

Elementary Education & Special Education Advisory Board
Department of Elementary, Literacy and Special Education (ELSE)
ELSE Conference Room
Advisory Board Meeting April 30, 2026(3:15-4:15)
Zoom Option: <https://uca-edu.zoom.us/j/88470729363>

Attendees: Dee Dee Cain (UCA), Dr. Deanna Rice (UCA), Dr. Janet Filer (UCA), Dr. Rushing (UCA), Scarlet Cates (UCA), Brandy Walthall (UCA), Amber Brantley (UCA), Dr. Jason Trumble (UCA), Sherri Jennings (Cabot School District), Haley Beavert (Cabot School District), Stacy Allen (Cabot School District), Dr. Kathi Sweere (Conway School District), Yvonne Sturdivant (Conway School District), Lindsay Jones (Conway School District), Tina Glover (Conway School District), Mande Carmical (North Little Rock School District)

1. Welcome and Introductions

- College of Education Leadership Updates. Dee Dee Cain welcomed participants and introduced the new leadership team within the College of Education:
 - Dean: Dr. Debbie Dailey
 - Assistant Dean: Dr. Jason Trumble
 - Chair, Elementary, Literacy, and Special Education: Dr. Stefanie Sorbet
 - Residency Coordinator: Sunny Styles
 - Teaching & Learning Chair: Dr. Allison Freed
 - Leadership Studies Chair: Dr. Jeff Wittingham

- Advisory Board Purpose and Partnership Expectations

Dee Dee Cain reviewed the purpose of the Elementary Education and Special Education Advisory Boards. Participants discussed the role of the advisory board as a collaborative learning community composed of faculty, recent completers, district partners, and practicing educators working together to examine program needs, current educational trends, and continuous improvement priorities to ensure teacher candidates are prepared for contemporary school settings. Participants emphasized the importance of ongoing partnership, district feedback, and collaborative program refinement.

2. Residency Rollout and Programmatic Changes

Residency Model Transition - Sunny Styles provided an overview of the transition from the traditional internship structure to the new residency model for undergraduate Elementary Education and Special Education programs. Discussion focused on the revised residency structure, including:

- Residency-based scheduling
- Increased field-based instructional experiences
- Observation and coaching structures
- Data-informed instructional expectations
- Match Day implementation
- Mentor training planning

Participants reviewed proposed residency scheduling structures for Elementary Education and Special Education candidates.

- For Elementary Education Residency I, candidates will participate in:
 - Field experiences Tuesday through Thursday
 - Coursework Monday and Friday through hybrid in-person and online formats
 - For Residency II, candidates will participate in:
 - Field experiences Tuesday through Friday
 - Opportunities for substitute teaching one day per week when appropriate
- Special Education residency discussions focused on ensuring candidates receive experiences across multiple placement settings, including:
 - Elementary resource
 - Secondary resource
 - Elementary self-contained settings
 - Junior high/high school self-contained settings

Participants discussed the importance of balancing candidate placement preferences with exposure to a range of instructional and disability-service environments.

Observation and Coaching Structures - Participants reviewed updated residency observation expectations, including:

- One walkthrough observation during Residency I and one during Residency II
- Two POP Cycles during Residency I and two during Residency II
- Pre-observation conferences
- Formal observations
- Post-observation conferences

District partners discussed the importance of coaching consistency, communication between supervisors and mentors, and opportunities for reflective instructional conversations throughout the residency year.

Match Day Planning - Participants reviewed plans for Residency Match Day and discussed placement timelines and district participation expectations. The group noted the goal of completing residency placements by June 1. District partners emphasized the importance of early communication and collaborative placement processes to support both district staffing needs and candidate success.

3. Elementary Education and Special Education Program Updates

- A. Enrollment and Program Overview - Dee Dee Cain provided enrollment updates for the Elementary Education and Special Education programs.
- Elementary Education enrollment included:
 - 47 Junior Block candidates
 - 30 Intern I candidates
 - 38 Intern II candidates
 - More than 100 students enrolled in prerequisite and pre-admission coursework
 - Special Education enrollment included approximately six active residency candidates, with discussion focused on continued recruitment and program growth.
- B. Participants also discussed revisions to program sequencing, including:
- Earlier field-based experiences
 - Adjustments to core coursework
 - Increased residency integration
 - Expanded exposure to district instructional systems
- C. High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) - Faculty reviewed efforts to increase candidate exposure to High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) throughout coursework and field experiences. Faculty explained that candidates are being introduced to HQIM earlier in the program through field-based coursework and clinical experiences. Programs and instructional materials purchased and integrated into the curriculum included:
- Phonics First
 - UFLI
 - Foundations/Wilson
 - Wit & Wisdom
 - Arts & Letters
 - Wilson Reading System
 - 95% Group
 - CKLA/Amplify

District partners emphasized the importance of residents understanding how to implement adopted curricular materials with fidelity while also adapting instruction responsively for diverse learners.

4. Assignment and Assessment Revisions

Faculty reviewed updates to key assessments and instructional assignments associated with the residency transition. Discussion included:

- Transitioning lesson plans to HQIM annotation formats while maintaining TESS alignment
- Revising model assessments
- Increasing focus on data-informed instructional decision-making
- Embedding residency-based instructional expectations within assignments

Participants also discussed the transition from traditional unit plans toward structures more aligned with authentic district planning processes.

5. Microcredentials and Professional Skills

Participants discussed opportunities for candidates to earn additional certifications and microcredentials, including:

- Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)
- SIM Sentence Writing
- Other instructional support credentials

District partners also emphasized the importance of preparing candidates in areas including:

- De-escalation and Tier III behavior support
- Student regulation strategies
- Candidate professionalism and self-regulation
- Collaboration and communication skills
- Navigating difficult in-person conversations with stakeholders

6. Graduate Program Updates

Special Education Graduate Programs - Dr. Deanna Rice and Dr. Janet Filer provided updates related to graduate Special Education programs, including:

- MAT SPED program updates
- SPA report discussions
- State licensure changes impacting enrollment

Participants discussed the effects of state-level licensure changes on program recruitment and enrollment patterns and emphasized the importance of maintaining strong district partnerships to support recruitment pipelines.

7. District Feedback and Partnership Recommendations

District partners emphasized the importance of continued collaboration between UCA and local school districts and identified several areas of focus they believe are essential for candidate preparation:

- Hands-on daily instructional experience
- Continued HQIM exposure
- Academic and behavioral data analysis
- Collection and organization of student data
- Tiered intervention planning
- Achievement Level Descriptor (ALD) interpretation
- Instructional engagement strategies
- Science vocabulary development at middle and secondary levels
- Navigating professional communication and stakeholder interactions

Participants noted the value of continued district involvement in program refinement and encouraged ongoing communication regarding residency implementation and candidate preparation needs.

8. Closing Reflections

The meeting concluded with discussion emphasizing the importance of sustained university-district partnerships as the College of Education transitions to the yearlong residency model. Faculty and district partners affirmed the importance of maintaining collaborative feedback structures to ensure candidates are prepared to work effectively within contemporary K–12 instructional environments.

Participants were encouraged to continue providing recommendations and feedback to program faculty and leadership throughout implementation of the residency transition.