

**Georgia Assessment and Certification of Educators - GACE
SPECIAL EDUCATION & EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Committee Report

Date: 8/1/07

Committee Members/Role

Kathleen Tootle (Co-Chair): Evaluated Special Education program/courses for undergraduate general curriculum, academic content, MAT general curriculum and evaluated Reading and Language Arts courses

Kathleen Crawford (Co-Chair): Evaluated Early Childhood Education program/courses and evaluated Reading and Language Arts courses

Karen Chassereau (Member): Evaluated Science courses for SPED and ECED

Donald Rakestraw (Member): Evaluated Social Studies courses for SPED and ECED

Sharon Taylor (Member): Evaluated Mathematics courses for SPED and ECED

Process:

To begin this project, the committee co-chairs met and reviewed the GACE website. The test framework worksheets were identified for both Special Education and Early Childhood Education. The Student Success Center was contacted to obtain the most recent programs of study for both Special Education and Early Childhood Education. The individual committee members were contacted and sent the test framework worksheet that included the GACE objectives and were asked to obtain course syllabi/content outlines for his/her individual discipline. In addition, the Co-Chairs collected a small sample of individual score reports from the first group of students who completed the GACE Assessment. The reports were analyzed to determine consistencies and inconsistencies between program (ECED/SPED) and GACE objectives.

The committee members individually aligned GACE objectives and content course objectives. These results are indicated on the matrices (See Attachments A, B, C, and D). Additionally, the members provided a narrative of their findings and recommendations for future program changes.

Findings for Early Childhood Education

1. All GACE objectives were covered within the program of study with varying degrees of emphases across content areas and courses.
2. The Early Childhood objectives (across courses) appear to be written under the assumption that students already possess the content knowledge. The emphasis of these courses is pedagogy and assessment of the content areas rather than the content itself.
3. When reviewing syllabi for major requirements, it was noted that there were inconsistencies in the course objectives.
 - a. ECED 3262 (Language and Literacy) provided numerous objectives that visibly aligned with the GACE Test Framework/Objectives. The course objectives were specific and clearly written.
 - b. ECED 4533 (P-5 Social Studies) provided course objectives that were written in a general manner. For example, “Demonstrate acceptable knowledge of content involved in P-5 Social Studies.” This statement is unclear as to whether or not GACE objectives are being covered.
 - c. ECED 4333 (P-5 Teaching Mathematics) provided course purposes and student outcomes. It was unclear if the goals or student outcomes were synonymous with the term “objective”. It is not obvious to whether or not the GACE objectives are covered because the wording is vague.
 - d. READ 4233 (Literacy Assessment and Instruction) provided course objectives that covered assessment and diagnosis methods only.

4. When reviewing the small sampling of ECED GACE scores, there were three main findings (See Attachment E and Descriptors):
 - a. In the sections of Reading/English Language Arts, Social Studies and Health, Physical Education and the Arts students typically scored within the higher range of the performance indices.
 - b. In the section of Mathematics, students scored exceptionally well in both the selected and constructed response questions. Most students scored higher in the constructed response questions. This could be a correlation with the number of math courses required of the ECED students.
 - c. In the section of Science, over half of the students scored exceptionally well on the selected response questions whereas over half of the students scored in the lowest range of the performance indices on the constructed response questions.

Recommendations for Early Childhood Education Program

1. Include in the course syllabi GACE objectives that align with the given content area for major course requirements, in particularly ECED 3262 (Language and Literacy), ECED 4533 (P-5 Social Studies), ECED 4333 (P-5 Mathematics), ECED 4433 (P-5 Science), ECED 3232 (P-5 Creative Arts) and HLTH 3530 (P-5 Health and P.E.).
2. When assigning unit and lesson planning topics, advise the course instructors to provide students with topic choices that have a GPS/GACE alignment to further develop content knowledge.
3. In some cases, students enroll in READ 4233 (Literacy Assessment and Instruction) and ECED 3262 (P-5 Language and Literacy) during the same semester. It is recommended that ECED 3262 be a pre-requisite for READ 4233 so that the content knowledge that aligns with the GACE can be covered first.
4. In Science courses ISCI 2001 (Life/Earth Science), ISCI 2002 (Physical Science), and ECED 4433 (P-5 Science) implement examinations/assignments that require students to

complete extended responses that align with GACE objectives. This will allow the students to practice writing extended responses in the area of Science.

5. Teacher Education Program Requirements currently state that students must complete Areas A and F with a minimum grade of a “C”. Currently, it is acceptable for students to earn a grade of a “D” in areas B-G which are major content areas. It is recommended that students who earn a grade of a “D” in Program Areas B-G be required to retake the course and earn a minimum grade of “C”.
6. It is recommended that a representative from Georgia Southern University procure GACE test scores that provide feedback for each major content area. Once this information is obtained, the representative will identify strengths and weaknesses of the program and share the results with faculty and develop departmental goals.

Findings for Special Education

1. When examining GACE test results the great majority of students passed the General Curriculum Assessment.
2. All GACE objectives were covered within the program of study with varying degrees of emphases across content areas and courses for the general curriculum program and the MAT program, but not for the Academic Content Concentration Test.
3. In the Academic Concentration Area there are several alignment gaps in Reading/English Language Arts and Mathematics. Specifically, it is unclear if there are GSU courses within the SPED program that cover:
 - a. Reading/ELA – Objective 0007: Understand skills involved in listening, speaking and viewing.
 - b. Mathematics – Objective 0012: Understand concepts and skills related to numbers and mathematical operations

- c. Mathematics – Objective 0013: Understand principles and applications of measurement and geometry.
 - d. Mathematics – Objective 0015: Understand concepts and skills related to data analysis and principles of probability.
3. Currently in the SPED program of study students are required to take 2 labs and 1 Science elective. If a student selects Science as their concentration area, he/she is required to take an additional 9 hours. The Science objectives on the GACE are derived solely from elective courses (with the exception of Objective 0020 – Understand the characteristics, tools, and processes of science).
4. It is advised for all SPED students to enroll in MATH 1111 (Algebra). If they choose not to enroll in this course, another Math course must be taken. Students whose area of concentration is Math are currently required to take MATH 5134 (Topics in Discrete Math for K-8 Teachers), MATH 5135 (Calculus Concepts for K-8 Teachers), and a math elective. It is also noted that there are no GACE objectives that align with MATH 5134 (See Attachment F).

Recommendations for Special Education

1. SPED students with a concentration in English Language Arts currently have a choice to enroll in WRIT 3131 (The Teaching of Writing) or READ 3330 (Content Literacy). There is also a choice between ENGL 5135 (Teaching Literature 6-12) or ENGL 5534 (Literature P-5). They are all required to take LING/WRIT 3430 (Linguistics and Grammar for Teachers). Since LING/WRIT does not address any GACE objectives, it is recommended that students enroll in WRIT 3131 and READ 3330 with the option of taking ENGL 5135 or ENGL 5534 depending on their age/grade preference.
2. In order to meet the Mathematics GACE objectives, it is recommended that students who are specializing in that area enroll in MATH 2008 (Foundations of Numbers and Operations), MATH 3032 (Math for K-8 II) and MATH 5135 (Calculus Concepts for K-8

Teachers). Although this removes the elective options, these are the three courses that most closely align with GACE objectives.

3. Since the majority of Science courses that align with GACE objectives are electives for our SPED students it is recommended that the students be required to take ISCI 2001 (Life/Earth Science) and ISCI 2002 (Physical Science). This will provide them with more concentrated coursework that is pertinent to GACE objectives.
4. When assigning unit and lesson planning topics, advise the course instructors to provide students with topic choices that have a GPS/GACE alignment to further develop content knowledge.
5. Teacher Education Program Requirements currently state that students must complete Areas A and F with a minimum grade of a “C”. Currently, it is acceptable for students to earn a grade of a “D” in areas B-G which are major content areas. It is recommended that students who earn a grade of a “D” in Program Areas B-G be required to retake the course and earn a minimum grade of “C”.
6. It is recommended that a representative from Georgia Southern University procure GACE test scores that provide feedback for each major content area. Once this information is obtained, the representative will identify strengths and weaknesses of the program and share the results with faculty and develop departmental goals.