

Mission Statement

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The mission of the Department of Elementary, Literacy, and Special Education is to prepare teachers at the graduate and undergraduate levels to successfully meet the challenges of educators who reflect on and model the principles of learning and to demonstrate the ability to meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of children and youth who come from highly diverse backgrounds. To achieve this mission, the Department: (1) Recruits and retains qualified faculty and students who represent diverse backgrounds and viewpoints and who demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching, (2) Provides challenging initial licensure programs for the education of children and youth (with and without exceptionalities) in the area of early childhood (preschool through fourth grade), as well as graduate programs in early childhood education, gifted education, reading/literacy, and special education, (3) Engages faculty and students in scholarly activities such as research and craftsmanship, reflective and creative teaching practices, and service to the community and profession in order to identify and implement best practices to educate our children and youth, (4) Encourages outstanding candidates who complete graduate programs to pursue career pathways that will allow them to assume leadership roles in schools, agencies, and professional organizations, as well as pursue advanced studies such as graduate programs, (5) Supports the use of technology in instruction, research and scholarly activities, and service, and (6) Collaborates with public schools, agencies, and fellow educators to develop and maintain outstanding programs of teacher education, clinical experiences, and professional development schools.

In addition to the mission, the faculty of the department of ELSE are collectively committed to a clear representation of the following principles across all programs of study.

Principle 1

- Addressing the importance of holistic teaching for all children
- Support candidates in their ability to: (1) Consider the interconnection of cognitive, physical and social and emotional needs of children as relates to achievement and success in and out of the classroom, (2) Develop caring citizens through supportive classroom and learning communities, and (3) Consider the individual strengths and challenges of each student to inform instructional and guidance decisions.

Principle 2

- Balancing pedagogy and content
- Support candidates in their ability to balance appropriate pedagogy with deep content knowledge by (1) Considering higher-order thinking skills, concrete experiences, opportunities and activities; and activating a desire for learning, and (2) Expanding and deepening content to address current standards, issues and trends.

Principle 3

- Providing a strong field experience component
- Provide candidates authentic opportunities to practice and apply course content in natural school and community environments by engaging in developing dispositions for learning, life, and career.

Principle 4

- Developing teacher candidate dispositions
- Support teacher candidates in developing dispositions to maximize learning in the university classroom and reflect those dispositions in their field placements as interns and their classrooms as novice teachers.

Principle 5

- Supporting candidates' ability to transfer knowledge
- Provide opportunities for teacher candidates to integrate and build upon the knowledge and skills developed from one course to another, from one discipline to another, and from one content area to another.

Principle 6

- Attending to faculty expertise
- Encourage and support faculty to (1) draw upon and collaborate with other faculty members' expertise to enhance the course content and/or delivery, (2) stay current regarding trends and issues affecting education, and build upon evidence-based practices as they relate to identified areas of expertise.

Principle 7

- Embedding diversity across all programs
- Consider the impact of diversity as it relates to individual learning needs, families, and environments and respect the foundational need to develop relationships with students, families, and colleagues.