

IBHE PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

CIP Code 13.1315

1. **Reporting Institution:** Eastern Illinois University
2. **Program Reviewed:** Graduate Certificate in Reading Instruction
3. **Date:** January 30, 2019
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5. **Overview:**

As its mission the Certificate in Reading Instruction seeks to advance scholarly preparation by providing quality teaching and promoting excellence in research/creative activity in order for graduate students to exemplify best teaching practices for children. The program of studies for candidates requires 18 semester hours of course work aligned with the State of Illinois Reading Teacher Endorsement, in order to prepare students, if they desire, to seek the credential upon completion of the coursework.

The program has experienced significant enrollment swings, which have mirrored overarching issues with teacher education over the past 5 years. Currently, the program has gained strong momentum as it has transitioned to an online program. The department looks forward to continued growth in the program as the need for reading specialists has never wavered since the inception of the program.

6. **Major Findings and Recommendations:**

6.a Description and assessment of any major changes in the program/disciplinary context e.g., (1) in the overall discipline or field; (2) student demand; (3) societal needs; (4) institutional context for offering the degree; (5) other elements appropriate to the discipline in question; and (6) other.

Changes in the Discipline or Field

With the implementation of ESSA, districts are seeking teachers that reflect advanced learning in the context of reading and are encouraging practicing teachers to pursue this area of specialty. This demand is reflected in the fact that almost 50% of the currently enrolled graduate students in the program have selected reading as their area of emphasis. The courses required within the Certificate in Reading Instruction have been aligned with the Reading Teacher Standards as outlined by the State of Illinois. Therefore, these graduate courses in reading may be applied toward the requirements for the Reading Teacher Endorsement in Illinois.

Student Demand and Success

Fall	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Enrollment	36	31	18	36	62

Majors. Enrollment began a decline as the field of teaching came upon hard times due to the changing economic climate, the number of students reflecting that trend began in 2015. With a push for marketing and a move to online delivery, the number of students returned to original level of enrollees in 2017 and has surpassed that mark for 2018. The future is very promising for this program.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Completion	17	9	12	8	6

Certificate Completion. A review of the data reveals that degree production has fallen on a yearly basis since 2014, for the most part. We anticipate this trend changing as enrollment numbers have dramatically increased. Retention in the program is strong over the past 2 years and should be demonstrated in the completion rates in the next report.

Time-to-Completion Data. Time-to-completion has remained consistent as predominantly 2 years. Most students complete three to four courses over an academic year, including summer. This reflects the fact that approximately 90% of the graduates from the program are full-time practicing teachers who must pursue a master's degree as part-time graduate students.

Societal Needs

According to the ISBE Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois - 2018 Triennial Report (February 2018), Reading Teacher and Reading Specialist maintained status as one of the most needed positions in the State of Illinois. As the State faces an overall

teaching shortage, those with advanced training will remain in high demand.

Institutional Context

The Graduate Certificate in Reading Instruction is housed in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Foundations in the College of Education. Students may complete the Grad Cert program as a stand-alone certificate or as part of their Masters in Education in Curriculum and Instruction degree. The program is well supported by highly qualified faculty who maintain their own professional development in reading. Faculty members from the department serve as elected members of the Council on Graduate Studies. Graduate students annually represent the program as members of the Graduate Student Advisory Council and one of the program majors served as the President of that body in 2017-2018. Establishing high standards for student performance has resulted in two recent graduates of the program being recognized as the Thesis Award Winner - Award of Excellence for the College of Education and the King-Mertz Research/Creative Activity Award Winner - Award of Excellence for the College of Education.

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

We have faced challenges in having adequate responses to our exit survey for the Graduate Certificate in Reading Instruction. Over the past three years, we have a 14% (4/29) response rate. Comments from completers such as “More instruction is needed on classroom and state assessments. This was not covered in detail in any of the courses I took for my reading teacher certification.” have been addressed by expanding the testing formats that we introduce during coursework and students practice giving in their classrooms. Other students provided feedback such as “I felt like I am very well prepared for being a reading teacher through the courses taken at EIU.” As another student noted, “The professors are easy to talk to, accessible, and are consistently willing to help. I appreciate the time and energy given by them to grade assignments with useful feedback and suggestions as well. Class content is rigorous and usually practical for motivating further study.” It is our hope to elicit more feedback for our next report as it is essential to helping our program improve and our students do appreciate the opportunity to share their insights with us as another student stated “Thank you for providing an exit survey to get feedback.” In addition to student surveys, we are continually reviewing assessment materials to make sure our students are up to date on the assessments needed for their own classrooms.

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

Faculty Hires

Two new tenure track faculty members have joined our staff since the last review, while three have retired. These individuals brought expertise in fundamental reading skills, diagnostic and prescriptive reading, content area reading and other similar areas to the graduate program.

Curricular Changes

Our students have consistently demonstrated a 100% pass rate for the Reading Teacher test. Our courses are aligned to the Reading Teacher standards and therefore we have been updating information shared with students, but have not made any drastic curricular changes. Our faculty stay current in the field of Reading through professional development opportunities and incorporate that knowledge into their coursework for the students.

Instructional Resources and Practices

Since the last report, we began offering coursework through multiple modes of delivery (face-to-face, hybrid and online). All faculty teaching online coursework have completed university required training in development and teaching of online coursework. Technology has been appropriately integrated into courses to support student learning, the classrooms in Buzzard Hall are equipped with up-to-date instructional equipment (e.g., Smart Boards and document cameras); and the Ballenger Teacher Center in Booth Library provides access to a wide variety of educational resources to support both faculty and students in both online and face to face environments.

University resources (Williams Travel Grants) and departmental funds have been used to support faculty-student collaboration on research projects and presentation of the findings at professional conferences (e.g., annual meetings of the International Reading Association).

The graduate website was revamped to strengthen the program’s web presence (i.e., to enhance program visibility, provide faculty/student resources; and highlight notable accomplishments). The site was rated as “excellent” in content, design and accessibility during a recent review. In addition, the Department has implemented a social media presence that has reached over 2.7 million viewers on Facebook in the past 2 years! Twitter and Instagram have been a bit slower engaging with approximately 55 viewers a month.

6.d Description of actions to be taken as a result of this review, including instructional resources and practices and curricular changes.

Our graduate program, which includes the Graduate Certificate in Reading Instruction, was awarded First Choice Recognition for our institution. We are planning to seek this recognition again to firmly establish the program as superior

quality. We have been able to hire a new tenure-track faculty member for Fall 2019 and hope to increase our faculty numbers next year as well, as the demand for the Reading Teacher endorsement continues to climb and our numbers for the Graduate Certificate in Reading Instruction follow suit. We have seen growth in the Master's degree as students who were interested in reading instruction decide to continue on for their master's program. We will continue to review the coursework on a rotational basis through our Department Curriculum Committee. Finally, we are investigating options to receive a better response rate to our exit survey so that we can capture a larger perspective from our students regarding the program.

7. **Outcome**

Decision:

Program in Good Standing

Program Flagged for Priority Review

Program Enrollment Suspended

a. **Explanation:**

On behalf of the office of Academic Affairs, I appreciate the faculty's commitment to this graduate certificate program to assure high quality outcomes through continued innovation. The department is to be commended for its efforts with respect to enrollment, particularly online program development. The report is demonstrative of the commitment to academic excellence and student success.