

2.4: Candidates collaborate with and coach school-based educators in developing, implementing, and evaluating literacy instructional practices and curriculum.

STANDARD 3: Assessment and Evaluation: Candidates understand, select, and use valid, reliable, fair, and appropriate assessment tools to screen, diagnose, and measure student literacy achievement; inform instruction and evaluate interventions; assist teachers in their understanding and use of assessment results; advocate for appropriate literacy practices to relevant stakeholders.

3.1: Candidates understand the purposes, attributes, formats, strengths/limitations (including validity, reliability, inherent language, dialect, cultural bias), and influences of various types of tools in a comprehensive literacy and language assessment system and apply that knowledge to using assessment tools.

3.2: Candidates collaborate with colleagues to administer, interpret, and use data for decision making about student assessment, instruction, intervention, and evaluation for individual and groups of students.

3.3: Candidates participate in and lead professional learning experiences to assist teachers in selecting, administering, analyzing, interpreting assessments, and using results for instructional decision making in classrooms and schools.

3.4: Candidates, using both written and oral communication, explain assessment results and advocate for appropriate literacy and language practices to a variety of stakeholders, including students, administrators, teachers, other educators, and parents/guardians.

STANDARD 4: Diversity and Equity: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of research, relevant theories, pedagogies, and essential concepts of diversity and equity; demonstrate an understanding of themselves and others as cultural beings; create classrooms and schools that are inclusive and affirming; advocate for equity at school, district, and community levels.

4.1: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of foundational theories about diverse learners, equity, and culturally responsive instruction.

4.2: Candidates demonstrate understanding of themselves and others as cultural beings through their pedagogy and interactions with individuals both within and outside of the school community.

4.3: Candidates create and advocate for inclusive and affirming classroom and school environments by designing and implementing instruction that is culturally responsive and acknowledges and values the diversity in their school and in society.

4.4: Candidates advocate for equity at school, district, and community levels.

STANDARD 5: Learners and the Literacy Environment Candidates meet the developmental needs of all learners and collaborate with school personnel to use a variety of print and digital materials to engage and motivate all learners; integrate digital technologies in appropriate, safe, and effective ways; foster a positive climate that supports a literacy-rich learning environment.

5.1: Candidates, in consultation with families and colleagues, meet the developmental needs of all learners (e.g., English learners, those with difficulties learning to read, the gifted), taking into consideration physical, social, emotional, cultural, and intellectual factors.

5.2: Candidates collaborate with school personnel and provide opportunities for student choice and engagement with a variety of print and digital materials to engage and motivate all learners.

5.3: Candidates integrate digital technologies into their literacy instruction in appropriate, safe, and effective ways and assist colleagues in these efforts.

5.4: Candidates facilitate efforts to foster a positive climate that supports the physical and social literacy-rich learning environment, including knowledge of routines, grouping structures, and social interactions.

STANDARD 6: Professional Learning and Leadership: Candidates demonstrate the ability to be reflective literacy professionals, who apply their knowledge of adult learning to work collaboratively with colleagues; demonstrate their leadership and facilitation skills; advocate on behalf of teachers, students, families, and communities.

6.1: Candidates demonstrate the ability to reflect on their professional practices, belong to professional organizations, and are critical consumers of research, policy, and practice.

6.2: Candidates use their knowledge of adult learning to engage in collaborative decision making with colleagues to design, align, and assess instructional practices and interventions within and across classrooms.

6.3: Candidates develop, refine, and demonstrate leadership and facilitation skills when working with individuals and groups.

6.4: Candidates consult with and advocate on behalf of teachers, students, families, and communities for effective literacy practices and policies.

2. How the data is collected on the Program SLOs (rubrics, portfolios, etc.)

Each assessment in each course is aligned to the above standards. These assessments each have a corresponding rubric to determine level of proficiency with meeting the corresponding standard. Additionally, student grades and qualitative responses to mid-semester reflections and end of course reflections are drawn on to continue to refine and improve practice. Data informs refinement of course experiences and readings. Because the courses are highly dialogic in

nature, close observation and analysis of in-class discussions and reading journal responses inform course design.

Program data are collected at several junctures, according to CAEP and ILA. The assessments that will be used for reporting and analysis in the next round of data reporting include:

1	Licensure assessment, or other content-based assessment	Foundations Essay	EDRE 674	Early program
2	Assessment of Content Knowledge	Portfolio	EDRE 698	End of program
3	Assessment of Candidate ability to plan instruction	Analysis of Instructional Practice	EDRE 675	Early program
4	Assessment of internship, practicum, or other clinical experience	Teaching Video & Reflection Project	EDRE 680	Mid-program
5	Assessment of candidate effect on student learning	Instructional Case Study	EDRE 681	Mid-Program
6	Assessment that addresses ILA standards	Colleague Coaching Analysis	EDRE 696	Capstone/ End of program
7	Assessment that addresses ILA standards	Community Language Practices Ethnographic Analysis	EDRE 671	Early Program
8	Assessment that addresses ILA standards	Engaging Striving Readers	EDRE 678	Mid-program

3. The data collected on the Program SLOs during the previous academic year

Data collected from each course, as listed in the above eight assessments inform the below evaluation. Additionally, student grades and qualitative responses to mid-semester reflections and end of course reflections are drawn on to continue to refine and improve practice.

4. An evaluation of the data collected on the Program SLOs during the previous academic year

Use of Assessment Results to Improve Program:
It is important to note that these overarching findings in the assessment data are triangulated with observations of students' performance and discussion in class, looking closely at student work, as well as student reflections and feedback (both informal and through course evaluations).

Overall, data indicate that candidates are developing proficiencies to meet the standards (ILA, 2017). Because each of the candidates is a practicing teacher, opportunities to try out

the ideas examined in the courses in real time, is a powerful learning tool.   This field-based approach to the entire program, and the opportunity to continually apply theory and practice is essential. Each course has *at least* one or more field-based assessments. As we have moved forward, additional opportunities to engage in video practicum experiences (instructional, coaching, and leadership) continues to deepen their ability to reflect on practice and these experiences.

The shift of the summer practicum to an online format in the summer of 2020 actually created additional opportunities for data collection. We were able to collect a series of video data and corresponding analysis by candidates related to Standard 2 (Curriculum & Instruction)& 3 (Assessment). Candidates ability to directly apply the practicum knowledge to students in their community has also supported their work in applying these ideas in the following course (EDRE 681). This has been unexpected, but continues to emerge. In the Fall of 2022, candidates clearly had deeper understandings of how to bring the ideas learned over the summer when working one on one with students into their classrooms in the fall. Video data as well as the literate environments designed and analyzed by candidates provided evidence of the effectiveness.

5. Current and Future plans to improve student learning

Making the transition to the student learning outcomes related to the 2017 Standards put forth by the International Literacy Association has required ongoing shifts in course content:

Standard 1: The role of writing and the writing process has been called out separately through the adoption of the new standards, and upon reflecting with the group who just completed their capstone project, it was clear that this can be made more explicit in the course work. Adjustments to readings for EDRE 674 (Foundational Knowledge), EDRE 679 (Content Literacy), EDRE 675 (Reading and Cognition) EDRE 680 (Assessment and Instruction I), and EDRE 681 (Assessment and Instruction II). We have incorporated readings related to emergent writing, writing process and analyzing written work. Because the courses and their content spiral and are interrelated, opportunities for candidates to build knowledge and continually analyze student work are foregrounded.

With the increased attention nationally and within the state (Alaska Reads Act) to the "Science of Reading," candidates also review and analyze a series of research and theoretical articles throughout the above courses to examine the merit of the initiatives as well as the research base (or lack of) behind these approaches.

A focus on the evolution of culturally relevant, responsive, sustaining and revitalizing pedagogies plays a stronger role in the course design. We recognize that these sociocultural and critical theories need to be more deeply understood in order to support students' literacy development, so an explicit focus on tying classroom practice to these theoretical and research-based models has been made more clear.

Standard 2: In light of both the national and state level conversations related to what constitutes "evidence-based" reading and writing instruction, I adjusted the foundational theory assignment in EDRE 674 to create space for candidates to critically analyze research related to a topic of their choice (that they see as urgent for the students they work with). They are asked to pull research from a variety of sources and consider the commonalities and contrasts in these bodies of research. We have continued to support candidates to be critical consumers of research and analyze the sources and validity of the studies they come across. Additionally, a focus on media literacy has been necessary for candidates to continue to critically analyze reporting on instruction.

Standard 3: An area for growth in the program is in relation to Standard 3.1 (*Candidates understand the purposes, attributes, formats, strengths/limitations (including validity, reliability, inherent language, dialect, cultural bias), and influences of various types of tools in a comprehensive literacy and language assessment system and apply that knowledge to using assessment tools.*) This is a standard that is introduced in the Ethnography Practicum (EDRE 671), and, beginning in the 2021-22 school year, has been a stronger focus. We have built in analysis of assessment practices in both EDRE 680 and 681.

Standard 4: The diversity and equity standard has taken on additional specificity in the 2017 standards, and, in relation to 4.3 and 4.4, candidates were asked to consider these in relation to their final projects for their capstone course (EDRE 696). The focus on "designing and implementing instruction that is culturally responsive and acknowledges and values the diversity in their school and in society" (ILA, 2017) has been an area of focus throughout the program. Because candidates are working with students in their communities for EDRE 680, this focus has been continually strengthened in the past three summers, and we will continue to examine ways in which depth of knowledge of students' identities emerges in different courses. Because EDRE 675 is a prerequisite for EDRE 680, we have gone through and strengthened areas of focus on student observation for two of the five video analyses in that course to better prepare candidates with tools for close observation of students' assets. Additionally, as noted above, the alignment with TESOL standards has also played a role in designing curriculum in the program to support both culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Standard 5: There is a stronger focus on collaboration with families and communities than there was in the 2010 IRA standard, and this will continue to be an area of improvement. Candidates continue to incorporate "home letters" to the summer practicum, and are asked to collaborate with parents in each of the instruction and assessment courses as they both do initial data collection on students' interests and goals, and also as they continue to communicate strengths and areas of growth from school to home.

The role of technology has also been folded into this standard, where in previous years technology was a separate standard. Because purposeful use of technology is the goal, candidates examine how they use technology specifically to support students' reading and writing processes. The literate environment analysis in EDRE 681 has been refined to incorporate this.

Standard 6: Candidates are developing familiarity with adult learning theories and systems thinking, with a culmination of these ideas in the capstone course, EDRE 696. Their work with peer coaching in previous courses, as well as ongoing discussions in class with corresponding

norms, supports their participation and analysis of effectiveness in professional learning communities throughout the program.

Standard 7 (not measured in the final portfolio, but a core component of the program design) has been added to increase the role of practicum experiences. As stated in previous reports, an increased emphasis on data collection and analysis during the practicum, as well as peer feedback on instruction has been emphasized during the summer practicum and extended through the rest of the coursework that follows.

Growth in students' capacity to provide one another with effective feedback on instructional practices, as well as their capacity to ground their instructional decisions in student data has been apparent. Beginning early in the program, with EDRE 675 and EDRE 679, candidates are asked to participate in video observations and analysis of instructional design. When they enter EDRE 680, the summer practicum, this becomes the central focus, while layering on the design of assessments. Opportunities to build on the practicum, in EDRE 681 and EDRE 696 continue to be refined based on the needs of each cohort.

Because we do not observe candidates in their communities in this program, these virtual observations are essential.

Additional Analyses of Candidates Learning
In partnership with colleagues at UAA, we have begun a systematic analysis of candidates' instructional practice and capacity for inquiry and reflection. The data sources for this analysis include: instructional videos from EDRE 675, 680 and 681; written analyses of instruction; reading journal entries; and final data talks from each of these three courses.

Initial findings indicate that there have been shifts in candidates' perceptions of selves and curriculum and assessment. An overarching pattern of increasing teacher agency has been noted. Additionally, data indicates that candidates are: 1) revaluing themselves as teachers, 2) that evolution of practice is not linear, but that over time there are shifts; 3) how teachers perceive their students shifts to a more strengths-based vision; 4) candidates are increasingly aware of limitations of curricular materials; 4) there is an inherent tension between state and district-mandated initiatives and what teachers see in their students' learning and engagement.

This analysis is ongoing and we will continue to monitor and adjust coursework in relation to the ILA standards as these findings emerge.