

PREPARING TEACHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA'S COLLEGE AT WISE

LA PREPARACIÓN DE LOS MAESTROS EN LA UNIVERSIDAD DE VIRGINIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to describe how teacher education candidates at The University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVa-Wise) in the United States are prepared and become eligible for professional teaching licenses in grades 6-12 in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The authors first offer a brief overview of the College and the collaborative efforts between the UVa-Wise Department of Education and other academic disciplines. The authors identify specific program endorsement areas and grades levels in which UVa-Wise TEP candidates pursue licensure. Respective curricula in endorsement areas that candidates are required to complete to become eligible for their professional licenses in their respective teaching endorsement areas are summarized. Topics of discussion include: 1.) Requirements that candidates must meet for admission into the UVa-Wise teacher education program; 2.) the professional dispositions expectations for admission into and continuation in the UVa-Wise teacher education program; and 3.) the admission requirements to the student teaching internship, which is required of all program completers. Additionally, the roles of the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Board of Education in the teaching endorsement approval process for all teacher education programs in Virginia are discussed. Finally, the process of how teacher education programs can become recognized by a national accrediting organization (more specifically, the Teacher Education Accreditation Council) is briefly examined.

Keywords: UVa-Wise, teacher preparation in Virginia, teaching endorsement areas, teacher program approval, teacher program accreditation, teacher preparation curriculum

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es describir la formación de los estudiantes de Formación del Profesorado en la Universidad de Virginia de Estados Unidos y cómo llegan a ser docentes para la Enseñanza Primaria (Grados 6-12) en el Estado de Virginia. Los autores presentan, en primer lugar, una breve visión general del College y los esfuerzos colaborativos entre el Departamento de Educación de UVA-Wise y otras disciplinas académicas. Los autores identifican las áreas específicas de apoyo a los programas y las etapas y grados de los candidatos a la Formación del Profesorado en UVA-Wise para licenciarse. Asimismo, se resumen los respectivos planes de estudio que deben completar los estudiantes para adquirir la licencia profesional en sus correspondientes áreas. Los temas de la presente exposición incluyen: 1. Requisitos que los candidatos necesitan para ser admitidos en el programa de

Formación del Profesorado en UVA-Wise; 2. Las expectativas de los profesionales en cuanto a su admisión y continuación en el mencionado programa; y 3. Los requisitos de admisión al periodo de prácticas, el cual es requerido para completar el programa. Se expone además, el papel que tiene el Departamento de Educación de Virginia y el Consejo de Educación para la aprobación de los programas dirigidos a la Formación de Profesores en Virginia. Finalmente, ha sido brevemente examinado, el reconocimiento otorgado a los programas de formación de profesores por parte de una organización nacional de acreditación (en concreto, el Consejo de Acreditación de Educación de Profesores).

Palabras claves: UVA-Wise, Formación de profesores en Virginia, áreas de enseñanza, aprobación de programas de profesores, acreditación de programas de profesores, currículum de la Formación del Profesorado.

1. Introduction

The University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVa-Wise), formerly Clinch Valley College of the University of Virginia, is the only four-year, state-supported college in far southwestern Virginia and the only branch of the University of Virginia. Established in 1954 as a college of the University of Virginia, the College is guided by the values of citizenship and altruism. The mission of the College is to guide students to become knowledgeable, caring, and life-long learners who enrich the lives of their students and their communities. The mission of the Teacher Education Program (TEP) at UVa-Wise is to prepare professional educators to be transformative leaders in their classrooms by caring for, teaching, and inspiring their students to excel as learners and citizens. The guiding philosophy of the Department of Education promotes cohesion within the TEP, promotes a shared vision with the College, and is a base from which "continuous improvement, renewal, and change can occur" (Dottin, 2001, p. 3). The program's philosophy is consistent with and supported by the mission of the College.

The major role of the UVa-Wise Department of Education is to coordinate the TEP with other academic departments that provide the general education core requirements and specific content area coursework to TEP candidates. The Department of Education includes a Liberal Arts and Sciences major, which was established in collaboration with the other academic departments at the college. Within the Liberal Arts and Sciences major, students may pursue teacher licensure in Elementary Education (Pre-K-6), Special Education (K-12), or Health and Physical Education (K-12). The major requires pre-service elementary or special education teachers to complete courses in a general education core, a specific area of concentration (from language and literature, mathematics, history and social science, or natural science), and in relevant professional education coursework. The major also requires health and physical education candidates to complete coursework in the college's general education core, their major requirements for health and physical education, and coursework in either a concentration leading to teacher licensure or coursework in the sports management concentration. Candidates pursuing an initial teaching endorsement in grades 6-12 are required to major in the content area in which they intend to teach and complete eighteen hours of professional education coursework within the Department of Education plus complete a twelve credit hour (one semester) of a student teaching internship in a local public school district. Most education courses also have a field experience component prior to the

internship semester, which requires students to spend a specified minimum number of hours in the public schools.

Faculty from all departments of the College work together closely to provide the curriculum to meet the professional education competencies required by the Virginia Department of Education (Virginia Department of Education, 2010a), as well as to strengthen the ability of teacher candidates to become educators with mastery of the content of Virginia's Standards of Learning (Virginia Department of Education, 2010b). Candidates who are recommended for initial licensure in one of the endorsement programs in grades K-12 or in grades 6-12 (middle/secondary education) in an academic discipline are required to complete their respective major requirements (as determined by the respective departments) and professional education courses plus their student teaching internship.

The TEP identifies candidates with the potential for becoming effective teachers, develops and provides programs for candidates that will enable prospective teachers to acquire the academic and pedagogical knowledge and skills required for successful teaching and continued professional growth, and monitors and assesses the progress of prospective teachers as they complete program requirements.

Through candidates' respective curricula, candidates are expected to demonstrate the following competencies:

- 1) A thorough background of academic studies in the separate and integrated disciplines that comprise the liberal arts core curriculum;
- 2) A high level of competence in the content of the academic area of specialization in which a teaching endorsement is sought;
- 3) The ability to apply concepts from the social and behavioral sciences that provide a framework for understanding and interpreting educational problems;
- 4) A thorough understanding of human growth and development and the principles of teaching and learning;
- 5) The ability to design, implement, and reflectively evaluate effective curricula and instruction (including technology), which is based on current research pedagogy;
- 6) The quality and quantity of experiences with children or adolescents that are required to develop a high level of sensitivity to the varying needs and characteristics of learners at different levels of development and multicultural backgrounds;
- 7) The knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to teach the Virginia Standards of Learning as prescribed by the State Board of Education effectively and successfully and;
- 8) The cognitive, affective, and leadership skills that will sustain continuous personal and professional growth in an intellectually, emotionally, and physically demanding human service occupation.

2. Program Endorsement Areas

Currently, the UVA-Wise TEP prepares undergraduates to become endorsed by the Virginia Department of Education in the following teaching licensure areas:

<u>Endorsements**</u>	<u>Grade Levels</u>
Elementary Education	Pre-K-6
Special Education-General Curriculum	K-12
Health and Physical Education	Pre-K-12
Foreign Language (French, Spanish)	Pre-K-12
Library Media	Pre-K-12
Music Education - Instrumental	Pre-K-12
Music Education - Vocal/Choral	Pre-K-12
English	6-12
History and Social Science	6-12
Mathematics	6-12
Mathematics - Algebra I (add-on endorsement)	6-12
Science	6-12
Biology	6-12
Chemistry	6-12
Earth Science	6-12
Driver Education (add-on endorsement)	6-12
Career and Technical Education:	6-12

Business and Information Technology

**Reflects titles of Teaching Endorsement Areas Approved by the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Board of Education

3. General Education/Liberal Arts Core

A liberal arts education is viewed increasingly as an indispensably valuable foundation for undergraduates and not at odds at all with the professional fields of study (Schneider, 2004). More specifically, a liberal arts education is valuable because it "...gives students the strong sense of self and habits of mind and action to become leaders" (Durden, 2001, p. B20); in fact, it has been said that "a liberal arts education equals leadership" (p. B20). A liberal arts education at UVA-Wise prepares candidates to be informed and caring citizens, life-long learners, and transformational leaders. The College's liberal arts curriculum promotes the thoughtful development of the ideas, insights, values, competencies, and behavior of an educated person through a thorough background of academic studies in the separate and integrated disciplines that comprise the liberal arts core curriculum.

4. Academic Discipline

Effective teachers must know their content (including knowledge of Virginia's relevant grade-level specific Standards of Learning) in order to facilitate optimal learning for all students.

In keeping with VDOE licensure requirements, which include the successful completion of a content area examination/ assessment in the student's initial endorsement area (Praxis II Speciality Area Assessment), the UVa-Wise TEP requires that students successfully complete all assessments before the student internship. However, while knowledge of the subject matter that one will teach is a necessary condition to be an effective teacher, it is not a sufficient condition alone for excellence in teaching and learning (Murray & Porter, 1996; Shulman, 1987). Candidates preparing to teach in the middle (grades 6-8) and secondary schools (grades 9-12) must be content specialists who demonstrate both depth and breadth of understanding of the content that they are preparing to teach; middle school and secondary candidates must also have an understanding of the modes of inquiry and epistemological frameworks of their disciplines. To this end, all candidates seeking a teaching endorsement in a content area for grades 6-12 must complete coursework in the major discipline in which they intend to teach.

5. Professional Studies and Field Experiences

Our graduates and program completers are guided throughout their professional education coursework and field experiences to develop the cognitive, affective, and leadership skills that will sustain continuous personal and professional growth in an intellectually, emotionally, and physically demanding human service occupation. The theoretical knowledge bases that support the outcomes of the Teacher Education Program at UVa-Wise are informed by the theories of social and cognitive constructivism (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Schwandt, 1994; Vygotsky, 1986). Plato once said that we should never discourage anyone from making progress, no matter how slow. Academic progress is made when teachers guide students to make connections between what is known and what is to be learned. Through our *Teachers as Transformative Leaders* conceptual framework, teacher candidates are empowered with the knowledge and experiences to provide the learning environment in which students are encouraged and guided to make meaningful and purposeful connections in and out of the classroom. Effective teachers not only know their content (embedded in the grade-level content-specific SOLs), but also know where their students are developmentally (Flavell, 1985), and it is through informed and reflective pedagogy (Costa, 2000; Dewey, 1933; Jadallah, 1996; Schon, 1983) that our candidates can meet the learning needs of all of their students (Haberman, 1991; Sigel, 1990).

Theoretical knowledge and experience are required to develop a high level of sensitivity to the varying needs and characteristics of learners at different levels of development and from multicultural backgrounds. Because teachers face increasingly a more diverse classroom population, emphasis must be placed on the importance of teachers' sensitivity to and reflection on their students' cultural, socioeconomic, linguistic, emotional, and psychological backgrounds (Buckley, 2000), especially as these issues relate to teaching and learning in general and teacher education in particular (Banks, 2001).

To prepare teachers to remain responsible professionally throughout their careers, our candidates must develop, demonstrate, and then continue their competence in several areas. For example, candidates must be able to evaluate critically and integrate appropriately a variety of instructional technologies into their teaching (Brooks & Kopp, 1990; Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999). Candidates must also develop competence in communicating with their students and their students' parents, as well as their colleagues, administrators, and the general public. Finally, teachers must model for their students what they want their students to become: leaders through service to others, citizens through reflective action, and life-long learners through a commitment to excellence.

Specifically, candidates seeking an endorsement in grades 6-12 are required to complete the following professional education courses:

*EDU 2520: Foundations and Development of American Education** (2 credit hours)
*EDU 3580: Reading in the Content Areas, Grades 6-12** (3 credit hours)
*EDU 3690: Exceptional Children in the Regular Classroom** (3 credit hours)
EDU 4080: Classroom Management and Discipline (3 credit hours)
EDU 4091: Foundations of Assessment (1 credit hour)
*EDU 4820: Design and Development of Instruction in Grades 6-12*** (3 credit hours)
PSY 4740: Adolescent Psychology (3 credit hours)
EDU 4946: Teaching Internship: Middle and Secondary Grades, 6-12 (12 credit hours)

*Courses require 20-30 documented hours of observation in a middle or secondary school setting.

**Those TEP candidates seeking a license in mathematics are required to take *EDU 4820*, but those candidates seeking a license in the areas of business education, history and social sciences, the natural sciences, English, foreign language, or Health and PE are required instead to take one of the following respective methods courses: Business education candidates are required to take *EDU 4800: Methods of Teaching Business Subjects*; history and social sciences candidates are required to take *HIS 3020: Social Studies Teaching*; biology, chemistry, or earth science candidates are required to take *SCI 4400: Methods for the Secondary Science Teacher*; English candidates are required to take *ENG 3430/EDU 3590: Teaching Writing*; foreign language candidates are required to take *FRE 4150: Foreign Language Teaching* or *SPA 3820: Methodology of Teaching Spanish*; music candidates are required to take *MUS 4610: Secondary Music Methods Choral* or *MUS 4620: Secondary Music Methods Instrumental*; and Health and PE candidates are required to take *HED 4710: Methods of Teaching Health*.

6. UVa-Wise TEP Admission Requirements

Students planning to complete the teaching preparation program at UVa-Wise must be admitted to the College and Teacher Education Program (TEP), and admission to UVa-Wise does not guarantee admission to the Teacher Education Program. Students pursuing programs leading to an initial teacher license in grades 6-12 must complete the appropriate curriculum for teacher education, including the general education requirements, requirements for one of

the majors offered by the College, professional studies requirements, and the student teaching internship.

Students seeking a license to teach in the public schools in Virginia must apply for and be granted admission to the TEP by the Teacher Education Admissions Committee. After initiating the application process, students periodically contact the Director of Teacher Education to review the status of their candidacy. The Teacher Education Admissions Committee interviews those students who have been identified as eligible for admission. To be considered eligible, students must present evidence of the following to the Director of Teacher Education:

- a) Admission to The University of Virginia's College at Wise;
- b) Completion of at least 30 semester hours of academic credit from an accredited college or university;
- c) A cumulative grade point average of 2.5 (on a 0-4 scale) or better for all course work completed at UVa-Wise and an overall cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or better from all colleges and universities attended;
- d) Written recommendations from: a.) The chair of their major academic department at UVa-Wise and the department which offers an approved program of study appropriate for the teaching licensure being sought. A recommendation from the appropriate department is also required for students seeking licensures in additional teaching areas. b.) Four college instructors (including at least two members of the UVa-Wise faculty) who have observed and assessed the candidate's performance as a student;
- e) Completion of *EDU 2510: Foundations and Development of American Education* with a recorded grade of "C-" or better;
- f) Passing scores on the required assessments for program admission: the Virginia Communication and Language Assessment (VCLA) and the PRAXIS I (PPST) mathematics test.

Students who have taken the SAT before April 1, 1995, and achieved a score of 1,000 (450 minimum verbal and 510 minimum math) or students who have taken the SAT after April 1, 1995, and achieved a score of 1,100 (530 minimum verbal and 530 minimum math) are not required to take the PRAXIS I math or the VCLA for program admission. However, those meeting the assessment requirement for program admission with substitute SAT or ACT scores must take the VCLA to meet admission requirements to the Teaching Internship and for licensure application. Students with identified disabilities, who may need additional time to achieve passing scores on the PRAXIS I math and the VCLA, are eligible to apply for probationary admission to the Teacher Education Program. All students must be fully admitted to the Teacher Education Program to be eligible to enroll in the Student Teaching Internship.

The purpose of the Teacher Education Admissions Committee is to assure that students who are admitted to and remain in the Teacher Education Program possess the personal, social, and intellectual characteristics necessary to complete successfully their academic and professional studies and to become effective teachers. The Teacher Education Admissions Committee then recommends, defers or denies admission to the Teacher Education Program. If the Teacher Education Admissions Committee determines that a

candidate exhibits any deficiencies with regard to the above criteria, the committee may prescribe specific conditions that must be met before full admission is granted. Students who have been denied full admission to the TEP cannot take classes that require TEP admission nor enroll in the teaching internship. After receiving full admission to the Teacher Education Program, each student's academic progress, personal conduct, and professional development are monitored.

7. Professional Dispositions Expectations for Candidates

Candidates enrolled in the TEP are considering careers in public education, and, consequently, all teaching faculty are charged with the responsibility of evaluating not only the academic achievement of these students but also their "professional dispositions" for teaching. These dispositions are often defined as patterns of behavior and habitual tendencies that impact students, colleagues, and the school environment in general. Specifically, these teacher behaviors have been shown to directly affect student learning, motivation, and development.

Of particular concern to the Department of Education are students who exhibit such problematic behaviors as excessive absences, excessive tardiness, lack of preparation for class, lack of concern for completing assignments or for completing assignments on time, lack of tolerance for others and others' ideas, or lack of respect for diversity. A demonstration of any of the negative dispositions described above by students seeking to be admitted to or already admitted to the Teacher Education Program are taken into account during the application process and during the duration of the student's enrollment in the Program.

To document such negative dispositions, teaching faculty sends a Letter of Concern to the Director of Teacher Education documenting the behavior(s) that, in the professional judgment of the instructor, need(s) improvement. This Letter of Concern is placed in the student's application or member file for the Teacher Education Program. The Director will send a copy of the Letter of Concern to the student and advise the student of the risk of denial of admission to or, if already admitted, withdrawal from the Teacher Education Program if the student does not demonstrate improvement in the specified disposition(s). A total of three letters from two or more instructors constitutes a pattern of such behaviors and provide the basis for denial of admittance or continued enrollment in the Teacher Education Program. Additionally, students will be rated in all professional courses regarding the degree to which they meet these specific dispositions for teaching.

8. Admission to the Student Teaching Internship

Students will be permitted to enroll in the student teaching internship after meeting the following requirements:

- a) Full admission to UVa-Wise Teacher Education Program;
- b) A cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or better in all course work completed at UVa-Wise and an overall cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or better from all colleges and universities attended;

- c) Satisfactory completion of the professional education courses which are requirements for the prerequisite to the teaching internship.
- d) Satisfactory completion of at least six semester hours of course work on the main campus at UVa-Wise;
- e) Completion of all general education requirements prescribed by UVa-Wise;
- f) Receive the tuberculin test, which can be administered by the College's Health Services nurse or physician. The TB test must be completed less than one year prior to the date on which the internship experience will begin;
- g) Demonstration of interpersonal skills required to establish and maintain successful professional relationships with the pupils, parents, teachers and supervisors in the school community;
- h) Earn a grade of "C-" or better in all professional education courses; and
- i) Submit passing scores for the appropriate PRAXIS II Specialty Area Test.

Upon successful completion of the teaching internship and all other requirements for the degree and teaching license, students are advised to complete an application for a teaching license. The licensure application, when completed, must be returned to the Director of Teacher Education and submitted on behalf of the student from UVa-Wise.

9. Endorsement Area Approval

The UVa-Wise Teacher Education Program, including each teaching endorsement area offered, must be recommended for approval by the Commonwealth of Virginia State Department of Education (VDOE) with final approval granted by the Virginia Board of Education. An approved program is "a professional education program recognized as meeting state standards for the content and operation of such programs so graduates of the programs will be eligible for state licensure" (Virginia Department of Education, 2010c.) Endorsement areas recognized by the VDOE are outlined in these *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia* with specific required competencies cited for each endorsement.

To be approved by the Virginia Board of Education, the UVa-Wise Department of Education, assisted by other academic departments, submitted a detailed competency-program matrix for each requested endorsement area, as well as a detailed competency-professional matrix for each grade-level. The competency-program matrices matched required content knowledge and skills to the specific courses in the proposed program curriculums under review. Course syllabi were submitted with the matrices as evidence that course content did, in fact, teach essential subject area competencies required for endorsement and licensure by the Virginia Department of Education. The VA DOE reviewed evidence that proposed endorsement program areas had addressed content requirements and also met the minimum credit hours in specified content areas. The competency-professional matrix, which matched education coursework including field experience in teaching to required pedagogical knowledge and skills, was submitted for Prek-6 as well as PreK-12 and 6-12 grade levels.

UVa-Wise attempts to be responsive to the need for specific teaching endorsement areas by the local school systems; therefore, UVa-Wise reviews its programs periodically. UVa-Wise can discontinue programs or submit an application to the VDOE to add new

endorsement areas to its Approved Program on a yearly schedule as the need arises. Applications for new programs must be supported by matrices and syllabi, as well as evidence of partnering school divisions that will assist in providing field experiences for teacher candidates, with final approval granted by the Virginia Board of Education.

10. Program Accreditation Process

While all teaching endorsement areas must be approved by the Virginia Board of Education, all TEP's throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia are required to be accredited by either the Board of Education of Virginia or by a state recognized national accrediting agency. Until recently, the UVa-Wise TEP had been accredited by the VBOE only; however, in July 2010, became the UVa-Wise TEP became accredited by the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), an internationally, nationally and state recognized accrediting agency. TEAC is in its eleventh year and currently has 200 members, composed of 184 institutions and 16 professional associations, which include members in 21 states and programs in Puerto Rico and the United Arab Emirates.

For a TEP to be eligible for accreditation by TEAC, the respective TEP is required to apply for and be accepted as a member of TEAC, which then allows the TEP to begin the approximately two year process of accreditation with TEAC. To achieve TEAC program accreditation, TEP faculty must make a successful case that their program satisfies three quality principles: 1.) Evidence of candidate learning (QP 1); 2.) Evidence of faculty learning and inquiry (QP 2); and 3.) Evidence of institutional commitment and program capacity for quality (QP 3). Examples of evidence used to support QP 1 include teacher education candidates' cumulative grade point averages, grades in specific courses, scores on several state mandated standardized professional tests, internship ratings by college supervisors and cooperating teachers, as well as employer and alumni surveys. Evidence used to support QP 2 includes analyses of a system of quality control through which TEP faculty regularly inquires into ways to improve the program's quality, makes decisions based on the evidence, and monitors and enhances the program's capacity for quality. Evidence used to support QP 3 includes analyses of the TEP's system of quality control, which includes an internal audit trail of the relationships among all personnel, curriculum, TEP requirements, and supporting organizational structures at the College.

TEAC recommends that a program faculty plan to complete the accreditation process with them in approximately two years, beginning with TEP faculty attending a TEAC workshop on writing an *Inquiry Brief*. An *Inquiry Brief* is a research monograph where TEP faculty present evidence supporting their claims that their program satisfies TEAC's quality principles. Once a *Brief* is declared auditable, a final version of a *Brief* is submitted to a lead auditor and an audit team. Auditors then verify data within the *Brief* and formulate questions for the audit visit to be scheduled with TEP faculty on campus. Once a final audit report is written, TEAC sends the *Brief*, the audit report, and faculty response to a TEAC Accreditation Panel, who meets to make an accreditation recommendation and sends an Accreditation Report to the TEP faculty for comments. The Accreditation Committee of TEAC makes a final decision based upon the *Brief*, reviewers' comments, the audit report, and the case analysis.

11. Summary

We have shared how teacher education candidates at UVa-Wise become eligible for a teaching endorsement in the Commonwealth of Virginia and what roles the Virginia Department of Education and Virginia Board of Education play in that process. More specifically, we have identified the specific program endorsement areas and grades levels in which UVa-Wise TEP candidates may become eligible for licensure, and we have explained the respective curricula that candidates are required to complete to become eligible for their respective professional licenses. We have also discussed the requirements that candidates must meet for admission into the TEP, the professional dispositions expectations for admission into and continuation in our TEP, and the admission requirements to the student teaching internship. Finally, we discussed the endorsement area approval process for all teacher education programs in Virginia, as well as how teacher education programs are accredited by the Teacher Education Accrediting Council.

Maintaining an approved and accredited teacher education program is challenging and rewarding work. The TEP faculty at UVa-Wise is proud of our program and our graduates, but continues to look for ways to improve how we can better prepare the teachers of tomorrow to guide, care for, and inspire the generations of students that they will teach.

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