

# Teacher Education Program

## Undergraduate Candidate Handbook

### **Mission of the Teacher Education Program**

The mission of the Teacher Education Program at Virginia Wesleyan University is to prepare reflective, engaged teachers of good character who will adhere to the highest standards of professionalism, and who are willing to advance the cause of education and cultivate and inspire a love of learning in their students and the communities in which they teach.

Rigorous content and education coursework combined with multiple supervised field experiences serve to develop the content and pedagogical knowledge necessary to teach successfully, to foster an appreciation for the richness of diverse cultures, and to value the worth and dignity of all individuals in our international community.

This mission is driven by a conceptual framework based soundly on the current research in teacher education and the needs of America's public schools, and rests upon a foundation laid by exemplary scholars and writers on the importance of character, the growth and worth of knowledge, the impact of global education, and in accordance with our United Methodist heritage.

### **Philosophy of the Teacher Education Program**

#### **WE learn.**

The Teacher Education Program faculty contend that our candidates must see and experience the wonder in the human ability to learn<sup>1</sup> in order to understand teaching as a vocation. This is accomplished by preparing the hearts and minds of our candidates through rigorous content and education coursework combined with multiple field experiences, leading to development of the knowledge necessary to teach successfully and to appreciate the richness of diverse cultures.

#### **WE do.**

Building on John Dewey's notion that "we learn what we do," the faculty of the Teacher Education Program contend that all children can and do learn. Embracing both a constructivist and humanistic philosophy, we contend that good teachers, when prepared through a program that values both the science and art of teaching, can "cultivate the mind, the hand, the heart, and indeed the whole person" to elevate and prepare all children for the concrete challenges of life and a changing world.<sup>2</sup>

#### **WE serve.**

The Wesleyan heritage promotes a commitment to servant leadership and civic engagement within the university's faculty, staff, and students. This commitment is embraced by the faculty, staff, and candidates of the Teacher Education Program to see and use education as a pathway to purposefully engage the needs of students of all cultures and value the worth and dignity of all individuals.

<sup>1</sup>Emerson, R. W. In Hansen, 2008, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Hansen, 2008, p. 16.

### Conceptual Framework

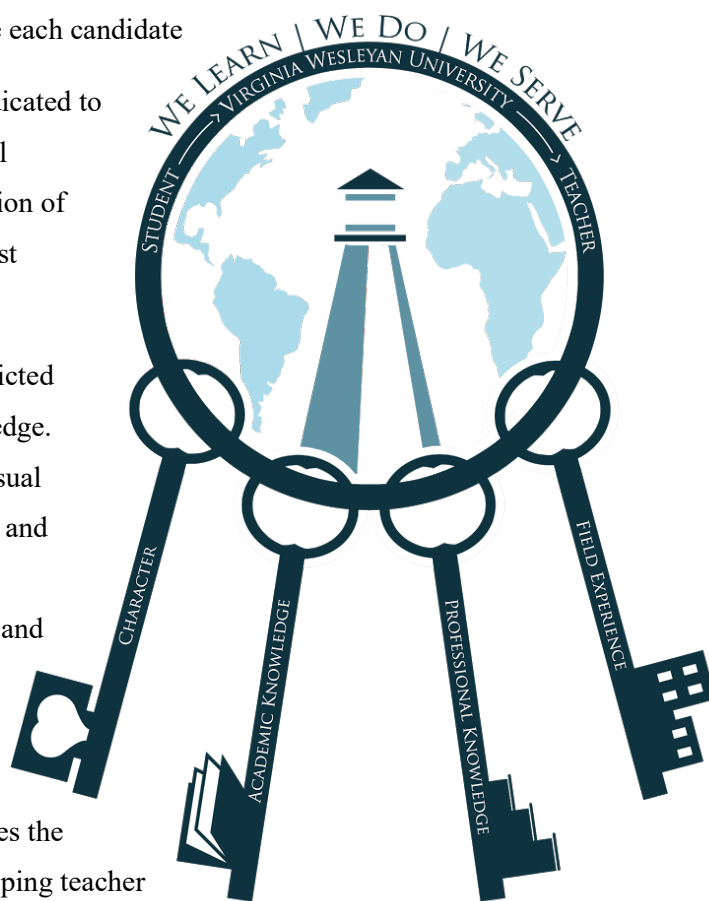
Guided by the La Sallian motto, “Enter to learn, leave to serve,” and John Dewey’s belief that “we learn what we do,” the faculty of the Teacher Education Program at Virginia Wesleyan University (VWU) seek to inspire and prepare teachers to become champions of all students’ hearts and minds (Dewey, 1916). The education faculty embrace and advocate a perspective that values lifelong learning and continuous improvement of the individual that is best captured by six words:

WE learn. WE do. WE serve.

This philosophical statement expresses our commitment to an understanding that teaching is a vocation to which one is especially drawn, and for which one can be uniquely prepared. With the support of the liberal arts and sciences faculty, we prepare and guide each candidate

to become an education professional – a teacher – dedicated to the continual improvement of all students’ educational experiences. Our beliefs are in keeping with the mission of Virginia Wesleyan University and its United Methodist heritage.

For years, the field of education has been depicted visually by a set of keys that represent keys of knowledge. At VWU, we incorporate four unique keys into the visual representation of our conceptual framework as a clear and present reminder that teachers impart knowledge that unlocks the doors of their students’ hearts and minds, and the doors to a better life. The four keys represent the four components of program emphasis: Character, Academic Knowledge, Professional Knowledge, and Field Experience. The ring symbolizes the ongoing and interconnected challenges inherent in helping teacher candidates move from a perception of self-as-student to a perception of self-as-teacher and life-long learner. The globe represents our awareness of and willingness to respond to the international influences and growing diversity in our region. We understand the connectedness of the global community and the unity that education can bring to that global community. Today’s educators need to be aware of the impact of their vocation on the educational experiences of their own students and communities, as well as the global impact of their vocation on the improvement of all students’



educational experiences. The lighthouse completes the metaphor that education is a beacon of knowledge and wisdom that lights the way to a hope-filled life and a better world.

Each key in the graphic represents a component that constitutes the educative process that VWU education faculty, with the input of public and private school partners, have identified as essential for the development of education professionals:

- 1) **Character** consists of the dispositions, behaviors, and ethical values identified by our partners and in the literature on teaching and teacher education, as necessary to be successful, effective teachers. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote of the importance of inquiry, reflection, and communication as prerequisites to being a good educator (Hansen, p. 7, 2008). The development of ethical behavior, a spirit of inquiry, a need for professional reflection, and the ability to communicate effectively are reinforced throughout a candidate's course of study at VWU;
- 2) **Academic Knowledge** encompasses major, elective, and General Education courses that assist our candidates in understanding themselves and the world around them, and that provide them with a core scholarly experience. Courses in majors enhance and build upon VWU's General Education core courses, providing candidates the opportunity to learn how to think about the knowledge in the disciplines and how this knowledge can contribute to becoming effective, successful teachers;
- 3) **Professional Knowledge** evolves through carefully thought-out courses of study that are combined with multiple site-based experiences starting with the first course students take in both our undergraduate and newly approved Master of Arts in Education (M.A. Ed.) programs. Throughout their professional studies coursework, candidates are encouraged to recognize and to be responsive to learners' diverse needs, gifts, and talents as they connect their endorsement area knowledge to an understanding and eventual application of effective pedagogy through observation and participation in diverse classrooms to see how preK-12 students learn and think at various stages in their development;
- 4) **Field Experience** opportunities help all candidates develop further the practical knowledge that pre-service teachers need to connect academic and professional studies coursework to professional practice. Early site-based experiences that begin in the pre-admission courses and continue throughout the programs lead to formal practicum experiences and culminate in the student teaching semester. These experiences provide candidates with extensive opportunities to explore diverse educational settings and develop specific competencies and

desired dispositions through observation, participation in professional learning communities, peer collaboration, guided practice, direct instruction, and reflection that leads to personal growth and elevates the status of the profession.

### **Character**

Character speaks to the “inner landscape of teaching” and the need to “cherish – and challenge – the human heart that is the source of good teaching” (Palmer, 2007, p. 4). The challenge of which Palmer (2007) writes is best described by Covey (2004) as the crucial challenge: to find our own voice and inspire others to find theirs. Over the past two decades, great attention has been focused on the importance of identifying and cultivating appropriate dispositions, or character strengths, for candidates in teacher education programs (Pang, Nichols, Terwilliger, & Walsh, 2014).

At Virginia Wesleyan, we see dispositions as qualities that are necessary to possess good character, and they are a vital part of the expressed mission of our Teacher Education Program. Within teacher education, dispositions have been defined as “patterns of behavior exhibited frequently, consciously and voluntarily by educators (Katz, 1993) and often demonstrated through a positive attitude, engagement, a value of diversity, and commitment to effective communication” (Baum & Swick, cited in Pang, et al., 2014). Both Maslow (1954) and Covey (2004) felt it necessary to address social and emotional needs – Palmer’s “inner landscape” – as powerful motivators, and speak of “the heart” in terms of having relationships which are satisfying interactions with students in the classroom, and with other teachers, administrators, parents, and community stakeholders. As such, character plays a significant role in a teacher’s success both in and out of the classroom. Thus, the cultivation of good character and the dispositions associated with good character seems in keeping with states’ guidelines and professional education organizations (e.g., Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation). These organizations call for teacher education programs to cultivate positive dispositions and assess these dispositions as one part of continual program improvement. Based on the research and established guidelines, the potential conclusion is that the more of the critical character traits that are possessed by teachers in terms of dispositions, the more likely those teachers are to persist in the profession and to have a positive impact on the learning of all students.

In VWU’s education programs, we identify good character as part of our mission. We include as part of the needed dispositions the goals and learning outcomes of evaluative and reflective practice (InTASC 9), knowledge of education trends and issues (InTASC 10), as well as additional behaviors and mindsets needed to become successful, reflective educators of good character. The dispositions are cultivated and developed primarily through the professional studies courses and through interactions with education faculty and education professionals, both in university classrooms and during site-based and formal field experiences. It is our firm desire to communicate these dispositions to candidates, faculty,

and school partners to ensure that all parties are contributing to and reinforcing the development of qualities and traits that empower teachers and define good character.

### **Academic Knowledge**

Academic knowledge encompasses VWU's General Education courses that assist our candidates in understanding themselves and the world around them, and that allow them to gain a broader view of knowledge in multiple disciplines. The disciplinary content courses enhance and build upon the General Education courses, providing candidates the opportunity to learn how to think about knowledge in the disciplines and their endorsement areas, and how this knowledge can contribute to becoming effective, successful teachers. Candidates fulfill General Education requirements and specially designed endorsement area programs. The General Education Requirements ensure VWU graduates demonstrate proficiency in writing for a variety of rhetorical purposes; demonstrate competency in a language other than English; complete three Wesleyan Seminars designed to foster intellectual excitement and curiosity and to develop strong essential academic skills of reading, writing, and oral communication; and complete a six-course Breadth Requirement to ensure a well-rounded education

Candidates seeking initial licensure in the current undergraduate elementary preK-6 and special education general curriculum K-12 programs gain the content needed to be successful teachers through satisfactory completion of coursework needed to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Comprehensive Liberal Studies. Candidates seeking initial licensure in a secondary and preK-12 certification area will earn a BA or BS in the appropriate approved academic major, then transition to an intensive fifth year of professional studies coursework coupled with multiple supervised field-based experiences in diverse educational settings through the Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) Program. All program candidates are assessed on the pedagogical and endorsement competencies specified in guiding documents identified as the *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia* and the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards (2013). These guiding documents form the basis of assessment instruments, including rubrics and examinations, as well as practicum and student-teaching observation forms that are used in our Teacher Education Program. Endorsement area courses of study are typically co-constructed by education and liberal arts and sciences faculty to fulfill the required teaching competencies identified in the *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia* (2017). New programs are vetted by our partners in preK-12 education through direct contact or membership on advisory boards. Courses of study in the academic disciplines are dynamic and continually reviewed and adjusted based on emerging knowledge of best practices in the academic field, updates to the Virginia Standards of Learning, and feedback from partners, advisory boards, and alumni in the field.

### **Professional Knowledge**

Professional and pedagogical knowledge evolve in the undergraduate programs through a carefully planned course of study that includes both pre-admission and professional studies courses and early site-based experiences. The faculty agree with Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2007) that knowledge about the teaching profession and the issues that surround the field of teaching are best acquired by pairing coursework with exposure to real school settings, with real students and real teachers. In the newer M.A.Ed. Programs, professional and pedagogical knowledge is imparted through a purposeful progression of professional studies courses combined with multiple site-based experiences and supervised internships that begin concurrently with the first course taken by M.A.Ed. candidates.

Throughout their experience in the Teacher Education Program, all candidates are encouraged to connect their content area knowledge to the understanding and eventual application of effective pedagogy as they observe and participate in diverse classrooms to see how students learn and think at various stages in their development. Realization of this nexus is crucial for candidates to develop an understanding of the disposition of reflection and of praxis, “the process of taking action in practice whilst acting within a theoretical framework of thought” (Quinlan, 2012). Our interpretation of this notion is that through the process of reflection and field experiences (action), our candidates will evolve from students of teaching into teachers of students, capable of transforming the lives of all students. We integrate research on professional and pedagogical preparation (Danielson, 2007 & 2014; Marzano, 2017) and culturally responsive teaching (Hammond, 2015; Gay, 2010) with research conducted by education faculty, information contained in state and national guidelines, and feedback from our school partners and alumni into our program structure. These tools are used deliberately and thoughtfully to prepare our candidates with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions identified in both the InTASC Standards (2011) and Virginia’s teacher competencies. Our Program Goals, Learning Outcomes field observation instruments, and syllabi serve as evidence of this preparation perspective. The learning outcomes are aligned with our program goals and contribute to our annual and long-term assessment audits and our reflection on program effectiveness, candidate development, assessment practices, and growth.

### **Field Experience**

Field Experience opportunities help candidates develop the practical knowledge that pre-service teachers need to connect academic and professional studies coursework to professional practice. Early site-based experiences begin in the pre-admission courses, continue throughout the program, and lead to formal practicum experiences and student teaching. Providing early, frequent, and essential field experiences in multiple geographic areas expose VWU candidates to the increasing diversity of the region’s schools and the students who attend them. Candidates gain extensive opportunities to explore diverse education settings and develop specific competencies and desired dispositions through observation, participation in professional learning communities, peer collaboration, guided practice, and direct instruction. As a result of collaborations and/or partnerships with local school divisions and an on-campus laboratory school, and before formal admission to the Teacher Education Program, undergraduate

students will have had two or three meaningful opportunities to observe school culture and classroom routines, and participate in education activities with school-aged children and education professionals, in the formal education settings of schools and in the less-formal settings of public libraries and other site-based programs. These early experiences provide students a chance to determine if teaching is the vocation to which they are called, or if their hearts and minds are drawn to other careers.

Once admitted to the Teacher Education Program, both undergraduate and graduate candidates are exposed to additional site-based experiences carefully coordinated with their professional studies courses. In the undergraduate programs, these experiences occur before formal practicum and student teaching, allowing candidates to begin the process of observing and translating theory into practice under the watchful guidance of VWU faculty and committed education partners. Practicum experiences during methods coursework allow undergraduate and graduate candidates to reinforce their development of praxis as they apply their pedagogical knowledge in diverse, formal school settings appropriate for their endorsement areas. During these experiences, candidates are typically supervised by their methods course instructors, who can provide near-immediate feedback and fine-tune or re-emphasize course content based on multiple classroom observations of the candidates. Upon successful completion of practicum experiences and the recommendations of faculty teaching the methods courses, candidates proceed to student teaching. Student teaching at VWU is a performance-based demonstration of curriculum implementation and teaching procedures and competencies at acceptable levels for the areas and learning outcomes described in this conceptual framework. Student teachers are also expected to demonstrate developing knowledge and awareness of the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers* during their placements and in carefully constructed seminars. All of this is accomplished with the support of seminar professors, cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and education and content area faculty. We believe that it is in this environment of multi-faceted support VWU candidates emerge as highly desirable professional educators who exhibit good character; understand the importance of communicating clearly and coherently; demonstrate effective instructional planning and behavior management practices; demonstrate effective instructional and assessment practices; and demonstrate the ability to reflect on and evaluate their practices and engage in identified professional behaviors that lead to lifelong personal growth, continual improvement, and a commitment to the growth and status of the profession.

## **Conclusion**

We have identified four components (Character, Academic Knowledge, Professional Knowledge, Field Experience) that are expressed in goals in specific majors that are annually assessed. The outcomes reflect alignment with Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Standards as well as those of InTASC and reflect evolving program emphases. Candidate outcomes are annually reviewed by the Director of the Teacher Education Program in consultation with the Coordinator of Accreditation, Data Collection, and Reporting, and Education faculty who supply formal and informal stakeholder input.

1. Develop candidates who know their endorsement area content and are able to employ best practices in instruction of that content to all students.
2. Develop candidates who are knowledgeable, reflective, and able to plan, provide, and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners, to include culturally responsive teaching.
3. Develop candidates who are knowledgeable, reflective, and able to employ effective behavior management strategies in the classroom and beyond.
4. Develop candidates who are knowledgeable, reflective, and able to use instructional media and technology to enhance student learning.
5. Develop candidates who are knowledgeable, reflective, and able to employ assessment strategies to collect and evaluate data to increase student learning.
6. Develop candidates who are able to evaluate and reflect on professional responsibilities, enhance the profession, and are knowledgeable of current trends and issues in education.
7. Develop candidates who possess good character and the dispositions to be successful, reflective teachers.

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## **Undergraduate Teacher Education at VWU**

### *Elementary Education PreK-6*

Students seeking to teach in grades PreK-6 are advised to major in Elementary Education. This major offers a broad-based course sequence in the liberal arts that provides teacher candidates with a strong interdisciplinary knowledge base and the skills necessary for highly-qualified elementary teachers. Even before acceptance into the program, students seeking PreK-6 elementary education endorsement will have the opportunity to experience teaching in multiple diverse contexts. These experiences intensify after admission, serving as a means to bridge the gap between the theory learned in class and the practical aspects of teaching. During the senior year of this program, candidates enroll in a 50-hour practicum placement preceding a 300-hour culminating student teaching placement in the spring. Those completing all four years at VWU typically spend over 400 hours in the field. This program leads to a state teaching licensure in Elementary Education Pre-K-6.

### *Special Education: General Curriculum K-12*

Students seeking to be special educators are advised to major in Special Education. This major offers a broad-based course sequence in the liberal arts that provides candidates a strong interdisciplinary knowledge base and the skills necessary for highly-qualified special education teachers. Even before acceptance into the program, students seeking this endorsement will have the opportunity to experience teaching in multiple diverse contexts. These experiences intensify after admission, serving as a means to bridge the gap between the theory learned in class and the practical aspects of teaching. As they near the end of the program, candidates enroll in a 50-hour practicum placement preceding a 300-hour culminating student teaching placement in the spring. Candidates completing all four years at VWU typically spend over 400 hours in the field. This program leads to a state teaching licensure in Special Education: General Curriculum K-12.

### *Education Studies: Non-licensure track*

Students seeking to become educators in areas or within institutions that do not require state licensure may be interested in completing the Education Studies major. Like the elementary and special education majors Education Studies offers a broad-based course sequence in the liberal arts that provides candidates a strong interdisciplinary knowledge base and the skills necessary for becoming effective educators. Even before acceptance into the program, students seeking this endorsement will have the opportunity to experience teaching in multiple diverse contexts. These experiences intensify after admission, serving as a means to bridge the gap between the theory learned in class and the practical aspects of teaching. This program includes opportunities for internships at our on-campus lab school, but internships are not required for the major. Also, the licensure tests required of the Elementary Education and Special Education majors are not required. This major does not lead to Virginia teaching licensure.

### **What to Expect from the VWU Teacher Education Program**

Drawing from the VWU Teacher Education Program Mission, Conceptual Framework, the *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia*, and InTASC standards, Virginia Wesleyan University's Teacher Education Program offers candidates a unique educational experience meant to prepare confident and effective educators to meet the diverse needs of today's PK-12 students. Students interested in becoming teachers are guided by a academic adviser in the Education Department that will assist them in understanding the necessary requirements for admittance into, and subsequently the successful completion of a Four-Year Teacher Education Program.

### *Before Admission*

Leveraging VWU's diverse on- and off-campus education partnerships, pre-admission education-related courses (INST 202: The School and the Society, EDUC 266: Classroom Management and Teaching Strategies, and EDUC 225: Characteristics of the Learner) provide candidates early experiences in real-world teaching contexts to assist them in making the decision to continue or change their course of study. Figure 1 illustrates one of many projects meant to provide candidates the means to create a 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environment for future preK-12 students. These types of projects and early field-based experiences are enhanced through small class sizes and broad-based liberal arts coursework that encourage interdisciplinary thinking, critical thinking, and stronger relationships among students and between students and professors.



*Figure 1. Candidates lead activities using an augmented reality topographical mapping device to teach about watersheds.*

### *Requirements for Admission*

VWU students interested in Elementary Education, Special Education or Education Studies majors must formally indicate the major in which they are interested and apply for admission to the Teacher Education Program. All required paperwork for admission into the Teacher Education Program is distributed online during preadmission education courses and should be submitted to Education Department staff via email or in Pruden 103. If for some reason a candidate does not obtain an application packet during coursework, packets are also available in Pruden 103. Admission into the Teacher Education Program is required before enrolling in 300-level professional education courses. Table 1 explicates admission requirements and provides suggested dates for their completion. Each required test is assigned to a required course in the Teacher Education Program. Although professors will require study time and registration for the tests, it is the responsibility of the candidate to put in the time and effort necessary to do well on the tests. Candidates who successfully meet these requirements in the suggested timeframe position themselves to successfully complete their degree on time.

VWU undergraduate teaching candidates will encounter three important gateways during their academic journey. Each gateway is specially designed to ensure all candidates are well-prepared, highly qualified, and ready to enter the teaching profession upon program completion.

### Gateway 1: Program Admission

By the end of their sophomore year, aspiring elementary and special education teachers must apply and successfully complete all requirements for program admission (Table 1). It should be noted that most requirements are tied to courses within the majors. Students should keep track of all required materials.

Table 1. Undergraduate Education Program admission requirements.

<b>Undergraduate Education Program Admission Requirements</b>	<b>Suggested Timeframe to Complete Requirements</b>
Complete Education Program Application and submit to Education Program staff in Pruden Hall room 103.	A student thinking about becoming a teacher should begin the application process as soon as possible. Initial documents are provided in INST 202 and EDUC 266 or in Pruden 103.
Receive a score of 160 or above on a math competency test or submit a qualifying equivalent SAT/ACT score as substitute.	Candidates are required to take the math competency test during EDUC 266 or EDUC 225, depending on which course comes after their first college math course. <b>This is not required for Education Studies majors.</b>
<a href="#">Submit Passing Scores on VCLA (Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment)</a>	Candidates are required to register for the VCLA during EDUC 266 or EDUC 225, depending on which course comes after ENG 222. <b>This is not required for Education Studies majors.</b>
Complete and pass the Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition and Intervention Training module and submit a certificate of completion.	Complete while enrolled in EDUC 225.
Complete and pass the Virginia State and Local <a href="#">Civic Education Module</a> and submit a certificate of completion.	Complete while enrolled in EDUC 266.

Complete the Restraint Module and submit a certificate of completion.	Complete while enrolled in EDUC 266.
Achieving Acceptable ratings (AVG -2.5) on the VWU Dispositional Survey for Educators.	Complete while enrolled in INST 202: The School and Society.
Successfully complete the following courses with a grade of C or above.  INST 202: The School and Society  EDUC 225: Characteristics of the Learner  EDUC 266: Classroom Management and Teaching Strategies (Ed Studies—this is a part of the major)	Complete by the End of the Sophomore Year.
Achieve an overall cumulative GPA of at least 2.8 at the time of application.	Be aware of your overall GPA at all times and maintain at least a 2.8 GPA. <b>Education Studies majors need at least a 2.5 GPA.</b>

### *What to Expect After Admission*

Upon entry into the Teacher Education Program, candidates begin to enroll in upper-level professional education courses where education professors employ a vast array of pedagogical techniques in order to bridge the gap between education theory and practice. Candidates' participation in diverse authentic teaching settings will increase as will their teaching responsibilities within such contexts. Small class sizes allow for productive debriefing and reflective discussion after candidates' development and implementation of original lesson plans. This also allows for professors to provide in-depth and individualized feedback on candidates' performance. Figure 2 illustrates one of many field experiences that allow VWU candidates to express their learning through the development and implementation of engaging lessons tied to knowledge of learning and instructional theory acquired in professional education coursework.

Another unique aspect of Virginia Wesleyan's undergraduate education program is four-semester-hour coursework. Four-semester-hour professional education coursework typically includes students meeting with their professor for three (or more) hours per week for face-to-face instruction, while all or part of the "fourth hour" is reserved to enhance the learning in the classroom. Professors often use this fourth hour for field trips to partnering institutions and/or to provide candidates with field-based experiences on and off campus. Candidates often rate these activities as some of the most meaningful learning experiences in their time at Wesleyan.

Completing the Elementary Education or Special Education majors prepares candidates for teacher certification, but in order to maintain good standing in the program and take part in the required final internship (student teaching), candidates must successfully meet and complete specific requirements.



*Figure 2.* Elementary Education candidate, Erik Estrada, reads about the moon to young students in a "Spaceship Blanket Fort" at the Slover Library.

Education Studies majors must also meet certain requirements to graduate, but they are not required to complete a full-time internship or licensure tests. Once admitted to the Teacher Education Program, students will encounter two important gateways in order to continue toward their goals: Gateway 2 and Gateway 3. A separate handbook, the VWU Clinical Experiences Handbook, provides an in-depth description of requirements for student teaching. This is available in Pruden 103 and can be found on the VWU Education website. It is extremely important for licensure track candidates to keep up with requirements as most are needed for initial licensure in Virginia, and all are required to successfully complete the program. Candidates who do not complete the requirements in a timely manner may delay their graduation, and candidates who do not successfully meet or complete the requirements may not complete the program. Again, all documentation mentioned in Table 1 should be submitted to Education Department Staff in Pruden 103.

### Gateway 2: Recommendation for Student Teaching

Student teaching serves as the culminating internship experience for all teaching candidates. During this internship VWU teaching candidates will be responsible for preK-12 student learning. Thus, it is important that VWU faculty are confident that each candidate has the knowledge, skills, and appropriate dispositions to be successful in educating students in an authentic teaching context. Professional education courses with multiple field experiences help to prepare VWU teaching candidates for student teaching. Table 2 delineates the specific requirements needed for a teaching candidate to be recommended for student teaching. Again, these requirements are explicitly tied to coursework and candidates should keep track of all required materials.

Table 2.

Gateway 2 requirements needed for candidates to be recommended for student teaching (ELED and SPED majors) or be recommended for program completion (Education Studies).

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Requirement Descriptions and/or Suggestions</b>
Maintain an overall cumulative GPA of at least 2.8 at the time of application. Education Studies must maintain a 2.5 GPA.	Candidates should be aware of grades in all coursework and utilize VWU tutoring services when needed.
Achieve grades of C or better in ALL Professional Studies Education courses and a C- or better in all required coursework in the Teacher Education Program	Candidates should be aware of grades in all coursework and utilize VWU tutoring services when needed.
Maintain an "Acceptable" (2.7) rating or higher on all dispositional criteria on the VWU Dispositional Survey for Educators.	Candidates complete a self-evaluation of their dispositions in specific EDUC courses and their professors will discuss ratings with them. Candidates with any scores below "Acceptable" on this survey may not be recommended for practicum placement or student teaching placement.
Provide evidence of successful completion of the Dyslexia Awareness Training Module.	Candidates should submit completion certificate while enrolled in EDUC 321. This is typically the spring of the Junior Year.

Submit Passing Scores on Reading for Virginia Educators (RVE) assessment. <b>This is not required for Education Studies majors.</b>	Candidates should submit passing scores while enrolled in EDUC 321, typically in the spring of the Junior Year.
Submit passing scores on all sections of the <u>Praxis</u> Multiple Subjects Test. <b>This is not required for Education Studies majors.</b>	Passing scores are due to the Education Department by October 30 if student teaching the following spring, or March 15 if student teaching in the following fall.
Submit a negative TB test and a clean Background Clearance Check. <b>This is not required for Education Studies majors.</b>	Candidates should submit documentation of a negative TB test prior to Practicum placement. This should be done the summer after the Junior Year.
Submit a clean Background Clearance Check. <b>This is not required for Education Studies majors.</b>	The Seminar Professor will provide candidates with proper forms and instructions for completing the Background Clearance Check. A clear Check is necessary to continue to practicum and pre-service teaching.
Practicum Instructor Grants Consent for Student Teaching. <b>This is not required for Education Studies majors.</b>	Candidates' progress to the student teaching experience is contingent on a successful practicum experience. The practicum instructors will notify the Director of Teacher Education and the Seminar Professor of recommendations at the end of the practicum course.
Provide evidence of completion of a certification or training program in emergency first aid, hands-on training for CPR, & use of AED, such as a program developed by the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross. <b>This is not required for Education Studies majors.</b>	Submit in the Fall or in January of your Senior Year.

### Gateway 3: Recommendation for Virginia Teaching Certification

Candidates taking part in the senior internship (student teaching) will complete an impact study and their teaching will be observed multiple times by multiple instructional experts. Candidates who successfully complete this internship are considered well-prepared, highly qualified, and ready to enter the teaching profession. As such, with a successful review of all elements within the student teaching experience, the VWU Director of Teacher Education will recommend teaching candidates for Virginia Teaching Certification in their particular endorsement area. Gateway 2 is the last requirement for Education Studies majors, so they do not need to pass Gateway 3.

### Expectations of Candidates Admitted into the Teacher Education Program

As the requirements in previous sections imply, candidates hoping to complete the major and education coursework and experiences within four years must complete the requirements of their program successfully and on time. Although we provide suggestions in this handbook, in supplemental documentation, and offer advising sessions to assist candidates on their academic journey, it is ultimately the candidates' responsibility to complete the requirements in the timeframe provided. We also expect candidates to be aware of all graduation requirements found in the VWU Catalog. To be clear, the VWU Education Department expects students to accept the responsibility to meet the standards and complete

any requirements explicated in Tables 1 and 2 above in order to be accepted into and continue within their chosen program. In order to achieve desired success, candidates are encouraged to use the wealth of resources at VWU in order to successfully meet all requirements.

### **Suggestions for Success & Consequences for Underperformance in the Teacher Education Program**

#### *Academic Support Services*

##### Learning Center & Writing Center

If a student is ever struggling academically, we highly encourage use of the VWU Learning Center. Located in Clarke Hall, the Learning Center caters to students' individual academic needs, including one-on-one writing support, and offers ample appointment times available throughout the semester. Also, within the Learning Center, the Speech Lab can help students prepare for oral presentations. The Center houses crucial resources for students hoping to keep their GPA above a 2.8, and for those students looking for assistance in passing a required admission or licensure test. The Writing Center is also within the Learning Center and offers assistance on papers and writing in general.

##### Praxis Math Assistance

Every winter semester, VWU provides a non-credit-bearing Praxis Math preparation course ~~in order~~ to assist those students that may be concerned about passing the math portion of the Praxis Multiple Subjects test. This course is free to students enrolled in a winter course, and there is a small fee for those not already enrolled in a winter course.

##### VCLA Assistance

Every winter semester, VWU provides a one credit English grammar course designed to assist students in passing the VCLA.

##### Teacher Education Academic Advisor

Prospective or admitted candidates are assigned an academic advisor within the Teacher Education Department to assist them in successfully completing the program. All prospective or admitted candidates must meet with their advisor during advising weeks each semester in preparation for registration and to discuss their progress and other program-related requirements and concerns. The Four-Year Suggested Course Plan allows candidates to easily view and plan for the courses in which they need to register before their advising session, so that a more in-depth discussion about individual progress and goals may be achieved. Thus, it is expected that candidates come prepared to all advising meetings.

To be prepared for an advising meeting, candidates should do the following:

1. Review their Program Evaluation on WebAdvisor
2. Know their current GPA
3. Know what application/program requirements they have met and what requirements are still needed
4. Have a schedule for taking required tests and/or proof that they have scheduled or already passed the tests
5. Have a list of possible courses and their related times for registration the following semester
6. Have a prepared list of questions/concerns if necessary (email this to the advisor in advance, if possible)

If candidates are prompt and prepared, advising meetings are much more efficient and effective, and provide greater value to the student.

#### *Consequences of Academic Underperformance*

Any student achieving less than an overall GPA of a 2.8 at time of application will not be admitted into the Teacher Education Program. Any candidate achieving less than an overall GPA of a 2.8 (ELED and SPED) or 2.5 (Ed Studies) OR failing to meet acceptable standards on a Key Assignment in the program will be put on Teacher Education Program Probation and will be notified via email of a scheduled meeting with their professor or their advisor, followed, if necessary, by a meeting with the Director of Teacher Education. To prepare for this meeting, candidates on Teacher Education Program Probation must prepare a written description detailing an action plan for improvement. This meeting with the professor, adviser, and/or Director of Teacher Education will consist of a description of support services, a discussion of the candidate's plan to get back on track, and a description of consequences of another semester under an overall 2.8 (2.5 Ed Studies) GPA and/or options to resubmit a Key Assignment. Candidates must bring their overall GPA to or above a 2.8 (2.5 Ed Studies) in the following semester in order to continue enrolling in Professional Studies Education Courses.

Candidates who earn a grade less than a C in a professional studies education course or less than a C- in a course required for the program must retake the course in order to complete the program.

Elementary and special education candidates must submit documentation of passing scores for all required licensure assessments, of completion of training modules, and for all other requirements by the deadlines in Tables 1 and 2 to receive consent for pre-service teaching. Failure to do so will delay student teaching, program completion, and eligibility for licensure.

#### *Dispositional Support & Consequences of Dispositional Underperformance*

Due to the nature of the teaching profession, the development of dispositions typical of effective teachers are critical to teaching candidates' success and completion of any VWU Teacher Education Program. Although professors assess candidates' dispositions in several professional education courses, it is critical that candidates develop average ratings of 2.7 on all dispositions upon completion of practicum or their last methods course. Candidates who do not achieve these dispositional ratings may not receive the required consent to complete their student-teaching experiences (ELED and SPED) or to be provided an opportunity for internship (Ed Studies).

To address any misunderstanding of the survey of dispositions in general by candidates, education professors will invite discussion regarding dispositional criteria within the survey during a pre-admission course. In order to assist candidates in developing dispositions typical of effective teachers, professors in specific courses will meet individually with candidates to discuss their dispositional ratings. In these professional studies education courses, candidates with ratings that are below "Acceptable" will meet individually with their professor during the semester. Dispositional ratings are not graded, and are meant to encourage metacognitive reflection and discussion. In order for an underperforming candidate to graduate to the next Gateway, the candidate and their professor will discuss how best to address areas of concern and the candidate will submit a written plan to the professor on how he or she hopes to address any weaknesses. This plan will then be sent to the Director of Teacher Education and discussed with the professor. Depending on the performance of the candidate and their plan, the Director of Teacher Education could decide to accept the candidate provisionally through the next Gateway, or have them retake the preadmission course, practicum or methods course. If the candidate does not agree with the decision, he or she may request a meeting with the Director of Teacher Education to discuss the issue. Underperforming candidates who continue to have ratings below the required threshold after submitting a plan will need to meet with the Director of Teacher Education and a committee to present a comprehensive plan to address these weaknesses. If the plan is accepted, the candidate may continue in the Teacher Education Program. If not, a recommendation may be made that the candidate resubmit the plan or pursue a different course of study at the University.

#### *The Importance of Consistent Attendance and the Prompt Submission of Assigned Work*



Of course, it is extremely important for all VWU students to attend class regularly and to submit assignments in a timely manner. Due to the professional nature of VWU's Teacher Education Program and the career that education candidates are hoping to enter, consistent attendance and the prompt completion of assigned work are crucial. Because professional studies education coursework often involves candidates in field-based experiences that include the teaching of PreK-12 students, a candidate's absence or late submission of work could negatively impact the learning achievements of others. These types of behaviors are not traits of an effective educator. For these reasons, chronic absences and/or the late submission of work in professional studies education courses may result in candidates being asked to withdraw from the course or may result in a failing grade. Syllabi will clearly delineate procedures for notifying the professor of a need to be absent or late to class, and any consequences for chronic absences or the submission of late work.

### Field Experience Attendance

Field-experiences are an extremely important part of candidates' learning. In many cases, the unique field experiences provided in our program have developed over years of careful planning and discussion between institutional partners. When scheduled as a part of the 4<sup>th</sup>-semester hour, the field experiences may take place outside of the normal class meeting. In these cases, the professor will provide candidates with ample notice, and candidates should make every effort to attend the experience. Missing a scheduled field experience is arguably one of the most difficult learning experiences to make up, and it can negatively affect a candidate's learning and grade. If a candidate cannot attend the experience, he or she must do the following:

1. Two weeks prior to the scheduled date of the experience, the candidate should provide documentation of why he or she cannot attend the experience.
2. If the candidate is sick, he or she must give notice as soon as possible and provide the professor with a doctor's note upon returning to class.
3. The candidate should ask the professor about possible make-up dates or another comparable experience to attend. If there is not a comparable experience, the candidate may discuss taking an Incomplete for the course.

### In Conclusion

The aim of this *Handbook* is to provide prospective undergraduate teacher candidates and admitted teacher candidates with a comprehensive overview of the undergraduate components Teacher Education Program experience. Changes to Teacher Education Program and VWU requirements are inevitable, and the Education Department will always attempt to inform candidates of such changes in the most expedient manner possible. Updates to the *Handbook* will be made accordingly. Nevertheless, the ultimate responsibility for knowing and understanding the requirements for program completion and graduation rest with the candidate. It is the hope and desire of the Teacher Education Faculty that all candidates be successful in pursuing the vocation of teaching and when they become teachers. This Handbook is one part of the support and guidance that candidates can expect throughout their study at VWU.

If you are a new student interested in teaching as a career, we extend you a warm welcome to VWU and encourage you to refer to the contents of the Handbook often as you progress toward candidate status. If you are already a candidate in one of the programs, we congratulate you on your acceptance, look forward to supporting you to achieve your goal of becoming a teacher, and hope this Handbook clearly communicates the policies, procedures, and expectations of VWU's Teacher Education Program.