

NORTHERN PLAINS TRANSITION TO TEACHING

A PROFESSIONAL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM AT



PROGRAM SUMMARY

MISSION

The Northern Plains Transition to Teaching program is designed to provide a compact, rigorous, and diverse system of preparation to move seasoned professionals with established records of excellence into a new career in the public school classroom as competent educators prepared to meet the needs of all learners and to continue their own professional development throughout the course of their new career.

OBJECTIVES

The Northern Plains Transition to Teaching (NPTT) program at Montana State University (MSU) was developed to provide highly qualified and competent educators to meet the hiring needs of secondary schools. To accomplish our objective we established the following goals:

1) Recruit highly qualified professional adults holding baccalaureate degrees (or equivalent) appropriate to the content area they wish to teach;

2) Develop a compressed-format, alternate route to licensure training program for these professionals to include six concentrated and rigorous course offerings, delivered at a distance (with interactive web-based technology), and to enable candidates to enter the field in a supervised year-long paid internship after the initial qualification phase (*i.e.*, after the first nine credits); alternatives to the paid internship are considered on a case by case basis;

3) Place new teachers in public schools, especially rural schools within our partnership states, through the development of an annual hiring pool to be brokered by the NPTT (which includes partner organizations such as: the Montana Board of Public Education via the Montana Office of Public Instruction, the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board, and the South Dakota Department of Education);

4) Support and retain these new teachers, by providing classroom mentoring by master teachers; access to university faculty and highly qualified instructors, and other professional opportunities such as gatherings at state educator meetings; and

5) Develop the distance-delivery infrastructure and partnerships needed to recruit and support transitioning mid-career professionals interested in pursuing a new career in teaching and, in the process, serve as a national model for other institutions interested in developing alternate route licensure programs.

The NPTT builds on a long-standing commitment at MSU to meet the educational and professional development needs of the state and region's rural residents. Because of this commitment, MSU has become nationally recognized for its distance delivery of advanced degree granting programs for in-service teachers (*e.g.*, the Master of Science in Science Education [MSSE], in standards-based science education; or the online Borderless Access to Teaching and Education [BATE] serving those interested in certification for Library Media), distance mentoring for rural teachers (*e.g.*, through the Systemic Teacher Excellence Preparation, or STEP, and other programs), and other standards-based on-line learning opportunities (*e.g.*, the National Teachers Enhancement Network or NTEN).

Building on this foundation, the NPTT is designed to move new teachers into classrooms as quickly as possible, without sacrificing teacher quality or preparation. In lieu of student teaching, candidates are supported through full employment in a salaried internship under alternative or temporary licensure. After completing the first year of teaching and all licensure/certification requirements, qualified NPTT teachers have the option to take an additional six credits to complete the requirements for a master's degree in education. Most choose to do so. To date, the NPTT program has served around 300 highly qualified candidates, and enrollments have grown briskly with each year of operation (almost 80 new students enrolled in 2007). The program was funded under a U.S. Department of Education Transition to Teaching grant to serve Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota. Our service area has grown and now includes students from across the nation, as well as approximately 8% of students from overseas (including China, South Korea, Thailand, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Nepal, Columbia, and Guatemala). NPTT is an authentic graduate level program. It appeals to working professionals interested in understanding deeply the nature of ideas, cultures, and formalized cultural systems in order to teach these to young learners effectively.

OVERVIEW

This program serves the needs of professional adults with baccalaureate degrees as well as masters and doctoral degrees in content areas and related fields where the standard university core requirements have been met and most, if not all, coursework requirements have been satisfied relative to the state and university standards for teaching in a particular subject area within the states where we are authorized to recommend for licensure. This program places a strong emphasis on providing teachers in high need subject areas such as mathematics and science while also looking to develop and place teachers in school districts looking for social studies, English, health & physical education, technology, music and modern languages as appropriate.

The design of the program can be more compact than conventional undergraduate teacher education programs for several reasons. First, it presupposes satisfaction of the core requirements of a liberal arts education typical of most university baccalaureate degree programs, as well as completion of relevant content area course work. Furthermore, this program design assumes that the maturation and socialization processes associated with the conventional undergraduate experience have already been accomplished, and the necessary social skills, academic skills and personal discipline have already been attained. Admission is selective and dependent upon a record of prior achievement and readiness. In short, the concentrated nature of this program assumes and requires a high level of readiness and self-motivation on the part of teacher candidates.

All state and national standards are satisfied by the program design. Additionally, the program produces a respectable corps of professional teachers because of the high quality of candidates selected and the concentrated and rigorous quality of the course offerings. Each course is a graduate level, research-based, up-to-date offering grounded in a balance of the theoretical and the practical. We strive to provide the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by teachers in order to master the complex work of establishing highly functional learning communities where every student is supported emotionally, socially, and culturally, where an ethos of respect and purposeful engagement prevail, and where an authentic love of intellectual engagement and cultural awakening is established as the central purpose by the group under the skilled guidance of the teacher. This kind of advanced preparation ensures both conceptual rigor and high levels of performance in the skills, knowledge and dispositions required of professional educators' intent on meeting the needs of their students.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

This program is designed to get new teachers into the classroom as quickly as possible without sacrificing the preparedness that parents, the profession, and communities expect of their teachers. The program consists of eight concentrated course offerings, at three credits per course, delivered over a two year period or less. Candidates are able to enter the field in a year-long, paid internship (or equivalent) after completing the qualification phase (*i.e.* first nine credits of the program). In lieu of the classic “student teaching” experience, NPTT participants enter into a contracted, salaried teaching position under alternative or temporary licensure. This year-long “internship” is based on a resident teaching model that includes mentoring from an on-site master teacher to assist the candidate. During the year of induction, candidates are enrolled in EDCI 558 and EDCI 559, Internship courses in which the practical issues and challenges of teaching are addressed and continuous support is provided. NPTT program personnel work directly with school administrators who hire NPTT candidates to ensure a seamless network of support, mentoring, and ongoing advancement of knowledge and skills. First year NPTT teachers have an excellent record of high quality performance, with nearly 100% securing contracts for the foreseeable future.

The Northern Plains Transition to Teaching program has recently added a second option for students unable to secure a contract teaching position. The NPTT Student Teaching option is sought by students who have proven to be unable to secure employment for the traditional internship, and are generally place bound. This variance must be approved by the NPTT Steering Committee.

The total program consists of eighteen course credits plus six credits of resident teaching internship, for a total of twenty-four credits. Upon completion, this twenty-four credit program leads to recommendation for full licensure in the states of Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming or other states where the NPTT program is recognized. The Montana class 1 and class 2 licenses are highly portable. These licenses/certificates are generally convertible by reciprocity agreement with most other states in the U.S. with little or no additional coursework.

**Please see table on next page*

COURSE WORK (24 credits total)		FIELD EXPERIENCES
Qualification Courses	EDCI 552 (3 credits) Human Development & the Psychology of Learning	Includes structured observation in 6 or 7 settings covering a variety of age groups.
	EDCI 553 (3 credits) Diversity, Special Needs, and Classroom Discipline	
	EDCI 554 (3 credits) Curriculum Design, Pedagogy, and Assessment	

Candidates are eligible to begin contract teaching after these first three qualifying courses

In-Service Internship / Courses	EDCI 558 (3 credits) Internship I Methods of Teaching	All three of these courses are taken during the candidates first year of “internship” teaching.
	EDCI 559 (3 credits) Internship II Equity, Special Needs, Diversity	
	EDCI 555 (3 credits) Technology, Instructional Design, and Learner Success	
Continuing Preparation Courses	EDCI 556 (3 credits) The Legal, Social, and Practical Basis of Schooling	
	EDCI 557 (3 credits) Brain Science, Educational Research, and Teaching	

Candidates are eligible for full licensure after completion of all eight courses and all requirements of the year- long Internship, including professional portfolio review.

PRAXIS II AND PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO

Subject matter mastery is expected of all NPTT candidates. The admissions process is rigorous and conducted by a committee of experts to ensure clear evidence of high quality preparation in the subject the candidate will teach. Every candidate in the NPTT program is expected to take the Praxis II exam in their content area(s) to provide additional evidence of ‘highly qualified’ status, and those who seek the masters degree also take the GRE. Finally, every candidate completes a capstone portfolio which serves as additional evidence of their mastery of content, pedagogical content knowledge, and the specialized skills, dispositions and knowledge needed to serve as a highly qualified, professional educator.

INDUCTION & MENTORSHIP

This program will continue to provide mentorship and professional resources and follow-up to all candidates even after they have successfully completed the 24 credit certification program and have entered into professional practice. As a practical matter we recognize the need to document program success as determined by candidate performance in the profession, and to analyze areas of effectiveness and weakness as an ongoing function of program excellence.

In addition, for those candidates who desire it and are academically qualified, an additional sequence of six credits (typically two courses) in professional development beyond the structure of this certification program is offered which will complete requirements for a master's degree in education. While this offering was not part of the original grant-funded project experience showed that virtually all candidates wanted to complete their professional preparation within the structure of a full masters degree program. This helps to ensure a coherent pathway of professional development from the point of induction to the attainment of sustained professional engagement. Compressed certification programs that fail to provide adequate follow-up tend historically to experience higher rates of attrition in recent graduates. This program has been designed to ensure low rates of attrition, a full complement of support services, and engaging pathways to professional development, need-specific workshops and supplemental course offerings.

Those who complete the masters degree will take EDCI 564, a professional portfolio course that explores the use of portfolio assessments within the profession, and they then complete their own portfolio to showcase their achievements and to gain a rigorous summative experience that promotes reflection, scholarship, and planning for future professional development. Students also have the option of taking EDCI 540 American Indian Studies for Educators, an outstanding course, especially for candidates who work in western states where indigenous cultures contribute to the cultural and linguistic richness of the land.

PROGRAM OUTCOME GOALS (BASED ON INTASC STANDARDS)

The Career Professional, prepared by this program to become a professional educator, shall:

1. demonstrate understand of the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structure of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students;
2. demonstrate understanding of how children learn and develop and provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development;
3. demonstrate understanding of how students differ in their approaches to learning and create instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners;
4. demonstrate understanding and use a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills;
5. apply an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation;
6. use knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom;
7. plan instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals;
8. understand and demonstrate the use of formal and informal assessment strategies to ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner;
9. emulate the reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his or her choices and

- actions on others (students, families, and other professionals in the learning community), and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally;
10. foster relationships with school colleagues, families, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being; and
 11. demonstrate an understanding of the importance of contextual and experiential learning to the success of students and be capable of demonstrating connections between academic learning and the skills required in the present and future workforce.

COURSE SEQUENCE

The core of the program includes eight well designed courses that meet the academic and practical implications of the outcome goals listed above.

1. **EDCI 552** – HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LEARNING (3 credits)
Human growth and development (physical, cognitive, emotional, moral). Early field experience: (neonatal care center; pre-school; elementary school; middle school; high school; university or adult education center; nursing home or elderly care center). The psychology of learning; theories of skill and knowledge acquisition. Motivation and Discipline; the school as social environment; Montessori's insights.
2. **EDCI 553** – DIVERSITY, SPECIAL NEEDS AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT (3 credits)
Theories of Democracy (meritocracy vs. social democracy); Democracy as a sociocultural dynamic; the history of human empowerment and the role of education; Valuing Traditional Cultures; Understanding modern scientific-technological culture; Youth Culture; Deviance; The Civil Rights movement and its legacy; Special needs and the classroom; Management of the Social Environment; Classroom Discipline; The culturally and ethnically diverse classroom (case studies); Are there different learning styles? Are curriculum materials biased?
3. **EDCI 554** – CURRICULUM DESIGN, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT (3 credits)
This course is designed to meet licensure requirements in the areas of Curriculum Design, Pedagogy, and Assessment. It is designed to equip new teachers with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to meet the teaching profession's expectations in the area of planning and preparation of daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly curriculum. This course will provide the practical planning content that will then be mirrored in the first internship of the program sequence (EDCI 558).
4. **EDCI 555** – TECHNOLOGY, INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND LEARNER SUCCESS (3 credits)
Practicing NPTT teachers will build knowledge in instructional technology through research and practice to design, implement and evaluate student-focused technology integration projects that enhance student learning. Teachers will integrate concepts from learning theories, frameworks for "Teaching with Understanding" and project based learning. Online reflections, discussions, synchronous scheduled meetings, and journals of reflection and intent will be utilized to clearly identify models of best practice.
5. **EDCI 556** – THE LEGAL, SOCIAL AND PRACTICAL BASIS OF SCHOOLING (3 credits)
Managing the Classroom Environment; Record-keeping; Legal Issues; Professionalism; Professional Dispositions; The School as a Political and Social Institution; State and Local Educational Authorities; How schools are governed; Teacher Organizations; Inside the

Classroom (case studies); Managing multiple, competing influences; Working with Parents; Community Resources; Networking for Professional Development.

6. **EDCI 557** – BRAIN SCIENCE, EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TEACHING (3 credits)

Cultural systems, Academic Disciplines, and School Subjects; What is mathematics and how do we teach it? What is science, natural language, history, literature, art, social studies, health enhancement, technology...and how do we teach these? This course will examine a variety of standard educational theory-and-practice paradigms, considering how each configures our understanding and approach to teaching. Questions of curriculum development, instructional practice, and assessment will be examined. The course will also consider how schools can integrate the curriculum for meaning and comprehension. What brain research says about the structure and processes of schooling will also be considered.

7. **EDCI 558** – INTERNSHIP: METHODS OF TEACHING (3 credits)

This course is designed to meet the licensure and certification requirements in the area of Teaching Methods, both General and Content Specific. It will help equip new teachers with the skills, knowledge, and disposition to meet the teaching profession's expectation that public school classrooms provide meaningful learning for each student, based upon the student's prior knowledge and specific learning style(s). This course is designed to be an integral part of the first year teaching process, building upon the information received in EDCI 554, EDCI 553, and EDCI 552. It will require the student to become knowledgeable of a variety of methodologies and to successfully develop lessons using those methodologies. Included in the content area of this course will be assessment, planning, standards, teaching strategies, student motivation, classroom management, and history and philosophy of teaching methods.

8. **EDCI 559** – INTERNSHIP: EQUITY, SPECIAL NEEDS, DIVERSITY (3 credits)

How professional teachers emerge from practice; managing the crises, learning from experience; utilizing available resources; understanding the context of specific practice. The commitment to equity and excellence; assessing current student competencies; students with special needs; understanding diversity; studying your students and their backgrounds. Directing theoretical understanding into practice; the meaning of reflective practice; meeting national, state, and local standards; portfolio preparation and review.

9. **EDCI 540** – AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES FOR EDUCATORS (3 credits)

To equip teachers with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to meet Indian Education for All requirements. Instruction pertains to the history, traditions, customs, values, beliefs, and contemporary affairs of American Indians, particularly tribal groups in the Northern Plains Region.

10. **EDCI 564** – THE COMPREHENSIVE PORTFOLIO (3 credits)

This course provides advanced training on the preparation of a professional teaching portfolio for candidates in the NPTT program or final project portfolio in the practitioner stand of the master's degree in Curriculum & Instruction. Based upon the standards and practices established by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), the Interstate New Teacher Assistance and Support Consortium (INTASC), and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) these portfolios are designed to provide comprehensive evidence of effectiveness in practice, the habit of reflection, and a

command of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of professional educators as developed in the student's graduate program. Portfolios developed in this course may in turn serve as the basis for the student's comprehensive exam.