

Eight-Year Program Review IBHE Report Summary**Reporting Institution: Eastern Illinois University****Program Reviewed: MEd Curriculum & Instruction****Date: 9/15/2026****Contact Person: Dr. Stephen Lucas – School of Education Chair
Dr. Daniel Carter – MEd C&I Coordinator****Telephone: 217-581-5728****E-mail: selucas@eiu.edu – djcarter@eiu.edu****5. OVERVIEW**

Consistent with its mission and those of EIU and its Graduate School, the MEd Curriculum & Instruction program prepares its graduates for continued excellence within K-12 institutions and leadership in various school-based settings. The Graduate Program in Teaching, Learning, and Foundations advances scholarly preparation by providing quality teaching and promoting excellence in research/creative activity for graduate students to exemplify best teaching practices. The graduate curriculum encompasses comprehensive content knowledge and promotes the use of critical thinking and problem solving to cultivate teacher-researchers who are empowered to serve as leaders in the profession. Faculty members challenge students to bridge the gap between theory and practice as they develop the skills required for ethical and effective collaboration and communication within the local school community and a culturally diverse, technologically advanced global environment. Faculty are dedicated, qualified and possess terminal degrees and experience appropriate to their fields of expertise.

The program allows for three areas of emphasis: Curriculum Development, Reading, and English as a Second Language. Within the areas of reading and ESL, graduates can earn subsequent endorsements to strengthen licensure credentials and qualify for specific school-based roles. The program is offered entirely online, and courses are instructed in an asynchronous format. This delivery design and program format is in consideration of practicing teachers that constitute the vast majority of the program's enrollment. The program of study requires 36 semester hours: 9 hours in the area of foundations, 9 hours in the area of research, and 18 hours in one's choice of emphasis (CD, Reading, or ESL).

The program has excellent student outcomes on program completion and subsequent endorsement test success. While graduates can file subsequent endorsement requests directly with the state, over sixty have completed the request through EIU, noting a number of those additional credentials serviced by the program. The graduate program achieved First Choice designation at EIU during the review period. Students have received various recognitions from

Williams Travel Awards, to Hamand Scholar Recognition (EIU's highest graduate award), to Research/Creative Activity awards as well as College and University Thesis of Excellence Awards.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Description and assessment of any major changes in the program:

Enrollment in nationwide teacher preparation programs has faced a long-term downward trajectory over the last decade and a half. Regionally in Illinois, thousands of positions still face localized vacancies or rely on short-term provisional approvals. With consideration for the teacher shortage, there are fewer seeking advanced degrees. However, about 56% of teachers will eventually seek a master's degree. There has also been a vast increase in "for-profit" institutions, with massive marketing efforts, offering financial incentives, accelerated pacing, and minimal credit requirements within graduate level programs. While acknowledged as not holding true to the same level of rigor as traditional programs offered through state universities, these programs have appeal to some educators, especially for those simply seeking advancement across pay lanes within their school employment contracts. This new level of competition amidst a time of teacher shortage presents challenges with enrollment numbers.

Specific to the area of reading, with the state approval of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, faculty have reviewed and verified alignment of all reading endorsement courses. These courses adhere to the expectations set in the literacy plan, emphasizing the science of reading. This includes aspects of the seven components of literacy, developmental and differentiated guidance, evidence-based standards, and support within implementation. The reading teacher subsequent endorsement option continues to be a point of pride and is highly sought by those students teaching in the primary grades.

b. Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement:

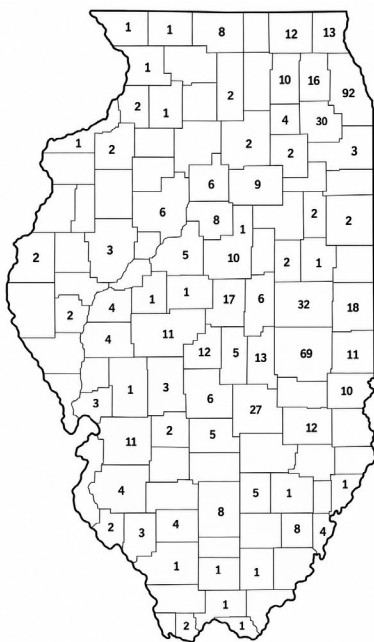
The program's goals and objectives are to prepare practicing teachers to:

- 1) Obtain a depth of content knowledge in the discipline, apply content knowledge to practice, provide evidence of differentiation, and provide evidence of inquiry-based instruction.
- 2) Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills and evaluate situations and develop a course of action.
- 3) Demonstrate appropriate oral and written communication skills, including appropriate use of technology.
- 4) Advance their scholarship through research by understanding the role of research and applying research to their practice.
- 5) Demonstrate an adherence to ethics and professional responsibility (e.g. engaging in reflective practice, collaborating with other professionals, promoting the success of all clienteles, respecting professional environments through honesty, integrity, and professionalism).

These goals are assessed at the entry, midpoint, and completion stages of the program. These assessments are typically conducted as students are enrolled in each of the three research courses (Introduction to Research, Research Methods, and Applied Research or Thesis). Faculty conducting these assessments are Unit A tenured faculty with years of experience and with robust professional research achievements in various areas of expertise.

This process reinforces best teaching practices and encourages graduate students from a research and practitioner perspective. The assessment process provides students with ways to formalize their teaching practice and acknowledges growth areas impacted by the program. Unlike some other measures of teacher effectiveness, this process does not depend upon the availability of standardized assessment scores. This then allows students to focus on the specific objectives they want to achieve for their own professional development. Emphasis is placed on how the students demonstrate their impact across these professional standards of expectation. This process also emphasizes that teacher dispositions are observable professional behaviors, attitudes, and values that support effective teaching and research. This includes interaction with students both instructionally and within research methods, professional ethics and practices, effective communication, and sensitivity to diversity and equity.

Within the review period, 100% of graduates have met or exceeded expectations in these five major goal areas. This assessment process continues to be reviewed by the department's Graduate Committee. Alumni of the program have returned to complete additional subsequent endorsements, noting satisfaction with the degree program itself. While the majority of enrollment constitutes EIU undergraduate graduates (which reflects the excellence of the undergraduate program) and those teachers holding bachelor's degrees in the local ROE areas, enrollment reflects populations from across the state. During this review period, over 660 unique C&I students have graduated representing residencies in 76 of Illinois' 102 counties. The map below evidences the service provided across the state and the impact throughout these various districts.



c. Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes:

A significant change in the program came in the form of instructional delivery and course format. In order to provide the program to a broader geographical range and a larger potential pool of participants, the program was redesigned to be completely online. This change in format resulted in an immediate increase in enrollment. In addition, serving districts and enrolling students across the entire state has helped promote the university and the program overall. All faculty participated in OCDi training and have designed asynchronous instruction with best practices true to the mission and tradition of the program.

Another change came in the alignment of program coursework with Illinois State Board of Education requirements in the areas of reading and ESL endorsements. Courses in those two areas of emphasis now align with state coursework and practicum expectations. This streamlined the endorsement process and often appeals more to graduates for pace and timing. Students can now complete the endorsement coursework within the context of the program graduation requirements. The program allows for endorsement-only certification, but most graduates complete the full degree program because of this alignment. This sequence of endorsement aligned courses is designed to allow completion within three semesters.

Due partly to faculty attrition, a conscientious effort has been made to secure enrollment numbers maximizing the program's carrying capacity while adhering to the highest standards of student accountability and support of achievement that is EIU's reputation. While a large increase in enrollment occurred immediately as the shift to the online format was made, the trend following was a decrease due to the combination of the teacher shortage, Covid issues, and increased for-profit institutional presence. Recently, that enrollment number has steadied and leveled to reflect a reasonable student-teacher ratio.

d. Description of actions to be taken because of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes:

With consideration of the successful endorsement track and sequence for reading teacher emphasis, a marketing effort is in effect to offer a similar track for English as a Second Language endorsement. These courses remain built within the master's program overall, however if individuals are solely seeking the endorsement, this sequence will offer structure and a set path of progression.

Continued partnership with ROE and local district administration and personnel will be emphasized as these partnerships and communication directly influence enrollment numbers.

VPAA Decision:

- ☒ Program in good standing
- ☐ Program flagged for priority review
- ☐ Program enrollment suspended

VPAA Explanation:

Curriculum and Instruction M.S.Ed. 130301

The summary above describes an M.S.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction program that has, since its inception as a fully online program in Fall 2018, enabled over 660 students to earn this credential. In serving a much broader contingent of students throughout Illinois, and in aligning with Illinois State Board of Education curricular requirements, the M.S.Ed. program has remained an attractive and widely accessible program with a streamlined three-semester completion window. The program plans to strengthen the pathway for the English as a Second Language endorsement and to continue strengthening its longstanding partnerships with Regional Offices of Education.