

**University of Vermont**  
**Application for New Program in Specialized Literacy Program**  
November 2024

Directions: Applicants seeking a new program review must submit the following to the AOE at least 6 months before the program review is conducted:

- A completed Design Document: you may use the template provided below or create your own Design Document detailing the proposed program.
- A formal letter requesting a review visit from the president or head of the institution
- Application fee of \$2,000

Section I

**Program name:**

Specialized Literacy Professional Program

**Address:**

University of Vermont  
College of Education and Social Services  
Department of Education  
85 South Prospect Street, Waterman Building 535  
Burlington, VT 05405

**Contact Name:**

Audrey Richardson, Ph.D.  
Graduate Literacy Coordinator

**Phone:**

(802)245-4433

**Email:**

Audrey.Flynn@uvm.edu

## Section II

### **Endorsement Area Sought:**

Specialized Literacy Professional

### **Rationale:**

The University of Vermont's Graduate Specialized Literacy Professional Program Strand is an ideal candidate for ROPA approval due to its alignment with critical state educational needs and recent legislative advancements. Vermont faces significant challenges in literacy instruction, with current assessments indicating that a substantial percentage of students are not meeting proficiency benchmarks, particularly in underserved regions (Vermont Agency of Education, 2023). New legislation, including the Literacy for All Act, emphasizes the necessity for specialized literacy instruction and intervention strategies to address these disparities (Vermont Legislature, 2024). By obtaining ROPA approval, UVM can enhance its program offerings, equipping educators with advanced skills and knowledge to effectively tackle literacy challenges in Vermont schools with completers offering both enhanced instruction to students and professional leadership to current practitioners. This approval would support the state's educational goals and contribute to improving student outcomes across the region.

The Graduate Specialized Literacy Professional Program has been pre-approved by the Vermont Agency of Education, but this approval is temporary. UVM strives to give their graduate students the highest quality and most comprehensive path forward to move into an impactful literacy career in a K-12 school. ROPA and Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators approval will allow UVM to meet high standards and prepare educators for a workforce in need of capacity and expertise.

### **Timeline:**

The Specialized Literacy Professional Program was pre-approved in May of 2023, and candidates currently seek endorsement via an aligned transcript review. In November of 2024, UVM is submitting a ROPA application and plans to complete the portfolio process before May of 2025. Upon approval we plan to begin to offer the endorsement immediately.

### Section III

Please provide a 3-5 sentence summary of your existing programs and concerns from your last ROPA review, if applicable. Attach additional supporting documentation as needed.

#### **Existing Approved Programs and Delivery Models:**

##### Approved Programs:

Initial Endorsement: Art Education; Early Childhood Education; Early Childhood Special Education; Elementary Education; Middle Level Education; Music Education; Physical Education; Secondary Education: English, Foreign Languages, Mathematics, Science, Computer Science, and Social Studies; Special Education; Educational Speech-Language Pathology.

Additional Endorsement: Education for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (English Language Learner)

##### Delivery Model:

Programs are primarily delivered face-to-face, with some options for online courses.

#### **Programs under Conditional Approval:**

None

#### **Progress Toward Addressing Identified Program Concerns**

Reviewing all syllabi for the 21 credits of courses within the literacy strand. All six syllabi were reviewed, revised, and/or replaced with updated content to align with the 2019 revisions of the Vermont Specialized Literacy Professional Endorsement Standards. These changes were approved by both the VT AOE and UVM. As the Graduate Literacy Coordinator, I have also been a part of the newly formed UVM Literacy Hub. The Literacy Hub is a group of UVM literacy professionals, researchers, and administrators seeking to enhance practical, political, and theoretical coherence around UVM's approach to literacy educator preparation. This group is an important part of supporting the evolution and support of the Specialized Literacy Professional Program.

#### **Potential Impact of Proposed Program on Existing Programs:**

The Specialized Literacy Professional Program will complement and strengthen the existing endorsement programs in the Department of Education. Faculty across programs have identified enhancing candidate preparedness to support literacy instruction and leadership as an area for improvement, and growth of this program is part of our ongoing efforts to meet this goal.

## Section IV

Please provide a brief overview of the proposed program. Attach a curriculum map detailing the program's alignment with the *Core Teaching and Leadership Standards* and endorsement knowledge and performance standards and additional documentation, as needed.

### **Program and/or Endorsement Overview:**

The UVM Specialized Literacy Professional Program is intended for those currently teaching who want to earn an advanced endorsement in PK-12 literacy. Prospective students in this program may take the strand of six courses (21 credits) as a standalone pathway to the endorsement if they already have a master's degree; if they do not have a master's degree, this program can be paired with the M.Ed program. In addition to course work, students participate in a 60-hour practicum experience where they work with a literacy mentor and operationalize their current coursework. All courses and experiences in this program are aligned with the Vermont Specialized Literacy Professional endorsement standards as approved in May 2019 by the Vermont AOE.

### **Criteria for admission:**

Applicants must have a license or be currently working toward a level one license. Students currently need to hold a master's or to be enrolled in a masters in an education related field. Admission is rolling so that students may enter the program at a time that is fitting for them. Students can only be recommended if they hold or are eligible to hold one of the following endorsements: elementary education, middle level English, secondary English, special education, early childhood education, Educational Speech Language Pathologist.

### **Curriculum Overview (course titles and descriptions):**

- **EDLT 5220 Cultivating Children's Literacy in the Elementary and Middle School**

This course focuses on current research and best practice related to the development of strategic, motivated, and independent readers and writers. Though the course is influenced by the Common Core State Standards, it is through the lens of poverty that the components of literacy and teaching literacy are studied, emphasizing the joint study of reading and writing in collaborative environments.

- **EDLT 5360 Culturally Responsive Approaches to Literacy and Literature**

Through this course, you will further develop your understanding of the role that culturally responsive approaches to literacy and children's literature selection can play in multicultural and social justice education. We will read widely both research on culturally responsive pedagogy and practice as well as authors of high-quality multicultural literature, evaluate multicultural texts/resources for use

in our classrooms, and develop lesson plans and activities using high-quality examples of multicultural literature to address the needs and interests of education students at various stages of their careers.

- **EDLT 6750 Literacy Assessment: Understanding Individual Differences**

Learn to identify, evaluate, and document literacy development, with an emphasis on assessment and instruction for disabled readers and at-risk students. In contrast to older courses in diagnosis, which emphasize dysfunction and deficits, this course focuses on designing and using assessment strategies to improve and adapt instruction. Both alternative assessment processes and normative tools will be examined. The influences of materials and methods and the role of cultural diversity in school learning will be explored and utilized to plan interactive assessment-instruction strategies in the classroom or clinical settings.

- **EDLT 6760 Literacy Instruction and Intervention Practicum**

This 3-6 credit (6 for students seeking licensure) supervised clinical practicum is an opportunity for you to implement your knowledge of literacy research and practice, as well as your broader knowledge of education and learning in an intensive teaching context. An important part of your work will be to demonstrate an understanding of the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity of the children with whom we work as you plan and make recommendations to parents and school. You will be asked to use and explain research-based teaching strategies as you collaborate daily with your colleagues to help each of them develop the best research-based instructional program for each of their children. You will work with two children experiencing difficulty in literacy learning. The selected children will "stretch" your skills in a variety of ways, including working with children at an age level with which you are less familiar.

- **EDLT 6990 Literacy and Leadership for Equity and Efficacy**

In this course, we will address the essential elements and dispositions of being a literacy leader in a K-12 education setting. Topics include: creating, maintaining, and improving literacy systems, literacy coaching, understanding the role of assessment, as well as supporting literacy instruction and systems that promote equitable access to literacy learning for all students. Significant trends in literacy leadership are also discussed, as we make connections between theory, research, and practice. We will also discuss the role of the specialized literacy professional in a school setting. Participants will apply knowledge of research and practice through program analysis and the development and implementation of professional development.

- **EDLT 6850 Critical Issues in Language and Literacy**

This hybrid course provides experienced literacy educators with knowledge and expertise related to critical issues in language and literacy acquisition and the implications for students, teachers, educational systems, and parents.

Participants will read broadly from contemporary research to learn about various contexts and their influence on language and literacy acquisition, including: socio-cultural, linguistic, and the influence of learning English as a second language. We will closely examine implications from contemporary research and practice for instruction, assessment, and policy. Participants will apply knowledge of research and practice through collaborative action research and the development and implementation of professional development

**Desired impact of program:**

The desired impact of the ROPA approved Specialized Literacy Professional Program at UVM is to cultivate literacy expertise and leadership in Vermont. Our goal is to leverage the energy around literacy instruction and leadership in the state to build capacity and sustainability so that our literacy learners may thrive. We strive to prepare literacy professionals who positively influence academic outcomes in reading statewide through critical and cutting-edge approaches to literacy systems and leadership.

## Section V

Please provide a brief overview of the proposed program(s) assessment system including how the program anticipates using assessments as part of its overall evaluation system. Attach additional documentation, as needed.

**Assessment System Overview:**

Each course has a summative assessment that requires students to operationalize their learning. Assessment approaches range from academic research in the field to explicit and practical advanced techniques in literacy instruction. Students demonstrate their learning and expertise by completing targeted formative and summative assessments throughout the 21 credits. There is also a 60-hour practicum in which students must successfully complete to be recommended for the endorsement.

**Key Assessments:**

- Action Research Experience and Paper
- Literacy Leadership Plan
- Culturally Responsive Literacy Audit

- Literacy Assessment Plan
- Critical Intersections Project
- Diagnostic Case Study Report and Presentation
- Specialized Literacy Practicum
- Literacy Lesson Plans for Differentiation and Intervention

### **Essential Data to Be Collected**

Program assessment to be collected will include:

1. Overall student GPA at the completion of the Specialized Literacy Professional Program
2. Program admission, retention, and completion data
3. Scores from the eight key assessment assignments listed above Program faculty will conduct an exit focus group interview of graduating students in the program to: (1) identify program highlights; (2) ask for suggestions for program improvement; and (3) survey their future professional plan

This program is consistently growing and sending increasing numbers of qualified literacy leaders in the Vermont Education Field. Students in this program are building knowledge on a predetermined base of teaching and sharing this knowledge with other, newer teachers throughout their roles as coordinators and coaches.

### **Proposed Evaluation System:**

#### Analysis of Essential Data Collected

The Specialized Literacy Professional Program coordinator and faculty will analyze the data listed above to identify strengths, challenges, and emerging patterns that may indicate revision of any of the work that students have completed during their course sequence. The grading scheme for this program will follow the established graduate grading policy at UVM.

Course Grading Scheme for the program:

Grade	Description	Points/Credits
A+	Excellent	4.00
A	Excellent	4.00
A-	Excellent	3.67
B+	Good	3.33
B	Good	3.00
B-	Good	2.67
C+	Fair	2.33
C	Fair	2.00
C-	Fair	1.67
F	Failure	0.00
AF	Administrative Failure due to a missing grade. <sup>1</sup>	
XF	Failure resulting from academic dishonesty. <sup>2</sup>	

## Section VI

### **Resources and Practices Overview:**

The Specialized Literacy Professional Program has undergone multiple levels of evaluation and approval at the University of Vermont including the College of Education and Social Services (CESS) syllabi and program approval process in 2023.

### **Key Policies and Resources in place to support the new program:**

The Education for the Specialized Literacy Professional Program is housed in the Department of Education (CESS) under the leadership of Dr. Kimberly Vannest (Chair) and Dr. Katharine Sheperd (Dean) and coordinated at the program level by Dr. Audrey Richardson. Necessary faculty, classroom space, labs, and administrative support will be provided the same as other college programs. UVM's newly established Literacy Hub group led by Dr. Vannest and Dr. Katie Revelle will also serve as an essential support for the sustainability and growth of this program.