

Special Education Program Portfolio Requirements

Starting Fall 2008¹

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The portfolio requirements for the completion of the Master of Science in Special Education degree at USM exist for several reasons. The main reason is the demonstration that a student has gained knowledge and understanding while in his/her program. The revised portfolio process of the Special Education Program follows the Core Practices of the program and the philosophy of Universal Design in Learning within the portfolio requirements. This process creates a portfolio that is more student centered, allowing students to use their strengths in expressing and demonstrating the skills, knowledge, and understanding they have gained in their program of study. The Special Education Program bases the requirements of the portfolio on the following: 1) Core Practices of the Special Education Program, 2) sound practices and lessons learned from past portfolio requirements, 3) the Core Values of the College of Education and Human Development, and 4) the Council for Exceptional Children's Teaching Standards (See Appendix A). The Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) teaching standards are used for the portfolio requirements, as both students with special needs and students who are gifted and talented are directly represented in these teaching standards. Students who are diverse, especially English language learners, are represented under these teaching standards through CEC's strong commitment to support all students in education.

To enhance students' use and understanding of diverse ways to evaluate student knowledge and understanding, the Special Education Program allows students options in how they complete

¹ Students who matriculated before the Fall of 2008, may follow the portfolio guidelines of when they matriculated or the ones in this document.

each section of the portfolio requirements. There are guidelines that students will need to meet for each of the three sections of the portfolio. However, how a student expresses or demonstrates meeting the section guidelines will be left to the student. Hence, students may choose their own methods when developing each section of the portfolio to meet the guidelines describe below. In addition, students choose the evidence they believe supports their meeting of the CEC Teaching Standards or their program goals. Therefore, portfolios can be in various formats, e.g., digital, audio, visual, and/or combinations of these three. The Special Education Program faculty is hoping that the opening of the guidelines to be more universally designed will result in more creative and student-centered portfolios, which are meaningful to the student and the program faculty. A portfolio that is well done, all through traditional papers, will also meet the requirements of the portfolio. Please see Appendix B for suggestions of ways to reflect and demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

There are three main sections of the portfolio requirements. The first section is for students to reflect on their teaching philosophy and what skills and strengths they have that support them in being a sound teacher. In the second section, students reflect on and demonstrate how they have met certain CEC teaching standards. The third section is different for students who have matriculated before the fall of 2008 and who do take SED 601. For students who do not take SED 601, the third section will be an expanded resume with detailed descriptions of what skills and knowledge they have gained while in their program. If students have completed SED 601, they will establish in this course at the beginning of their program three program goals they will be working towards achieving while in the Special Education Program. The third section, for these students, will be a reflection and evidence of working toward and/or achieving these program goals.

After the portfolio is completed, students are required to present their portfolio to their peers and faculty of the Special Education Program at the Semi-Annual Student Presentation Day. On the last Saturday of every fall and spring semester is the Special Education Program Student Presentation Day. On this day, students who have completed a research project in SED 699 or SED 697 during the semester give a poster presentation of their study. In addition, students who have completed their portfolios present on a self-selected product. The portfolio presentation gives students an opportunity to select one piece from their portfolio to highlight in front of an audience. How students complete their presentation is, again, self-selected. Students have 10 minutes to present their highlighted piece and then 5 minutes for questions and answers from their peers and faculty. Appendix C contains the scoring rubric used for portfolio presentations.

To create portfolios that students can be proud of and that clearly highlight their achievements and implementation of knowledge, the following requirements are for all materials included in the portfolio:

- All writing is free of spelling and grammatical errors, and is written in a professional/scholarly manner.
- All products use appropriate referencing (APA 5th edition, when relevant) of materials, ideas, and concepts of other professionals, peers, and authors.
- Presentation of the whole portfolio is done in a professional/scholarly manner, which is clear and understandable to all, in content and presentation.

Portfolio requirements for students who matriculated before Fall 2008 and who do not take SED 601:

1. Teaching Philosophy and Self-Analysis
2. Reflections and evidence of meeting CEC Teaching Standards
 - a. Choose 1, 2, or 3
 - b. Either 4 or 7
 - c. 8 Alone
 - d. Either 5 or 6
 - e. Either 9 or 10
3. Expanded resume, with an addendum of detailed descriptions of five past teaching and/or working with youth, emphasizing your skills that you have gained in your program.

Portfolio requirements for students matriculating during the academic year 2008-2009:

1. Teaching Philosophy and Self-Analysis
2. Reflections and evidence of meeting CEC Teaching Standards
 - a. Choose 1, 2, or 3
 - b. Choose 4, 7, or 8
 - c. Either 5 or 6
 - d. Either 9 or 10
2. Reflection and evidence of three self-selected program goals that are approved by the advisor, and correspond to the levels need to be represented in your goals: systemic, professional, and personal.

Description of teaching philosophy and self-analysis (all portfolios)

The student will state or demonstrate his/her approach to teaching, including the philosophical and theoretical constructs upon which the student's approach to teaching is based. In addition, the student will self-reflect on his/her strengths and weaknesses in working with youth and peers in an educational setting. The following should be included in this section:

- Issues of values, beliefs, culture, and diversity of the educational setting and learning
- Philosophies, models, theories, and issues of education
- Learning strengths, styles, and individual differences
- Use of technology to support and enhance student learning
- Classroom culture and environment
- Ethics and personal beliefs
- Special Education Program Core Values
- Reflective and analytical thinking

Description of reflections and evidence of meeting CEC Teaching Standards (all portfolios)

Students will select CEC Teaching Standards from the given choices, and state why they are reflecting on this standard and how they have met each selected standard. In addition, they will need to demonstrate or show evidence of how they met each selected standard. The following should be included for each CEC teaching standard:

- The CEC Teaching Standard that is being discussed
- The reasons this CEC Teaching Standard was selected
- Ways that the student has met this CEC Teaching Standard
- Evidence and/or demonstration of meeting the CEC Teaching Standard.

Description of expanded resume, with an addendum of detailed descriptions of five past teaching and/or working experiences (only for students who do not take SED 601)

Students will complete a professional resume for their educational profession. In addition, students will give a detailed description, through self-selected means, of their five past teaching experiences and/or work with youth experiences. The descriptions should emphasize skills or knowledge you have gained in your graduate program, by either stating how you may have done an aspect of your past work differently based on what you have learned in your graduate program, or how you have used skills or knowledge from your graduate program to support work you have done since starting your graduate program. The following should be included in this section:

- Professional Resume for your educational position, which includes the following:
 - Personal information
 - Education
 - Skills or knowledge important to your education profession, either highlighted through job descriptions or standing alone
 - Work and volunteer experiences that relate to education and working with youth
- Detailed description of five jobs and/or experiences working with youth that are connected to skills or knowledge you have acquired in your graduate program, which include the following:
 - Statement of the job or position title, where it was located, and job responsibilities
 - Description of how you would conduct or pursue an aspect or part of a job differently now, based on the skills or knowledge you have acquired, or how you

Description of reflection and evidence of three self-selected goals connected to the student's graduate program (only for students who complete SED 601)

These three student self-selected goals need to be approved by the student's advisor during the beginning of his/her program, usually when taking SED 601, and documented in the student's advising folder in the Professional Education Department. The three goals will each focus on the following levels of education: 1) systemic, 2) professional, and 3) personal. When completing this section of the portfolio, students will need to state their goals and why they select these goals. The students will also need to reflect on how they have met or have worked toward these goals and what supported or hampered them in working toward achieving these goals. There will also need to be evidence that demonstrates that the student has met, or worked towards meeting each goal while in his/her graduate program. As when working with students, goals do not always need to be accomplished, but growth toward them must be shown. The following should be included for each goal:

- Statement of the goal
- Why the goal was chosen
- How the student has worked toward or accomplished the goal, including what supported and/or hampered reaching the goal
- Evidence of working toward or accomplishing the goal

Appendix A - The CEC Teaching Standards

The CEC Teaching Standards and their descriptions can be found in *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards and Guidelines for Special Educators, 5th edition*, which can be downloaded at

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/>. The 10 CEC Teaching Standards are as follows:

1. Foundations
2. Development and Characteristics of Learners
3. Individual Learning Differences
4. Instructional Strategies
5. Learning Environment/Social Interactions
6. Language
7. Instructional Planning
8. Assessment
9. Professional and Ethical Practices
10. Collaboration

Appendix B - Suggestions of ways to reflect and demonstrate knowledge and understanding

When considering how to reflect and demonstrate knowledge and understanding in your portfolio, please keep in mind the following:

- Multiple Intelligences
- Higher level thinking
- Different ways of expressing knowledge and understanding
- Diverse Learning Styles
- Universal Design

Written papers are only one way to express knowledge and understanding. In addition, here are some suggestions:

- Pictures and examples of work completed in your classroom, including unit and lesson plans²
- Videos and/or audios of your teaching or self reflections
- Art projects in various media
- Use of movements
- Use of story telling and/or writing
- Poetry and song writing
- Course papers
- Professional activities or papers
- Newly created individual or collaborative works or products

² Please remember to follow confidentiality guidelines, by obtaining permission to use student work in your portfolio, and to make sure all identifiers are removed.

Appendix C - Presentation Rubric

**Professional Portfolio Presentation Evaluation Sheet
for the Special Education Program Concentrations**

This sheet will be filled out by the Special Education Faculty present during your presentation. A copy of all of the filled out forms for your presentation will be given to you and a copy will be kept in your program folder.

You will be graded on each aspect below on a five point scale:

1. Aspect missing or very weakly presented
2. Aspect weakly present
3. Aspect present
4. Aspect strongly present
5. Aspect present, above and beyond what expected

In addition, comments will be given to explain grading.

Aspect of Presentation	1-5 Rating	Comments
Introduction of self and Portfolio		
Explanation of why chose pieces of the portfolio to highlight		
Clearly present pieces of the portfolio, discussing how they supported your growth in the program and/or as a teacher		
Conclusion is a good representation of what was presented		
Presentation flows well and easy to follow		
Good and easy to read visual aids		
Sustained eye contact including periphery of room		
Clear, loud, well paced voice		
Natural, supportive movements and gestures		
Interesting presentation that maintains the audience's attention		
Total Score		

Parts of this sheet were taken from Samara, J. & Curry, J. (1994). The Curriculum Project.