

**2011 – 2012 APSU Teacher Unit Annual
Program Review (APR) Report: Reading
Specialist**

I. Name of Program: Reading Specialist Masters

II. Reviewers: Chair, Jeannine Hirtle, Benita Bruster, Lauren Wells, Tara Alvey

III. Program Description:

The Reading Specialist Program is designed to satisfy Tennessee licensure for Reading Specialist. Candidates must have an undergraduate grade point average of 2.75 and a minimum score of 600 on the verbal and mathematical sections of the graduate record exam. Candidates must also have a valid teaching license and verification of three years of teaching experience in order to begin this program.

IV Changes in the Reading Specialist Program:

Course requirements for the Reading Specialist degree changed during the 2011-2012 academic year, in regard to assessment data. Candidates continue to be assessed by Praxis examinations, Milestone review, and completion of an electronic portfolio. In addition, candidates are required to put key assessments in Live Text. These are organized by standards. During the final semester of the Reading Specialist program, candidates are required to develop an action research study working with a small group of students or their whole class. Candidates design the study based on knowledge of students and their particular literacy needs. Candidates present their study to an audience of faculty and peers.

Reading faculty completed a cross walk by standards for the Reading Specialist program. They have noted the discrepancy between the current six standards adopted by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the sixteen standards previously required by the IRA. Dr. Bruster has called state officials to see when Tennessee will be using the current IRA standards.

V. Program Strengths

Five candidates completed the Reading Specialist Program. This is a 40% increase from 2010-2011. Data collected during the 2011-2012 academic year from five candidates, indicated that all five candidates passed the licensure examination on the first attempt with an average score of 646 out of a required 510.

Program strengths include a strong recruiting effort, establishment of site-based cohorts, inclusion of online courses, and a proposed study of how to be competitive with online Reading Specialist programs.

To support recruiting efforts Dr. Gary Stewart, graduate coordinator and Dr. Benita Bruster are working to establish site-based cohorts for the Reading Specialist. In 2011-2012 a cohort of nine students matriculated with APSU and met at the Highland Crest Campus at Robertson County. While this is an improvement from the previous year, more efforts need to be made. To that end, APSU Reading Program is recruiting at Dickson County to begin a cohort for the Reading Specialist Program at Dickson's new Renaissance campus. In

addition to creating site-based programs, the Reading faculty is discussing ways to be competitive with online Reading Specialist Program.

VI. Program Weaknesses:

One weakness in the program continues to be a low number of candidates seeking a Reading Specialist degree. In the 2010-2011 there were only three completers in the program. The competition from surrounding universities, on-line programs, and the economy are possible reasons for the decline in the program. Students seeking advanced degrees are no longer matriculating with local universities; therefore, intense recruiting efforts were and are essential for growth.

VI. What Data Drove the Decision to Change the Program?

The dwindling number of graduates in the Reading Specialist Program was clearly evident that changes in the program are essential, if the program were to remain an option in the graduate selection at Austin Peay State University. In response to this data, the Reading faculty is working with Drs. Stewart and Bruster to recruit and teach site-based cohorts.

VII. Assessment of Candidates:

Assessment of the Reading Specialist Program will change for the 2012-2013 cohort. Candidates will be assessed using key assessments. Key assessments are developed that align to each of the Interactional Reading Assessments. Each required course in the Reading Specialist degree program has a key assessment. All candidates must successfully pass each assessment to demonstrate mastery of the standard to meet the requirements of the program.

Portfolio Evaluation for Masters in Reading Fall 2011-Spring 2012 showed a range of passing scores in the Exceeding and Meets Requirements areas. The scores ranged from 33% to 75% in the Exceeds category. The 33% score reveals student issues with word identification, vocabulary, and spelling. The 75% score in the Exceeds category reveals student mastery of theoretical base. In the Meets category, scores ranged from 22% to 66%. The 22% reveals issues with curriculum development and the 66% shows that students can meet the standard in word identification, vocabulary and spelling.

Courses need to be identified that address Standards 6 and 1, and additional emphasis needs to be put on student mastery of these standards.

The Milestone Review revealed that eight students met Milestone I, 16 met Milestone II and 15 Milestone III in the Fall 2011. In the Spring 2012, two students met Milestone I, zero met Milestone II and three met Milestone III. These scores reveal where the students are in their program. In Fall of 2011, the Reading Specialist program had five students complete, so it is appropriate that up to fifteen students had made significant progress on their Milestone achievements.

Praxis scores from the 2011-2012 academic year from five candidates, indicated that all five candidates passed the licensure examination on the first attempt with an average score of 646 out of a required 510.

VII. Summary of Proposed Changes

Recruitment was initiated again in spring 2012,

Site-Based Cohorts

One proactive solution has been to offer site-based cohorts. In the Summer of 2012 a cohort of nine teachers matriculated with APSU and met at the Robertson County's Highland Crest campus for a portion of their program with the remaining courses on-line.

In addition, plans are underway to offer a second site-based cohort at Dixon County's Renaissance Center. Also, an APSU campus-based cohort is being planned. These three cohorts are the foundation for the Reading Specialist program recruiting efforts.

In addition to making the Reading Specialist program more accessible to interested individuals, an effort to streamline the program is underway. The program no longer offers electives—rather it has a required sequence of courses, which include:

EDUC 5870
RDG 5850
RDG 5820
EDUC 5000
RDG 5040
RDG 5830
RDG 5800
RDG 5840
RDG 5860
RDG 6051

Lastly, the Reading faculty is examining ways to make the Reading Specialist program competitive with online programs offering the same degree.

The Reading Specialist program is compact and the outlined program allows the students to complete their entire master's degree in 30 hours.

Financial support is available through the Teach Grant which pays up to \$4,000 per year for individuals seeking a Reading Specialist degree and teaching in low income areas is available to most of our applicants. This is also aiding our recruitment efforts.

IX. Assessment of Program Operations:

The International Reading Association revised its standards in 2010. NCATE adopted the new standards, and reading faculty at Austin Peay State University revised our Reading Specialist standards to align with IRA Standards.

In 2010, Tennessee adopted the Common Core Curriculum for Reading and Language Arts. Reading faculty are working to incorporate the common core standards into course work as they become available for the Language Arts grade levels.

These new requirements also impacted the Reading Specialist program changes. In the fall, 2011 reading faculty ensured program requirements align with the International Reading Association Standards and that all key assessments are valid and aligned with program content.