

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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MACTE Minute – December 12, 2014 Issues Regarding the Special Education Core

At the previous BOT meeting on November 14, Developmental/Adaptive Physical Education (DAPE) institutions and candidates presented testimony regarding issues related to the Special Education (SPED) Core. During that meeting, one of the board members referred to an earlier meeting's testimony that revealed how the SPED Core also creates undue licensure complications for candidates pursuing Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) licensure. Today, I would like to reiterate briefly the need to examine the SPED Core literacy requirements for these two licensure areas. In addition, I would like to focus upon how the SPED Core is affecting higher education licensure approval for *all* special education licensure programs.

The SPED Core includes standards that are (a) applicable to all special education teachers and (b) meet the statutory requirements regarding comprehensive scientifically based reading instruction. Teacher preparation programs are required to include a range of 15-20 semester credits, with typical courses including special education foundations, legal and professional issues in special education, behavior management, communication/collaboration, assessment of needs/academic instructional methods, and a minimum of one reading course with a practicum. The concept of a special core is an important one, but one that has created issues with regard to licensure approval.

Issue 1: The reading standards that are part of the SPED Core are not applicable to the DAPE license, as indicated at the November BOT meeting. The reading/literacy standards from the content area should be accepted to demonstrate literacy competence.

Issue 2: ECSE teacher candidates face many of the same licensure challenges as DAPE teacher candidates. The reading standards for ECSE require candidates to demonstrate mastery of the same reading standards as K-age 21 special education teachers, even though the ECSE scope of practice is birth to age 6. Having candidates meet the literacy standards for Early Childhood educators (scope of practice to age 8) is more logical and also eliminates undue licensure obstacles and cost disincentives for ECSE candidates who are desperately needed to address teacher shortages.

Issue 3: The standards in the SPED Core are duplicated in each SPED categorical licensure area. The attached two-page, two-sided handout illustrates how SPED Core standards are duplicated for two SPED licenses in 2 of the 4 subject matter standards. Although the wording for the standards may not be identical across licenses, the intent is the same. This duplication can be found for all four subject matter standards for all special education licenses.

Issue 4: The SPED Core was created to apply to all special education license areas. If this is indeed the concept of the SPED Core, institutions should not be required to upload to EPPAS a separate and different core for each license and the 62 literacy standards that are a part of each SPED Core.

Issue 5: Special education teacher preparation programs have experienced difficulty in differentiating and documenting SPED Core and SPED licensure-specific credit requirements in EPPAS. EPPAS allows credits to be counted either for the Core or for the content, but not both. However, this does not reflect the reality that programs include SPED Core courses as part of the licensure-specific courses. Because programs are not able to count SPED Core credits as part of the content credits, they are not able to meet the 40-credit minimum threshold as currently specified in EPPAS. This results in significant delays when programs are seeking licensure approval.

Issue 6: Special education is the *only* license area with a core. Why is the SPED Core necessary when these standards are also reflected in licensure-specific content standards? Minnesota special education licensure standards are rigorous, comprehensive, and well defined. These licensure standards, in combination with the Standards of Effective Practice, ensure that future special education teachers meet the highest standards.

It is generally acknowledged that Minnesota exceeds the Council for Exceptional Children's professional standards for beginning special education teachers. Thus, we can be assured that our special educators have the knowledge and skills to implement research-based, ethical, and effective practices. Please consider the issues raised by this MACTE Minute for SPED and ECSE as you examine decisions about DAPE. These excess regulations exacerbate the already problematic shortage of SPED teachers in the state of Minnesota.

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