

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION, M.A.

Mission Statement

The mission of the School of Education is to provide appropriate programs for initial teacher certification as well as programs for the preparation of advanced level professional educators. The programs are designed to empower individuals to think, communicate, strategically plan, and to develop their cognitive and affective human potential in order to become exemplary educational leaders. The goal of “empowerment” supports the School’s structure, curricular design, and conceptual framework.

Student Learning Outcomes

The UWF School of Education graduate should be able to do the following:

Content

- 1.1 Design action research grounded in educational theory, collect data, analyze data, and use the information gathered from a variety of qualitative and quantitative sources to develop educational goals for secondary education students (FEAPS 1 & 7)
- 1.2 Explore the theoretical and practical literature base related to effective learning environments and design and establish a classroom environment that is conducive to high achievement of students (FEAPS 3, 7 & 9)
- 1.3 Articulate and apply the content and practices central to the areas of specialization (FEAPS 2 & 8)

Critical Thinking

- 2.1 Explore the current literature related to problem solving and critical thinking and design activities that will enable students to improve their creative thinking abilities (FEAPS 4 & 10)

Communication

- 3.1 Communicate research findings accurately and effectively through the written word to share research results so that others can replicate ideas and deliver high quality education (FEAPS 2 & 8)

Integrity/Values

- 4.1 Engage in self-reflection regarding research-based performance and pursue opportunities for feedback to demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement in effective goal-setting (FEAPS 3 & 9)
- 4.2 Adhere to the Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Conduct of the Education Profession (FEAPS 6 & 11)

Project Management

- 5.1 Use emergent instructional technology hardware and software to manage, evaluate, and improve instruction (FEAPS 1, 4 & 12)
- 5.2 Design and execute effective strategies taking into account students' learning styles, cultural backgrounds and developmental levels (FEAPS 5 & 9)

Diversity Skills

- 6.1 Create educational climates that foster openness, inquiry and concern for others (FEAPS 5, 9 & 10)
- 6.2 Act as a student advocate by seeking information about students' culture, home situations and backgrounds, and use the community to provide a variety of experiences (FEAPS 5, 10 & 11)

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

From the beginning of their studies, master's degree students develop content knowledge, engage in critical thinking activities, communicate with their classmates and professors both orally and in writing, engage in self reflection, enhance their professional behaviors, learn to manage increasingly complex projects, and refine their interactions related to diverse populations. The knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they develop culminate in the action research capstone experience. Thus, this experience becomes the primary assessment tool in identifying success with the Student Learning Outcomes. Students work individually or in small groups to identify an education problem; research that problem in the current literature; design a study; collect and analyze data related to the design; and then report the findings. The experience is considered successful if the student is able to produce a project acceptable to his faculty mentor who is teaching the action research course.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) are based on the legislatively-mandated and Florida Department of Education monitored Professional Level of the twelve Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPS) which include Assessment, Communication, Continuous Improvement, Critical Thinking, Diversity, Ethics, Human Development and Learning, Knowledge of Subject Matter, Learning Environments, Planning, Role of the Teacher, and Technology, ESOL Performance Standards, and the Professional Education Unit's Conceptual Framework. The FEAPS and ESOL Performance Standards are grouped into UWF's domains and are broken into the smaller Student Learning Outcomes seen in the Academic Learning Compacts and the Academic Learning Plans. The SLOs are integrated into individual course activities, "critical tasks", and are assessed through common rubrics. Progress on the SLOs, FEAPS, and Conceptual Framework Outcomes are monitored through Tk20 Comprehensive Assessment and Reporting System. Collective data are used to track individual student's

achievement of the SLOs, FEAPs, and Conceptual Framework Outcomes. Student data are checked at two points in the candidate's program, benchmark and mastery of a particular outcome. These data are aggregated and used in programmatic continuous improvement to affect policy, initial broad curricular changes as needed, and to modify individual course activities and assessments.

Job Prospects for Graduates with the M.A. in Exceptional Student Education

Florida, the 4th largest school system in the nation, is comprised of over 4,000 public schools situated in 67 public school districts. With a current annual enrollment of almost three million students, Florida continues to have a tremendous need for highly qualified teachers, including a critical need in the areas of mathematics, science, reading, technology, and exceptional student education. The Exceptional Student Education, M.A. is designed to enhance the professional skills and knowledge of special educators in the classroom as well as to help them advance their careers in agencies and private settings.

Find out more about the M.A. in Exceptional Student Education at UWF: <http://uwf.edu/education/>