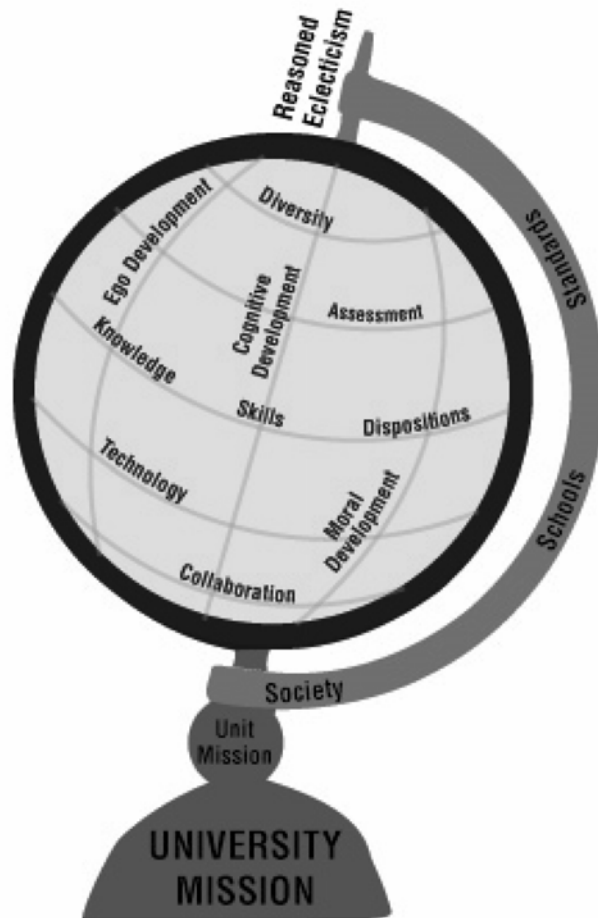


**Governors State University  
Alternative Certification Partnership  
Elementary Education Certification  
Student Handbook**

**Preparation and Continuing Development of Educational Professionals:  
Governors State University's Commitments  
*"Developing Real-World School Professionals"***



**The Professional Education Unit at Governors State University seeks to offer the highest quality academic programs, balancing innovation and best practice. The Unit is committed to developing teachers, counselors, psychologists, and administrators who will employ a reasoned eclectic approach in order to optimize the complex teaching and learning environments to achieve student learning in the diverse region served by the University, its candidates, and its graduates.**

## **Introduction**

This handbook provides information about the program for elementary certification through the alternative route (GSU Alternative Certification Partnership). This program, with an urban teacher education focus, is a collaborative partnership of the university with schools in our region that have a high percentage of low socioeconomic students. This handbook outlines the procedures for being admitted to, working in, and completing the requirements of this program.

The faculty of the Division of Education is committed to preparing outstanding educators. The Governors State University Alternative Certification Partnership at Governors State University is designed to introduce candidates with a B.A. or B.S. and five years of work experience to the demands and rewards of teaching. The program combines a strong background in general education with rigorous professional education coursework in order to supply quality educators to elementary schools in need in our region who are members of the partnership.

## **Purpose of the GSU Alternative Certification Partnership Elementary Education Certification Program**

The purpose of the partnership is to work collaboratively with area schools to provide quality educators committed to working with children of promise in our region.

## **Sources Used in Developing Program Goals**

In designing the GSU Alternative Certification Partnership for certification in elementary education, the program was developed so that candidates meet the same objectives as the traditionally prepared elementary education candidates in a more concentrated time period. As in the B.A. program in elementary education, the faculty has relied on information from a variety of sources to determine how best to support the development of reflective classroom teachers.

Among these sources were:

- The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) (<http://ncate.org/standard/elemstds.pdf>);
- Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (<http://isbe.net/profdevelopment/PDFs/prfstandards.pdf>); and
- Illinois Content-Area Standards For Educators (<http://isbe.net/profdevelopment/PDFs/standards.pdf>).

In addition, the faculty reviewed the standards for various teaching areas such as mathematics, science, reading, and language arts. The faculty also drew extensively on its experience in working with schools in the GSU region, advice and observations provided by students, and consultation with school personnel.

## **Program Goals**

As a result of its consideration of this information, the faculty established the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards as the goals to guide the design and continuing development of the program.

## **Illinois Professional Teaching Standards**

### **1 Content Knowledge**

The teacher understands the central concepts, methods of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) and creates learning experiences that make the content meaningful to all students.

### **2 Human Development and Learning**

The teacher understands how individuals grow, develop, and learn and provides learning opportunities that support the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students.

### **3 Diversity**

The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

### **4 Planning for Instruction**

The teacher understands instructional planning and designs instruction based upon knowledge of the discipline, students, the community, and curriculum goals.

### **5 Learning Environment**

The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

### **6 Instructional Delivery**

The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

### **7 Communication**

The teacher uses knowledge of effective written, verbal, nonverbal, and visual communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.

### **8 Assessment**

The teacher understands various formal and informal assessment strategies and uses them to support the continuous development of all students.

### **9 Collaborative Relationships**

The teacher understands the role of the community in education and develops and maintains

collaborative relationships with colleagues, parents/guardians, and the community to support student learning and well-being.

### **10 Reflection and Professional Growth**

The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates how choices and actions affect students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community and actively seeks opportunities to grow professionally.

### **11 Professional Conduct**

The teacher understands education as a profession, maintains standards of professional conduct, and provides leadership to improve student learning and well-being.

### **Course Work/Requirements**

The program sequence consists of the following components:

#### ***Core I (Late March to late June)***

- EDUC 320, The Future of American Education and EDUC 321, Effective Teaching and Lab (total seven credit hours)
- Requires 15 clock hours of school classroom observation
- Courses held Wednesday evenings and daytime Saturdays to permit students to continue working
- Additional course work possible if required to meet individual candidates' general education deficiencies
- Pass state of Illinois Basic Skills Exam before moving to Core II

#### ***Core II (June through July)***

- EDUC 650A, Theory to Practice (three credit hours)
- EDUC 650B, Strategies for Teaching in the Content Areas (four credit hours)
- EDUC 650C, Field Experience (two credit hours)
- Students attend classes five days per week, six hours per day for six weeks
- Pass Illinois State Board of Education Elementary Education Certification Exam prior to moving to Core III
- Possess a state of Illinois Substitute Certificate

### ***Core III (August to April)***

- Candidates work under contract with a local district as full-time classroom teachers
- During this period, students will be supported by a strong mentor program
- EDUC 650 D & E, Seminars in Reflective Teaching I and II (one course each semester that focuses on developing teaching skills)
- Additional course work possible if required to meet individual candidates' general education deficiencies

### ***Core IV (May through August)***

- EDUC 650F, Seminar in Reflective Teaching III
- Additional course work possible if required to meet individual candidates' general education deficiencies or middle school endorsement requirements
- Complete documentation, analysis, and interpretation of experience in the program through completion and presentation of portfolios
- Candidates will, if necessary, complete an individualized professional development program consisting of up to three workshops as recommended by the Assessment Committee

### **Please note additional requirements/information:**

- Candidates must be hired by a partner district to begin coursework of Introductory Sequence, Core I.
- The Alternative Certification office must receive notice of the candidate's passing of the Illinois Test of Basic Skills before beginning coursework of Core II. (Last test date to receive results by this time is March).
- Candidates must possess a state of Illinois Substitute Certificate for Core II.
- Candidates will take the state of Illinois Elementary Education Certification Exam as a cohort at a specially arranged time for alternative certification candidates (at the end of July-date to be determined, arrangements made through GSU while in Core I). Some candidates have found it helpful to take the test prior to the July test date to determine areas of weakness for review or simply to satisfy this requirement at an earlier date.
- State Exam results are valid for 5 years.

**Liberal arts and sciences courses** provide background information for teachers. While many of these general education courses are required for certification, teachers should be familiar with as many areas in the liberal arts as possible.

Course work acceptable for meeting these requirements must be college level work and may not include remedial courses even if college credit is granted. Generally, this course work must be at the 100-level or higher and applicable toward a degree at the institution providing the instruction. Courses with grades below "C" will not be accepted.

Faculty and advisors recommend that potential candidates consider taking general education coursework prior to beginning the program if possible. This serves two purposes:

- 1) Reducing the number of credit hours during the rigorous 16 month sequence of the program and
- 2) Assisting chances of acceptance into and continuation in the program as scores on the Academic Profile Exam and the state certification exams are part of the application/acceptance/continuation requirements of the program.

**Specialization Courses** provide in-depth subject matter exploration in one of the subject areas required by the Illinois State Board of Education. Candidates will determine their status in an area of specialization in consultation with their advisor in the completion of their Study Plan.

### **Middle School Endorsement**

Candidates planning to teach in the middle (5-8) grades will be expected to have at least 18 hours of coursework in the subject area in which they teach.

Traditional Elementary Education students complete two professional classes in middle grades: educational psychology and curriculum. The alternative certification sequence includes the middle grades educational psychology objectives in the required sequence. The middle grades curriculum requirement may be satisfied by a one-hour independent study course the second summer.

### **Professional Education Courses (25-29 hrs.)**

As noted in the program sequence, the required courses offered only in the cohort sequence constitute 25 hours. The additional four hours are the one-hour independent study for the middle grades curriculum requirement and the three-hour additional requirement for the middle grades math endorsement.

### **Professional Education Workshops**

Candidates may also be required to take one, two or three professional education workshops: Lesson Planning, Classroom Management, and/or the Professional Educator. Each workshop is 15 clock hours and candidates are

required to take workshops if recommended by the GSU Alternative Certification Partnership Assessment Committee. Candidates may also choose to take any or all of these workshops to improve their skills.

### **Certification Requirements:**

1. Complete all required course work with a grade of B or better in all professional education courses, and a grade of "C" or better in each of the other courses;
2. Complete at least one three-hour course in non-Western or Third World cultures; and
3. Maintain satisfactory student progress as defined by the GSU Alternative Certification Partnership Assessment Committee.

### **The Admission Process**

The first step in becoming a student in the Governors State University Alternative Certification Partnership is applying for admission to the program. The materials necessary for application are identified in the admission materials available on our web site at [altcert.net](http://altcert.net)

These materials and documents are to be filed with the GSU Alternative Certification office. This application and related materials should be mailed to: GSU Alternative Certification Partnership, Governors State University, University Park, Illinois 60466.

### **Candidate Selection Process**

**Phase One:** Application packet materials will be evaluated on an ongoing basis with January 5 each year being the application deadline date for the program beginning approximately the following April 1. (Note: If January 5 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the deadline will be the following Monday.) Candidates will be successful in this step if their credentials meet the following requirements:

- Complete set of higher education transcripts;
- 300-word typed essay expressing interest in the program and a career in education;
- Recommendation letter(s) verifying experience working with children and/or young adults
- Reference letter(s) verifying five years experience applying their bachelor's degree
- Transcribed general education credits of sufficient scope to allow satisfaction of program requirements by the time this program is completed.
- A current resume

**Phase Two:** Applicants who meet Phase One minimum requirements will be invited to take part in testing to evaluate candidate general education preparation. This testing is done on an ongoing basis throughout the year. Phase One applicants will be notified of upcoming testing dates. Applicants will also take part in a writing activity to assess analysis, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Candidates who are successful in this phase of the admission assessment will be invited to participate in Phase Three.

**Phase Three:** Program applicants will be invited to demonstrate through a standardized interview with teacher educators and school personnel the dispositions necessary to succeed as teachers in an urban school setting. These interviews will be scheduled monthly or as needed. Applicants must provide evidence of registration for the March [Illinois Certification Testing System Basic Skills examination](#) (or a passing score report) before proceeding to Phase Four.

Illinois law requires that candidates must pass the Illinois Test of Basic Skills before formally being accepted into a program. In line with the GSU Elementary Education Program, candidates will not be able to take professional education coursework beyond the Introductory Sequence (Core I) without formal notification of passing the state Basic Skills Exam.

**Phase Four:** Applicants who are successful through all previous assessment phases will be invited to interview with representatives of the program's partner school districts for a placement leading to a provisional teaching position (upon successful completion of Cores I and II and passing state certification exams). This school district / applicant forum takes place each year in early March.

**Notification of Admission:** Notifications of selection for the program will be made in March each year. Candidates will not be admitted unless they have been selected for placement in one of the partner schools.

### **Student Study Plans**

Student study plans are developed in consultation with an advisor before the end of Core I. The advisor will explain the program requirements and, with the student, develop a study plan that will lead to program completion.

### **Evaluation of Student Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions**

Governors State University is strongly committed to rigorous evaluation of its candidates preparing for professional positions in the public schools. The university believes that this evaluation must include the student's knowledge, skills, and dispositions. "Disposition," as used here, refers to "a tendency to exhibit frequently, consciously, and voluntarily a pattern of behavior that is directed to a broad goal" (Lillian Katz, Dispositions as Educational Goals, ERIC

Digest, September, 1993, Urbana, IL: Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education).

Thus, the faculty evaluates each student's performance in both academic and practical settings and assesses the dispositions displayed as the student confronts problems, works with children and other adults, and pursues his/her own development.

The program faculty assesses the extent to which students:

- seek to excite and expand students' learning as well as their own;
- seek to explore subject matters far beyond the level of mere competence;
- understand and use a variety of teaching strategies;
- believe that all children can learn and implement supportive, structured behaviors;
- are dedicated lifelong learners;
- seek, embrace, and celebrate human diversity;
- exhibit academic integrity and high ethical standards;
- employ technology as a tool for teaching/learning;
- pursue knowledge of best practices and innovations that effectively respond to educational challenges;
- seek to understand and interact with their communities;
- value and engage in self-reflection and assessment;
- exhibit flexibility in dealing with ambiguity;
- exhibit commitment to collaboration with colleagues and parents; and
- exhibit habits of mind that reveal reasoned eclecticism.

The faculty are committed to the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession as presented by the National Education Association (<http://www.nea.org/aboutnea/code.html>).

## **Student Progress**

The Governors State University Alternative Certification Partnership Coordinating Council in collaboration with the Dean and faculty have created the GSU Alternative Certification Assessment Committee (GACPAC) to assure that program quality is maintained and that each student's progress is supported, assessed, and matched to program expectations at a series of checkpoints between admission and graduation. The GACPAC consists of three College of Education representatives and four partnership district representatives appointed by the Coordinating Council and the Dean and faculty. The Program Director and the University Supervisor serve as ex-officio members. Program faculty routinely monitor student progress in the areas of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Indicators in these three areas include conduct in a course or

clinical experience, class attendance, academic performance, communication skills, and dispositions for a career in teaching.

The faculty monitors and evaluates student progress at critical checkpoints:

- After Cores I and II
- After Core III, Fall Trimester
- After Core III, Winter Trimester, and
- After Core IV.

At all points in the student's progress through the program the program's Assessment Committee determines the status of students. In making these determinations, the Committee reviews information about student performance and promise in four areas: knowledge, skills, dispositions, and impact on student learning. The Committee considers the student's performance and relevant information holistically. That is, the faculty's determination to include or exclude candidates is not based solely on any single item or threshold score, except failure to document passing the Illinois Basic Skills Test or Elementary Education Content Area Exam. This approach is consistent with best practices in assessing student progress as summarized in the following statement: "Decisions about continuation in and completion of programs are based on **multiple assessments** made at admission into programs, at appropriate transition points and at program completion" (NCATE, Rubric for Standard 2: *Assessment System and Unit Evaluation*; <http://ncate.org/2000/2000stds.pdf>, p. 21.)

In addition to these routine assessments the GACPAC may intervene when candidates are referred by program faculty. These interventions may range from written acknowledgement of faculty concern to recommendation for dismissal from the GSU Alternative Certification Partnership.

### **Mentor Component**

Each candidate is assigned a mentor by the district for the equivalent of one half day per week to provide professional and emotional support during the internship year. The mentors assist with and keep record of lesson plans, grade book, and critical incident reflections. The mentors meet regularly with the program lead mentor.

### **Conditional Continuation and Removal from Program**

The Assessment Committee may permit a student to continue conditionally. In such cases, Committee reviews of the candidate's records have identified evidence that the student will likely be successful in the program. The status of all students allowed to continue conditionally is reviewed by the Assessment Committee at each Gateway.

The Assessment Committee will make recommendation to the Dean for removal of a candidate from the program. A student may grieve faculty actions placing candidate on conditional continuance or removing them from a program. See Grievance Procedure below.

### Grievance Procedures

If the Assessment Committee places the student on conditional continuance or acts to remove a candidate from a program, the candidate may appeal the decision within 20 working days of notification of the Committee's action by notifying the Division Chair in writing. If the candidate's appeal involves an unresolved grievance regarding a grade in a course or other matter grievable under the University's student grievance procedures, the candidate may not file a grievance until all University procedures have been completed. For the University's Student Grievance Procedures, see <http://www.govst.edu/users/gsas/studenthandbook2000-2001#procedures>.

The candidate's notification of appeal must be accompanied by a statement in which the candidate provides reasons why he/she believes the Assessment Committee's action is characterized by one or more of the following:

- The action is arbitrary or capricious;
- The faculty grossly misinterpreted available information about the candidate and his/her performance;
- The faculty did not provide the candidate with adequate guidance regarding deficiencies in his/her performance and did not inform the student in a timely manner that his/her performance placed him/her in danger of being placed on conditions or removed from the program.

Within 15 working days after receipt of the candidate's notification of appeal, a panel of two persons will hear the appeal. The panel will consist of the Dean of the College of Education or the Chair of the Division of Education and a faculty member from a program other than the one in which the candidate is enrolled. The faculty member will be identified by the Division Chair.

The hearing will be limited to 30 minutes unless the panel members believe that extending the hearing for no more than another 30 minutes is required by the nature of the case. The hearing will consist of a presentation by the candidate of reasons and evidence introduced to show that the faculty action resulted from one of the three reasons listed above.

The hearing is not intended to be a formal legal proceeding but to provide a forum to elicit relevant facts and to insure that candidate has been accorded due process. The hearing is not subject to rules and procedures associated with formal hearings such as evidentiary rules or discovery. The candidate may be

accompanied by one other person who may advise the candidate and speak on the his/her behalf.

Within ten days, the panel will announce its decision which will be final and binding on both the candidate and the faculty. Its decision may not be appealed or grieved.

### **Teacher Certification**

This program is approved by the Illinois State Board of Education for recommendation of the Initial Elementary Certificate by entitlement. To be recommended for certification by Governors State University, candidates must complete the coursework indicated on the study plan signed by their advisor. Candidates must earn a B or better in all professional education coursework and a C or better in all other required coursework. Alternative Certification candidates must complete all program requirements and be recommended for certification to the Dean of the College of Education by the Assessment Committee. Candidates will be recommended for any eligible endorsements on the elementary certificate.

### **Requirements for Certification through Approved Programs**

To be recommended by Governors State University for any certificate (or endorsement), an applicant must:

1. have completed a Governors State University state-approved program leading to the desired certificate (or endorsement);
2. be at least 19 years of age;
4. be in good health;
5. be a citizen of the United States or legally present and authorized for employment; and
6. possess good character.

Candidates will be asked to address additional state requirements on the Program application form (Step 6).

Applicants for certificates or endorsements based on approved programs must seek and receive the recommendation of the university within one calendar year of completing an approved program and must meet any applicable requirements established by Illinois statute or rules and regulations during this one-year period.

Individuals applying for any of these certificates or endorsements must successfully pass examinations required by the Illinois State Board of Education to receive the certificate or endorsement.

## **Communication between Division Faculty and other Representatives and Students**

### **Student Address and other Contact Information**

Because the University and the Division must communicate information to students regarding their status in the University and the Division, students are obligated to provide the Registrar's Office and the Alternative Certification Partnership with current information including mailing address and phone numbers.

Should the Division send letters, certified or otherwise, to an address as filed with the Registrar but that is not current and therefore the letter is not delivered to the student as reasonably expected, the Division will not extend deadlines for student appeals or other actions.

### **Division Communication with Students via E-mail**

The Division of Education faculty has adopted a policy under which the Division of Education communicates routinely with students enrolled in its programs by e-mail regarding all matters except those that may be protected under the University's policy regarding student records (<http://www.govst.edu/catalog/appendix.html>).

Students are expected to check for e-mail from the Division at the address provided by the University on a regular basis. The Division will use this means to communicate information about schedule changes, reminders regarding various deadlines, and matters related to a student's study plan and progress in his or her program.

The Division of Education uses the addresses for e-mail accounts the University provides for its students. For further information about your e-mail account, see <http://www.govst.edu/its/webmail/home.html>. At this time, the University is unable to forward e-mail from a web mail account to another account that a student may maintain.

Students are encouraged to communicate with advisors, faculty, the Division Chair, or the Dean of the College of Education by e-mail. Addresses for these individuals are available at <http://www.govst.edu/users/gcoe/education.html>

### **Applicability of this Handbook**

This handbook provides information about the Governors State University Alternative Certification Partnership certification program for elementary education.