

Sul Ross State University
Middle Rio Grande Campuses

Master of Education
Reading Specialist

Program Handbook

Sul Ross State University

A Member of the Texas State University System

*Department of Education
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Dear Student,

Welcome to the Sul Ross State University Master of Education Reading Specialist Program and congratulations on making the decision to continue your formal education. The purpose of the Master of Education Reading Specialist Program is to prepare students in the Middle Rio Grande region and beyond for positions as Reading Specialists by providing them with a strong foundation in the theoretical and practical aspects of literacy. All courses require students to convert research-based theoretical knowledge into practical classroom applications as they relate to the levels of early childhood through grade 12.

This handbook will serve as your guide throughout the program; however, information contained in this handbook does not replace information from me, your advisor. When in doubt, please contact me with your questions or concerns. I am always happy to help you in any way I can.

Wishing you success and fulfillment as you begin this graduate school journey,

Gina L. Stocks, Ph.D.

Gina L. Stocks, Ph.D.
M.Ed. Reading Specialist Program Coordinator
gstocks@sulross.edu

Acknowledgement and Agreement Form

Signature of Acknowledgement

This is to acknowledge that I have received and understood the Sul Ross State University M.Ed. Reading Specialist Program Manual. I understand that it is my responsibility to abide by standards, guidelines, and policies set forth in the Educational M.Ed. Reading Specialist program manual.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Program Overview

Program Options

There are two options for students seeking certification as a reading specialist. Students without a Master's degree will work toward obtaining a Master of Education Reading Specialist Degree. Those students already holding a Master's degree are eligible for the Certification Only option. See below for a brief description of the requirements for each option.

Master of Education Reading Specialist Program

This is a 30-hour graduate program leading to a Master of Education degree with a Reading Specialist certification. Prospective students will follow the admission procedures outlined in a subsequent section of this handbook. Students will be responsible for completing all required coursework (which includes a 160-hour practicum), a comprehensive oral exam, a university- required reading specialist practice examination, and a state-mandated reading specialist certification examination.

Certification Only/Non-degree Program

This option is for students already holding a Master's degree in education or a related field from an accredited college or university. The Certification Only student will be responsible for completing the 21-semester hour Reading Component listed below under Program Requirements. The student must apply to the university and meet the admission criteria. Upon university acceptance, a transcript review will be completed by the Chair of the Department of Education to determine proficiency. Additional coursework may be required if an acceptable level of proficiency is not demonstrated by previous coursework and experience.

Admission

Application Process

Students should begin the application process on the Sul Ross State University webpage at www.sulross.edu Access and submit the online application at Apply >Apply Online>Apply Texas. If you have questions regarding applying to Sul Ross please contact Dr. Matt Moore in Alpine. At Rio Grande College you can contact Ulisses Gallegos at 830-703-4816 or ulisses.gallegos@sulross.edu

Once you are accepted into the University Graduate Program, you will receive a letter outlining your specific program request and any additional requirements you will need to complete. Please contact the Education Department where you will request to be scheduled for screening. A record of service as well as a letter of recommendation from a current, campus supervisor or colleague (principal, assistant principal, reading professional, expert teacher) will be required. The screening process will include submission of documents, a writing prompt and an interview. Upon acceptance, you will receive an invitation for formal admission. Formal admission requires; signed Official Admission Letter, signed Statement of Affirmation regarding the Educator Code of Ethics, signed program handbook verification form.

All documents will need to be returned within 7 working business days.

Any paperwork you receive requesting further information and/or signatures must be returned promptly to the Education Department.

Program Requirements

Course Requirements

The Reading Specialist graduate program strives to meet the needs of students who maintain full-time employment and fulfill other duties outside the classroom. Our hybrid delivery of instruction allows students to continue employment while obtaining an advanced degree. Sul Ross utilizes the Blackboard course management system to deliver high quality instruction online.

The following courses are required for a Master of Education Reading Specialist degree:

Reading Component (21 Semester Credit Hours)

- **EDUC 5308 Foundations of Literacy**
- **EDUC 6311 Advanced Studies in Language Acquisition & Literacy**
- **EDUC 6313 Teaching Reading in Content Areas**
- **EDUC 6314 Diagnosis and Correction of Reading Disabilities**
- **EDUC 6317 Organization & Supervision of Reading Programs**
- **EDUC 5330 or ED 6318 Literacy through Literature**
- **EDUC 7312 Practicum in Reading**

Core Component (9 SCH)

- **EDUC 5301 Research Methodology**
 - * must be taken within first twelve hours.
 - **EDUC 6308 Advanced Human Growth & Development**
 - **EDUC 5316 Teaching the Multicultural**
-
- Attain 260 points or higher on the Department of Education practice test (Certify Teacher Reading Specialist Preparation Software for Educator Certification)
 - Register and successfully pass the Reading Specialist (151) Certification exam
 - Graduate students are expected to maintain a 3.0 GPA average throughout the program. A grade of a C or below will not be accepted in the program.

Certification as a Texas Reading Specialist requires:

Students Admitted Prior to Fall 2019

- a Master's degree from an accredited institution of higher education
- a valid Texas Teacher Certification
- a minimum of **two credible** years of teaching experience in a TEA accredited school
- a score of 260 or higher on the reading practice test and successful registration and completion of **TExES 151** (Reading Specialist Exam) by March 25, 2021

Students Admitted Fall 2019-Beyond

- a Master's degree from an accredited institution of higher education
- a valid Texas Teacher Certification
- a minimum of **two credible** years teaching experience in a TEA accredited school
- a score of 260 or higher on the reading practice test and successful registration and completion of **TExES 251** (Reading Specialist Exam) after March 25, 2021.

Test Timeline: TExES 151 Reading Specialist Exam expires on March 25, 2021. **All students enrolled prior to Fall 2019, will need to plan to take the TExES 151 prior to March 25, 2021.** Students admitted in Fall of 2019 and beyond will be prepared to take the TExES 251 exam, which begins March 26, 2021.

Degree Plan/Certification Plan

A degree plan will be developed once the student is accepted into the program. This degree plan will be sent to the student with the departmental letter of acceptance, along with a copy of the Educator's Code of Ethics and the Statement of Affirmation and a program handbook verification form.

Students should keep a copy of their signed degree plan for their records. Students seeking a Master's degree will have a degree plan, while students seeking certification only will have a certification plan. Both are developed upon entering the program because they serve as the primary tool for advisement. It is the student's responsibility to keep the degree/certification plan updated after each semester.

Comprehensive Examination

Graduation requirements for students in the RGC reading specialist program include a comprehensive examination. Students will apply for exams during their last semester of coursework. Students can select up to three faculty members to serve on their committee. Dr. Stocks will serve as the committee chair.

Break in Enrollment

Non-enrollment for the period of one long semester will result in official removal from the program and TEA. This will also require that a student reapply to the university as well as the Education department upon return.

Practicum/Field-Based Experience

Reading specialist students must complete a 160-hour practicum in a TEA accredited school. The practicum experience is expected to the last full semester of enrollment. This course is offered both Spring and Fall semesters and is designed to allow students opportunities to put into practice the knowledge gained throughout the program. All of the reading standards and competencies will be demonstrated by the Reading Specialist Interns through planning and conducting a reading intervention project following the new Reading Specialist Texas standards.

The practicum does contain a case study component focusing on an elementary or secondary struggling reader, which is a requirement for completing the practicum. The case study experience will build upon previous course content.

Prior to beginning the practicum, it is the responsibility of the reading specialist candidate to secure a certified reading specialist who will agree to act as a site supervisor, locate a TEA accredited school in which to conduct the field-based experience, and obtain approval from the principal of the school to complete the practicum therein; however, final approval of these arrangements will be made by the major advisor. Candidates are required to submit to the major advisor request letters that will be presented to the potential site supervisor and school principal. These letters will outline the purpose of the practicum and the responsibilities of the site supervisor and principal. Upon approval of the requests by the major advisor, the reading specialist intern will submit the requests to the potential site supervisor and campus principal. **Prior to beginning the practicum, these letters of request must be signed by the site supervisor and the principal and submitted to the major advisor.** The site supervisor is required to complete a short supervising/mentoring training module.

During the practicum, a minimum of 30 clock hours will be designated as one-on-one teaching sessions with the case study student. The remaining 130 hours will document communication between the site supervisor, the principal, field supervisor, case study family and the reading specialist candidate. As well, the candidate will administer and interpret diagnostic assessments, plan and conduct an intervention program, and document the reading development of the intervention student.

The practicum student will maintain two logs during the practicum. The first log will detail the one-on-one intervention conducted with the case study student (Intervention Log). The second log will detail 130 hours of professional experience the candidate has gained that explicitly mimic the expected behaviors and activities demonstrated by reading specialists. Both logs are to be verified by the site supervisor or campus principal/director. *Be mindful that the practicum experience will require, in addition to your typical work week, approximately 10 hours of attention.*

Students will include in the practicum case-study lesson plans and reflections from intervention experiences. The final case study along with intervention logs, preparation logs, and required paperwork will be submitted in Bb as well as discussed in conferences with the university field supervisor.

The reading specialist candidate can expect one onsite and two electronic observations to assess progress and compliance during the practicum. These observations will be conducted by the university field supervisor. In conjunction with the onsite observations it is the responsibility of the reading specialist candidate to arrange a meeting between the site supervisor and the university supervisor. It is also the responsibility of the reading specialist candidate to facilitate the completion, collection, and submission to the university field supervisor progress reports from the site supervisor at the mid-semester point and end-of-semester. Additional information regarding documentation of the practicum will be provided in Blackboard upon enrollment in EDUC 7312.

Background Checks

Many school districts require a criminal history background check before granting access to the campus. It is the responsibility of the student to provide the hosting school district with the information required and pay any fees associated with the background checks. If you are completing the practicum experience on the campus in which you work, this will not be an additional requirement.

Course Sequence

Several of the required courses are only offered once a year; therefore, it is important to plan the sequence in which you take the courses carefully. By taking two courses during the long semesters and two courses during each summer session, the program can be completed within two years; however, students are

allowed up to five years in which to complete the program. Your major advisor is available for consultation when planning your course sequence.

Testing Course

EDUC 7312 Practicum in Reading is the capstone course and is offered Fall and Spring semesters. Due to the rigor of this course along with the requirement to pass the practice exam for test approval, the official exam, and complete oral exams during the last semester, approval to take courses simultaneous with the practicum will not be approved.

Graduation (Master's Students Only)

Students should be aware of the deadlines for graduation and submit the necessary forms and paperwork. Graduation applications forms can be found on the SRSU webpage.

PROFESSIONAL TESTING & CERTIFICATION

To become certified as a Texas Reading Specialist all reading specialist candidates will be required to take and pass the state certification examination, referred to as the TExES 151 Reading Specialist Test (if admitted prior to Fall of 2020) or the TExES 251 Reading Specialist Test (if admitted Fall of 2019 and beyond). Information is provided below regarding testing requirements for reading specialist candidates.

Official EPP Test Approval Process: Certify Teacher Practice Exam

All students in the program are required to purchase the online test preparation software selected by the Education Department in order to prepare for the TExES 151 or 251 exam. Further information can be obtained by calling the Certification and Test Coordinator, Susan Land at (830) 279-3041 or emailing her at sharper@sulross.edu.

It is the responsibility of the reading specialist candidate to obtain the educator standards for Texas Reading Specialists. We encourage that all candidates review the free Pearson preparation manual prior to seeking formal test approval. In the last semester of courses, the candidate should request test approval. Once the minimum level of proficiency is scored on the practice test (260 points), approval will be granted to the candidate to register for the TExES 151 or TExES 251 test.

Students are responsible for the purchase of online software that is required for test approval.

TE_xES 151 Certification Test

Reading specialist candidates are advised to take the TE_xES 151 Reading Specialist Test as soon as they are given granted approval by SRSU. After 30 days your approval will be removed.

If the TE_xES 151 is not passed, a remediation plan will be developed prior to approval to retest. This may include additional coursework or individualized study sessions. HB 2205 reads in part as follows "A person may not retake an examination more than four times, unless the board waives the limitation for good cause as prescribed by the board." Retesting information can be found on the TEA website.

Certification

To be eligible to receive the standard Texas Reading Specialist Certificate, a candidate must:

- complete the reading specialist program
- hold a valid Texas teaching certificate
- complete a minimum of two years teaching in a TEA accredited school
- hold a Master's degree
- pass the TExES Reading Specialist 151/251 examination

Certification Checklist

The checklist below outlines the procedure for applying for the Reading Specialist Certificate.

- 1. _____ University requirements are completed.**
 - Degree/certification plan has been completed.
 - Certify Teacher Practice Test has been passed and scores have been received by the MRGC testing coordinator.
- 2. _____ TExES 151 certification exam has been passed.**
- 3. _____ Scores have been received by MRGC testing coordinator.**
- 4. _____ Application is on file with the Texas Education Agency (TEA).**
 - Go to the TEA website (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us>) and use your TEAL login.
 - On the MAIN MENU on the left side of the screen, choose APPLICATIONS, which has a drop-down selection list. Choose STANDARD CERTIFICATE TEXAS PROGRAM.
 - Follow instructions to APPLY.
NOTE: After the affidavit you must indicate the "recommending entity." Choose Sul Ross State University - Alpine - University Based. The next line asks what you are applying for. Type in the name of the certificate you are seeking (i.e., Reading Specialist).

- Pay the certification fee. The fee is \$77 per application. If you have not previously applied for certification, you will be required to complete the fingerprint process.
- If you have problems of questions about the online application, you may call TEA at 1-888-863-5880.

5. _____ Practicum Case Study is completed and uploaded.

6. _____ Practicum Supervisor Observations is completed and uploaded and shared in the practicum blackboard portfolio.

Master of Education Reading Specialist Program Student Information

Instruction for this program occurs both in person and online. Expect that some professors will require regular class meetings while some professors will meet only at designated times throughout the semester. A portion of the instruction during EDUC 7312 will be synchronous (instructor and student interact at the same time though Blackboard Collaborate or Zoom). A portion of the instruction during EDUC 7312 will be face-to-face, but that will occur when the university supervisor visits the student for an onsite observation.

- Online students are subject to the same university policies and procedures applicable to students attending face-to-face courses on campus.
- The Course Syllabus and Calendar for each course is available prior to the beginning of each semester. These documents describe the course content, goals, assignments, due dates, and student expectations. Criteria for success for online students is as rigorous and comprehensive as those used in face-to-face courses.
- Communication between instructor and student occurs through Blackboard and/or SRSU email. Students can expect to receive

feedback for their assignments within five working days and responses to their emails within 48 hours.

- Technical support is available M-F, 8:30 - 5:30, Tim Parsons tim.parsons@sulross.edu 432-837-8525; Sul Ross help desk: 432-837- 8888.
- Attendance policies in effect for face-to-face instruction also apply to online students. This policy is interpreted as not participating formore than three weeks in a long semester or one week in a summer session. Any student dropped for non-participation will receive an F in the course dropped.
- Academic integrity is crucial for online instruction. To ensure academic integrity, online students are expected to honestly identify themselves.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of utmost importance for the students enrolled in the Reading Specialist program at Sul Ross State University. We take the issue of confidentiality of student and families very seriously; therefore, violation of confidentiality could result in dismissal from the program without refund of tuition and fees. Responsibility in maintaining confidentiality extend to discussions posted on Blackboard. All information discussed will be strictly among students in the course and the instructor and will be on a strict need-to-know basis.

Class Attendance

Students will be dropped from courses for non-participation. Students should review the SRSU Online Absence Policy posted in each course syllabus.

Dress Code

Practicum students should present themselves as professional educators. As a minimum, students will follow the dress code policies for faculty and staff of the school district in which they conduct the practicum. Specific questions and/or concerns should be addressed to your major advisor.

EDUCATOR'S CODE OF ETHICS

Texas Administrative Code §247.2

TITLE 19 EDUCATION

PART 7 STATE BOARD FOR EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION

CHAPTER 247 EDUCATORS' CODE OF ETHICS

RULE §247.2 Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators

(a) Statement of Purpose. The Texas educator shall comply with standard practices and ethical conduct toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and members of the community and shall safeguard academic freedom. The Texas educator, in maintaining the dignity of the profession, shall respect and obey the law, demonstrate personal integrity, and exemplify honesty. The Texas educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, shall extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession. The Texas educator, in accepting a position of public trust, shall measure success by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her potential as an effective citizen. The Texas educator, in fulfilling responsibilities in the community, shall cooperate with parents and others to improve the public schools of the community.

(b) Enforceable Standards.

(1) Professional Ethical Conduct, Practices and Performance.

(A) Standard 1.1. The educator shall not knowingly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district or educational institution.

(B) Standard 1.2. The educator shall not knowingly misappropriate, divert, or use monies, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.

(C) Standard 1.3. The educator shall not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay.

(D) Standard 1.4. The educator shall not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.

(E) Standard 1.5. The educator shall neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or to obtain special advantage. This standard shall not restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service.

(F) Standard 1.6. The educator shall not falsify records, or direct or coerce others to do so.

(G) Standard 1.7. The educator shall comply with state regulations, written local school board policies, and other applicable state and federal laws.

(H) Standard 1.8. The educator shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications.

(2) Ethical Conduct Toward Professional Colleagues.

(A) Standard 2.1. The educator shall not reveal confidential health or personnel information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.

(B) Standard 2.2. The educator shall not harm others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system.

(C) Standard 2.3. The educator shall adhere to written local school board policies and state and federal laws regarding the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of personnel.

(D) Standard 2.4. The educator shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political, professional, or citizenship rights and responsibilities.

(E) Standard 2.5. The educator shall not discriminate against or coerce a colleague on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, or family status.

(F) Standard 2.6. The educator shall not use coercive means or promise of special treatment in order to influence professional decisions or colleagues.

(G) Standard 2.7. The educator shall not retaliate against any individual who has filed a complaint with the SBEC under this chapter.

(3) Ethical Conduct Toward Students.

- (A) Standard 3.1. The educator shall not reveal confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.
- (B) Standard 3.2. The educator shall not knowingly treat a student in a manner that adversely affects the student's learning, physical health, mental health, or safety.
- (C) Standard 3.3. The educator shall not deliberately or knowingly misrepresent facts regarding a student.
- (D) Standard 3.4. The educator shall not exclude a student from participation in a program, deny benefits to a student, or grant an advantage to a student on the basis of race, color, sex, disability, national origin, religion, or family status.
- (E) Standard 3.5. The educator shall not engage in physical mistreatment of a student.
- (F) Standard 3.6. The educator shall not solicit or engage in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student.
- (G) Standard 3.7. The educator shall not furnish alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or knowingly allow any student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs in the presence of the educator.