

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
College of Human Sciences and Education
Department of Teaching and Learning
Elementary Education and Reading Program Area
2000-2003

Handbook for the Reading Specialist Program

Document Prepared by Literacy Studies Faculty

For additional information see the Folio for the Reading Specialist Program submitted to IRA 2002

Or contact

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Reading Specialist Program

Program Overview

The Reading Specialist Program at Virginia Tech is a Master's Degree Program that prepares experienced teachers to earn endorsement in the Commonwealth of Virginia as Reading Specialists. This K-12 endorsement enables successful candidates to take positions in schools across the state. The program has received national recognition from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the International Reading Association. This program meets the high standards set by these professional organizations. Thus successful candidates must demonstrate exceptional knowledge and skills related to reading and writing instruction, as well as a broad understanding of literacy.

The current program consists of nine traditional three-hour master's level courses and one practicum. Successful candidates also complete a Teacher-As-Researcher Project. Two cohort groups are currently completing this program at the Northern Virginia Center at Falls Church. One group will graduate in May 2003 and the second in May 2004.

The new program is currently accepting applicants. The first cohort group for this program will begin courses in Fall 2003. The course of studies includes twelve courses, two of which are practica. As a culminating experience to the program, candidates must complete a Teacher-As-Researcher Project. Required courses and practica follow.

- EDCI 5784: Teacher as Inquirer in the Literacy Classroom
- EDCI 5264: Comprehending Processes and Reading in the Content Areas
- EDCI 5784: Language, Literacy, and Culture
- EDCI 5784: Assessment for K-12 Literacy Instruction
- EDCI 5104: Schooling in American Society
- EDCI 5404: Practicum in Clinical Reading
- EDCI 5784: Practicum in the Roles of the Reading Specialist
- EDCI 5115: Advanced Educational Psychology
- EDCI 5784: Literacy Research
- EDCI 5784: Literacies and Technology
- EDCI 4424: Adolescent Literature
- EDCI 4414: Teaching Composition: Methods and Materials.

Admission Criteria

To be admitted to the program, an applicant must submit transcripts indicating completion of an undergraduate degree with a grade point average of 3.00 or better in the last 60 hours. Each applicant must also submit three strong letters of recommendation—each specifying the applicant's developing skill as a literacy teacher. In addition, each applicant must submit a writing sample that verifies the applicant's advanced writing skills. Applicants must provide evidence of teacher certification and complete a successful interview with a program advisor.

Contact People

Interested applicants in the Northern Virginia area should contact Dr. Rosary Lalik (rlalik@vt.edu or 703.538.8493). On the Blacksburg campus of Virginia Tech, applicants should contact Dr. Mary Alice Barksdale (mab@vt.edu or 540.231.5558).

Collaboration with Personnel at Clinical Settings

University faculty who lead the reading specialist program work closely with advisors from school systems in the area. In particular faculty develop long term reciprocal relationships with personnel from school systems challenged by factors such as working with students whose primary language is other than English, students who face the challenges imposed by poverty, and students who are racially diverse (non-white students). So, for example, the program maintains a dialogue with literacy specialists and supervisors from Fairfax County, VA. Literacy faculty members communicate regularly with these advisors through face to face meetings, telephone conferences, and electronic correspondence. Advisors inform the faculty about the problems they face and the methods they use to address those problems, and they consider the recommendations that faculty propose. Advisors suggest directions for the Reading Specialist Program, send teachers to us for further professional learning, and inform us about the long-term development of our graduates. Qualified advisors are frequently invited to teach courses in the Reading Specialist Program.

In addition to these long-term relationships, faculty who lead the Reading Specialist Program respond to requests from school divisions around the state to provide the entire certification program for teachers in the division. For example, the Reading Specialist Program has been delivered at Franklin County, Wythe County, Buchanan County, Fairfax County, and Floyd County. Each of these programs has been adapted to meet the particular needs of the county, while maintaining the procedures, integrity, and criteria we have specified for the Reading Specialist Program at Virginia Tech. Throughout these programs faculty work closely with school advisors to shape, monitor, and assess the effects of the program on teacher and student learning and school improvement.

Besides these on-going associations with public schools, the Reading Specialist Program articulates with public schools through the culminating experience for the program—a Teacher-As-Researcher Project. To complete the project, each candidate designs and conducts an intervention to support student learning and develops a written report of the research. In addition, candidates hold a conference for local educators to describe and discuss their findings. These Teacher-As-Researcher Conferences have been held at school sites including Francis Scott Key Middle School in 2001 and Braddock Road Elementary School and Walnut Hill Staff Development Center in 2002. Another will be held at Braddock Road Elementary School on April 5, 2003.

Field Experiences and Clinical Practices

While there is no student teaching requirement for the Reading Specialist Program; candidates do complete a practicum in the current program, and they will complete two practica in the revised program that is currently being reviewed by department and college curriculum review committees.

The first practicum in the Reading Specialist Program, EDCI 5404: Practicum in Clinical Reading, is designed to provide candidates with guided opportunities to tutor a learner who is struggling for success with school literacy. To be eligible to take this practicum, candidates must have completed the four other reading courses listed as concentration courses on the program of study and maintained a minimum of a B+ average.

In addition to course completion, each candidate must have demonstrated competence at literacy assessment by preparing two assessment reports and a portfolio of assessment strategies. One assessment report must describe the assessment activities, analyses, interpretations, and instructional recommendations for a learner at the early stages of literacy development and a second for a learner at more advanced stages of literacy development. The portfolio must provide evidence of the candidate's knowledgeable use of at least ten different assessment techniques. These documents will be reviewed and approved by faculty in charge of the program before a candidate may begin the practicum. These procedures are currently followed in the existing program for preparation of Reading Specialists, and they will be maintained in the revised program.

In completing the practicum, candidates must work with a struggling literacy learner twice a week for at least 10 weeks. For each meeting, the candidate must develop a log of tutoring in which s/he describes the purposes of the session, what happened during the session, an analysis of the learner's strengths and needs, and suggestions for subsequent instruction. Candidates must bring their logs to class each week and discuss their work with the professor and their colleagues who will provide direction and critique.

To complete the practicum each candidate must write two reports about tutoring—one designed for other professionals and another designed for caretakers and family members. The logs and reports must be reviewed and approved by the professor in charge of the practicum in order for a candidate to successfully complete of the practicum. The review of documents will be conducted using the measures specified for this practicum in the Folio for the Reading Specialist Program prepared for the International Reading Association.

In addition to EDCI 5404, a second practicum is included in the revised program. This is EDCI 5784: Practicum on the Roles of the Reading Specialist. To be eligible for this practicum, the candidate must have completed all other courses in the program with a minimum of a B+ average. This practicum has been designed as a year-long experience during which candidates participate, with assistance and guidance from the professor in charge of the practicum and from a school-based reading specialist, in the major roles of the reading specialists. These include, for example: identifying and critiquing state and national reading programs, supporting para-professionals, supporting classroom teachers, supporting school-based learning communities, participating in professional organizations, communicating with various stakeholders, and informing policy makers. The professor of record will collaborate with the school-based reading specialist to review each candidate's work on each assigned task and to determine whether the candidate is successful. To support this evaluation process a rubric will be developed for each task. (See course syllabus for illustrative rubrics.)

Demonstration of Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions To Help All Students Learn

For the Reading Specialist Program, materials from the first practicum will be reviewed regularly by the professor of record for evidence of candidate and student learning. Relevant documents from the first practicum include the tutoring logs, two tutoring reports, and the candidate's weekly oral presentation of tutoring during the fifteen class sessions that take place to support the tutoring. (The specific experiences and measures used for this practicum are detailed in the folio for the Reading Specialist Program prepared for review by the International Reading Association.)

Materials associated with the second practicum will be reviewed for evidence of candidate learning and school improvement. Relevant activities and documents will be assessed using rubrics prepared for this course. (See syllabus for illustrative rubrics.) These rubrics will be used by the professor of record as well as the school-based reading specialist who is participating with the program. Assessment will focus on evidence of candidate and student learning and school improvement.

EDCI 5404
Spring 2003

Rubric for Master's Project Narrative

The project narrative should include a section devoted to each item below:

I. Introduce the Purpose of the Project. For this item you must state the purpose of the project and elaborate that statement by explaining what you were trying to do. If the purpose changed, explain and describe both the original and the altered purpose. Also explain what circumstances and events brought on the change.

II. Justify the Project. For this item you must convince your reader that your project is worth the effort. Do so by explaining how the project contributes to the field of literacy education.

Draw on course readings and additional research on the relevant literature.

Draw on your teaching experience.

III. Frame the Project as Teacher Research. Do this by simply stating the basic question you are exploring. One useful question format is: What will happen if I ...?

IV. Connect to the Field. For this item you must explain what sources of professional knowledge you drew upon as you completed the project and how you used the information.

You must show how you used knowledge about the topic from the literature.

You must show how you used your teaching experience.

You must show how you used your knowledge of teacher research.

V. The Project's History. In this section you tell the story of how the project began and how it evolved until completion. This should be the longest section of the paper.

You should describe your work in enough detail that another educator could reproduce your project.

You should include what you did, as well as what others involved in your project (e.g., students, parents, other teachers) did. You should also include what you were thinking about, concerned with, worrying over, trying to change, and the like. A rich account of your thinking, feeling, and doings should find their way into this part of your narrative.

VI. Reflections on the Project. Discuss three types of learning: a) what you learned from doing the project; b) what new questions you have as a result of your analysis of your efforts; and c) what you plan to do next as you continue along your journey as a lifelong learner and literacy educator.

VII. Artifacts. Include pictures, copies of student work, brochures, and any other documents that were developed as part of your project.

VIII. Reference List. Include the information necessary to locate any source of information you used in your project. Check with the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (Fourth or Fifth Edition) for format of this list.

Note: Your work will be assessed for both completeness and quality. That is, faculty evaluators will not only look to see that you included every item on the list of criteria, but they will assess whether your inclusion reaches the high level of quality appropriate for the master's degree.

Appendix: Illustrative Syllabi for Practica

Course Syllabus
EDCI 5404
Practicum in Clinical Reading
Spring 2003/Tuesdays, 4:00-6:50 PM
CRN:15472

Instructor Information:

Name: Dr. Rosary Lalik

Address: 462 NVGC

Phone: (703) 238-8493

e-mail: rlalik@vt.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 2-5, Tuesdays 2-4 and 7-8, Wednesdays 2-4

Some Wisdom about Literacy Teaching:

“Until students are actively engaged in critique about the language and literacy that is so much apart of their lives, they will be at the mercy of those educational tools, rather than the masters of their complex but much rewarding craft.”

Fecho, B. (1998). Crossing boundaries of race in a critical literacy classroom (p. 98). In D. E. Alvermann, K. A. Hinchman, D. W. Moore, S. F. Phelps, & D. R. Waff (Eds.) Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum (p. 98).

Purpose:

The course is designed to achieve two important purposes. The first is to help teachers to develop a worldview and a teaching repertoire that will allow them, as individual teachers, to effectively assist learners who are struggling with school literacy. The second is to help them, as reading specialists responsible for the school-wide reading program, to learn ways to work collaboratively with others to foster a school culture in which high quality literacy instruction can be inspired and sustained.

Strategies:

To accomplish these purposes of the course the each participant will:

- Develop a set of guidelines for supporting struggling literacy learners.
- Conduct and reflect on (orally and through writing) a literacy tutorial in which s/he provides responsive, tailored, and effective assistance to a person struggling to achieve success in school literacy.
- Demonstrate ways to work as partners with school learners and their parents, as well as with allied professionals, to provide quality literacy instruction.
- Write reports of tutorial work for learners and their parents, as well as for allied professionals and paraprofessionals.
- Develop a set of principles for schools that wish to promote high quality literacy instruction.
- Use principles for promoting high quality literacy instruction as a basis for assessing a school's current literacy program and planning for its development.

Course Design:

The course is designed as one example of studio learning. In addition to using lecture as a mode of teaching, the instructor will regularly engage participants in a variety of activities so that they construct knowledge about focal topics. For example, during class sessions, participants will develop a set of guidelines for assisting literacy learners who struggle for success with school-based literacy. Participants are expected to engage creatively and thoughtfully in all studio activities. As well, participants are responsible for arriving at class ready to discuss the assigned readings and to explain the tutoring they are doing, what they are learning from that tutoring, and what issues or problems have arisen as part of tutoring. When the instructor gives a lecture, students should take careful notes and use the information in subsequent course discussions and writings.

Course Schedule:

The course will be held from 4:00 PM through 6:50 PM, on Tuesdays during the Spring, 2003 Semester. Class will meet on January 14, 21, 28, February 4, 11, 18, 25, March 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29.

Course Texts:

Allington, R. (2001). What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research based programs. New York: Longman.

Harawayne, S. (1999). Going public: Priorities and practice at the Manhattan New School. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Recommended Texts:

Allington, R. L. (1998). Teaching struggling readers: Articles from The Reading Teacher. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Clay, M. (1991). Becoming literate: The construction of inner control. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fountas, I., and G. Pinnell. (1996). Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Goodman, Y.(1995). Miscue analysis for classroom teachers: Some history and some procedures. Primary Voices K-6 3 (4), 2-9.

Moore, D. W., Alvermann, D. E., Hinchman, K. A. (Eds.). (2000).Struggling adolescent readers: A collection of teaching strategies. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Mueller, Pamela N. (2001). Lifers: Learning from At-Risk Adolescent Readers. Portsmouth, NH. (www.heinemann.com).

Peregoy, Suzanne F. & Boyle, Owen F. (2001) (3rd. edition). Reading, writing, and learning in ESL: A resource book for K-12 teachers. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. (www.awl.com).

Spear-Swirling, L., & Sternberg, R. (1996). Off track: When poor readers become "learning Disabled." Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Stires, S. (1991). With promise: Redefining reading and writing for "Special" students. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Wells, G. (1986). The meaning makers: Children learning language and using language to learn. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Course Assignments:

Tutoring and Tutoring Log. For this assignment, each participant will tutor someone who is struggling for success in school literacy. The participant should conduct at least two forty-five minute sessions each week for a period of at least 10 weeks. The participant will develop a log in which s/he records what happened during each tutoring session, why s/he acted as they did, and what s/he learned about their learning partner and about teaching literacy from the session. A total of 20 sessions must be developed in the log. In addition to these entries, copies of all artifacts from tutoring should be included in the log. The log should be brought to class each week and made available for review and discussion.

Tutoring Reports. Each participant will prepare two types of reports of the tutoring. One type should be developed for an audience of other professional educators. Another should be developed for an audience of parents. The report for professional educators should be about six pages in length and the one for parents should be 2-3 pages.

School Study. Participants will work singly or in small groups of 2-4 members to assess a school's environment in relation to the principles for supporting high quality literacy instruction and to plan for the school's development given the assessment.

Course Participation. Participants will attend all class sessions and demonstrate articulate, intelligent, and creative engagement in all class activities. Along these lines, participants should attend class ready to discuss each assigned reading as well as the tutorial and bringing with them an updated copy of the tutoring log.

Session Topics:

January 14: Principles for Supporting Struggling Readers and Writers

January 21: What it means to read a lot. (Allington: Chapters 1-4)

January 28: Thoughtful reading and writing. (Allington: Chapters 5-7)

February 4: Instructional Interventions to Assist Learners in Strategic Use of Letter/Sound Correspondence; Context, and Spelling Patterns for Reading and Writing. (Harwayne: Chapters 1-3)



February 11: Instructional Interventions to Assist Learners in Strategic Use of Comprehension Strategies for Reading and Writing. (Harwayne: Chapter 4)

February 18: Instructional Interventions to Assist Learners in Strategic Use of Multiple Purposes for Reading and Writing. (Harwayne: Chapter 5)

February 25: Instructional Interventions to Assist Learners in Strategic Use of Critical Analysis in Reading and Writing. (Harwayne: Chapter 6)

March 11: Supporting Interest in All Aspects of Literacy; Using Trade Books; Supporting Authentic Literacy Opportunities and Creative Uses of Literacy. (Harwayne: Chapters 7-8)

March 18: Communicating with and Designing Tutoring Reports for Learners and Their Parents. (No assignment due)

March 25: Communicating with and Designing Tutoring Reports for Allied Professionals; Making Instructional Recommendations that Include Three Components: What, Why, and How. (Draft Report for Parents)

April 26: Considering the Role of the Reading Specialist. (Draft Report for Allied Professionals)

April 1: Presentation of Tutoring Reports (Revision of Reports)

April 8: Design School Study (No assignment due)

April 15: School Study (Draft of school Study)

April 22: School Study (Draft of School Study)

April 29: Presentations of School Study (Revision of School Study)

Course Assessment Process:

Grades will be assigned to the two reports, the school study, and course participation. Each of these tasks will be weighted equally and will contribute 33.3% to the final grade for the course.

Some Wisdom about Students:

Let us then not think of students of diverse backgrounds as bringing differences to school, but instead as offering classroom “expansions” of background knowledge and ways of using language.

(Heath, S. B. & Mangiola, L. 1991. Children of promise: literate activity in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. p. 17).

Course Syllabus
EDCI 5784
Practicum on the Roles of the Reading Specialist

Instructor Information:

Name: Dr. Rosary Lalik
Address: Virginia Tech
NVGC
7054 Haycock Road
Falls Church, VA 22043
<http://www.ncgc.vt.edu>

Purpose:

This practicum focuses on strategies for developing school-based learning communities and working within and beyond the school to promote sound policy for school-based literacy.

Goals:

Having successfully completed this course, the students will be able to:

1. explain the various roles typically assigned to a reading specialist;
2. use the federal, state, and local programs to help students with reading and writing problems;
3. provide instruction and support for paraprofessionals who assist with literacy instruction;
1. collaborate with teachers, allied professionals, and administrators to plan, enact, and assess school-based literacy programs;
2. establish and support school based learning communities that promote literacy instruction;
3. communicate with administrators, school-board members, policy makers, and others about school-based literacy;
4. work with parents as partners to support literacy learning;
5. participate in and present at local and state professional associations that support literacy instruction.

Meeting Schedule:

This practicum is a year-long field experience through which students will complete their major assignments at the school where they work or where they are sponsored. As well, they will meet for 15 three-hour sessions over the course of an academic year. This time will allow students to thoughtfully complete the work of the course.

Course Design:

During the 15 class sessions, participants will reflect on their field work and design ways to improve it. As part of these considerations they will collaborate with the course instructor to design rubrics for each major assignment. This collaboration is quite appropriate insofar as learners should be intimately involved in their own evaluation and development. Even while it may seem efficient to design rubrics before teaching a class, professional learning (one might argue, all learning) should very much be a collaboration between teachers and learners—a collaboration that appropriately includes an assessment component. To develop the rubrics the students and instructor will have at their disposal the list of competencies associated with this practicum. Throughout the year speakers will attend sessions to offer professional advice on the issues under consideration. For example, we expect to invite reading specialists, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents to talk with the group. As well, we will hear from a school board member and legislative policy maker.

Required Texts:

Wepner, S. B., Feeley, J. T., & Strickland, D. S. (2002). The administration and supervision of reading programs. New York: Teachers College Press.

Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1998). Shaping school culture. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Recommended Texts:

Distinguished educators on reading: Contributions that have shaped effective literacy instruction. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Edelsky, C. (1999). Making justice our project: Teachers working toward critical whole language practice. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Fuller, M. L., Olsen, G. (1998). Home-School relations: Working successfully with parents and families. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Morrow, L. M. (1995). Family literacy: Connections in schools and communities. Newark, DE: International Reading Association

Roller, C. M. (2001). Learning to teach reading: Setting the research agenda. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Shockley, B., Michalove, B. & Allen, J. (1995). Engaging families: Connecting home and school literacy communities. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Soder, R. (2001). The language of leadership. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1997). The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American Children. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Dyson, A. H. (1994). The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Topics

1. Roles of the Reading Specialist
2. Federal, State, and Local Programs for Literacy Learners
3. Supporting Paraprofessionals
4. Collaborating with Other Professionals
5. Supporting School-Based Learning Communities
6. Communicating with Administrators and Others about Literacy
7. Parents as Partners
8. Participation in Professional Associations

Course Assignments:

Read and Reflect: Read the three required textbooks, and arrive at class ready to discuss your reading. Keep a writer's note book in which you record quotes, notes, organizers, visuals, reflections, and other transformations of your readings that relate to the six course goals and to your personal/professional agenda for taking this course. Each entry should be from three to five pages of computer produced response and should clearly indicate which course goals are being considered.

Researching Available Programs: Conduct a search for federal, state, and local programs designed to help students with reading and writing problems. Develop a summary and critique of each program with recommendations for when the program might be useful.

School Based Learning Community: Collaborate with administrators, teachers and others to establish a school based learning community. The community may take one of a variety of forms including but not limited to a Teachers as Readers Group, a Teachers as Writers Group, a Teachers as Researchers Group or a Literacy Curriculum Review Committee. Collaboratively (with others at your school) initiate, conduct, and assess the group focusing on its function as a school based learning community. Prepare an oral report highlighting the history and evaluation of the learning community.

Supporting Paraprofessionals: Establish a collaborative relationship with one or more paraprofessionals at the school where you work. As part of that collaboration observe and evaluate the paraprofessional interacting with children and provide feedback and involve the paraprofessional in observing you and providing feedback. Provide some

form of professional development or training for the paraprofessional. As well, engage in decision making with the paraprofessional. Collaboratively reflect on the work of the paraprofessional in literacy and with the paraprofessional, use those reflections to develop a set of guidelines for licensing paraprofessionals. Communicate your suggestions to the appropriate committee of your state professional association. Create a scrapbook in which you include all artifacts from this collaboration with narrative explanations of the meaning of each artifact.

Communicating about School-Based Literacy: Working with other participants in this practicum, identify an issue you want to address. Study that issue through a review of the professional literature (especially research) and reflection on your practice. Write a statement of your stance on the issue using language suitable for non-professionals. Confer with an administrator, a school-board member, and a state or federal policy maker about the issue documenting the views of each individual with whom you confer and expressing your views. Follow up each of the three conferences with a letter in which you thank the person for the conference, restate the issue related views you hold, and offer to participate in some form of continued communication as appropriate to the situation. (A Group Project)

Parents as Partners: Working with other participants in this practicum, establish a group for parents and professionals who come together at least once a month to reflect on school literacy and find ways to work together. Keep a record of the group's strategies and accomplishments. Meet regularly with practicum participants to discuss and record the processes and accomplishments of the group, and, based on these experiences, develop a set of guidelines for working with parents as partners in literacy learning. (A Group Project)

Collaborate with a Reading Specialist: Establish a collaboration with a practicing reading professional through which you meet regularly (face to face or digitally) to confer about the roles of the specialist. As part of this collaboration, assist the specialist in supervising classroom teachers, coordinating the school literacy program, evaluating the program, and completing other major responsibilities of the job. Keep a log of your activities and write a narrative describing what you did as part of this collaboration and what you learned from what you did. In discussing your learning focus especially, though not exclusively, on tasks associated with literacy program development and staff support.

Professional Participation: Join a local, state, and national professional association such as the International Reading Association or the National Council for Teachers of English. Attend a local and state meeting and make a presentation to the class about something you learned about literacy from your participation. Also design a proposal for presentation and submit it for conference review at a local, state or national level professional conference.