



**Handbook for
Initial Teacher Candidates**

2026-2028
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GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY THE JOHN H. LOUNSBURY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Programs Preparing Educators for Initial Certification

INTRODUCTION

The John H. Lounsbury College of Education (JHLCOE) is the unit of the institution responsible for the governance of all programs preparing educators for the State of Georgia. The teacher education programs at Georgia College & State University (GCSU) are fully approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Initial certification programs are offered at the undergraduate (Bachelor of Science) and graduate (Master of Arts in Teaching) levels in Elementary Education, Middle Grades Education, and Special Education. Secondary Education is also offered at the MAT level.

Music Education MAT and Health/Physical Education MAT programs are in their respective departments in the College of Arts and Sciences (Music) and in the College of Health Sciences (School of Health and Human Performance). These programs are a part of the College of Education governance processes. Candidates seeking an MAT degree and teacher certification must possess a bachelor's degree to enroll in GCSU's Master of Arts in Teaching program.

The theme, *Educators as Architects of Change*, is the organizing focus for all programs in teacher education at GCSU. To meet the needs of all students in today's public schools, educators must be able to be leaders in improving and keeping schools current with the needs of society. A strong foundation in professional preparation is based on the Liberal Arts curriculum and connects theory to practice while establishing understandings of content and pedagogy. Essential characteristics of the College of Education's initial certification programs are the extensive field-based experiences, cross-disciplinary course work, and preparation in technology. The curriculum is interdisciplinary and integrative, modeling the curriculum and organization the COE expects teacher candidates to practice in their own classrooms. Strands of diversity and technology are woven into the fabric of the curriculum with the expectation that candidates will be knowledgeable and competent with addressing both areas in the field. Furthermore, the curriculum and field experiences also prepare teacher candidates to address human relations and diversity.

The initial certification programs at GCSU center on educators' preparation to be ready to accept the challenges of their first professional experience. The COE programs accomplish this through solid foundations in the following areas:

- A strong Liberal Arts foundation in interdisciplinary understanding, aesthetic appreciation, analytic inquiry, and creativity.

- Guidance through classroom experiences by experienced educators working in collaboration with GCSU's partnership with local P-12 schools.
- An environment of respect that values individual differences as reflected in the teacher candidate's instructional and assessment practices.
- The ability to connect content with other disciplines and develop skills reflecting current research in pedagogical practices.
- Purposeful reflection on the teacher candidate's effectiveness in the classroom by becoming attuned to the needs of the learners, achievements of goals, and possibilities for alternative teaching strategies and assessments.
- A strong foundation in classroom management, educational law, technology, resources, and professional ethics.
- Effective decision-making and communication skills and the ability to demonstrate strong leadership qualities as advocates of change in the education community.

Mission

Graduates of the John H. Lounsbury College of Education, both graduate and undergraduate, take their places as Architects of Change in the public-school systems of Georgia, working in the interest of all young people. While preserving the best of our Liberal Arts heritage, our graduates are equipped with the intellectual and social skills they need to serve as advocates for all P-12 students.

The Educators as Architects of Change Model

In 1996, the faculty adopted the model, *Educators as Architects of Change* to guide our curricular and instructional decisions. *Educators as Architects of Change* exemplifies our dedication to careful, reflective, and purposeful improvement of schools through the preparation of professional educators. The *Architects of Change* metaphor demonstrates our belief that effective educators require a discrete set of skills, including the ability to advocate for students, to become mentors and leaders within schools, and to reflect on the meaning of the social practices they find in schools. With this document, our faculty affirms its utility, distilling our commitment to the principles of reasoned, artful, and purposeful improvement of schooling.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The faculty of the John H. Lounsbury College of Education believes that our schools must fulfill the educational needs of our populace while emphasizing fairness, democracy, and intellectual curiosity. Amid a climate of change and uncertainty, we inspire educators to create student-centered learning environments as the primary expression of strong pedagogy. We use the *Educators as Architects of Change* paradigm to guide the development of an inclusive and diverse community of stakeholders consisting of students, educators, teacher candidates, and the public. Since the inception of *Educators as Architects of Change* as our guiding principle, the faculty has continually reassessed our programs. Informed by research and reflective analysis, we have continued our intensive cohort model for our undergraduate and graduate programs. We seek to motivate professional educators to reach out to stakeholders to develop citizens who value formal education, literacy in its many forms, and individual differences.

This framework is designed to produce change agents, based on the following core principles:

- The Liberal Arts and integrated learning
- Professional preparation
- Human relationships and diversity
- Leadership for learning and teaching communities

In its programs of study, the GCSU faculty affirms the importance of programs that situate educators as researchers, leaders, and *Architects of Change* in the schools and the larger community.

Liberal Arts and Integrated Learning

The *Architects of Change* model demands that our graduates understand themselves as both “doing” and “thinking” about their professional practice (Hutton, 2006). We seek to preserve the intellectual commitments of the Liberal Arts college “to pose questions to the world and to reflect on what is presented in experience” (Greene, 1998, p.21). We see development as encompassing the cognitive, emotional, moral and civic dimensions found in the liberal arts.

Professional Preparation

Educator candidates in most of GCSU’s professional educator programs join cohorts of peers, allowing them to learn from and interact with each other in intensive, field-based courses. Integral to the cohort is a mentor leader who acts as a role model, advisor and facilitator of learning for each student. Consequently, faculty and students both live education grounded in action, community and collaboration. Through participation in our programs, educator candidates acquire a strong foundation in major content and pedagogical areas and learn to connect theory to practice by applying and conducting classroom research. We recognize that “skilled teachers are the most crucial of all schooling inputs” (Ferguson, 1991, p. 490). Our field-based cohort model serves as a

powerful vehicle to integrate theory and practice by fostering close collaboration among faculty, educator candidates, and professionals in the field. We understand teaching to be complex, requiring systemic reflection on practice. To become true Architects of Change, educators must go beyond simple bureaucratic solutions, learning to make instructional and curricular decisions based on exigencies of real life in schools (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Human Relationships and Diversity

Building upon strong Liberal Arts, professional and pedagogical bases, educator candidates in the GCSU professional education programs are encouraged to construct a well-grounded framework for appropriately addressing human relations and diversity issues in schools. As democratic educators, we understand schooling to be part of the real world and part of children's lives. "We share the knowledge gained in classrooms beyond those settings, thereby working to challenge the construction of knowledge as always and only available to the elite" (Hooks, 2003, p. 41). Our educator candidates are exposed to theory and practices that foster the belief that all students can learn and should be treated as individuals with unique and various needs, skills, talents, interests, histories, identities, cultures, and beliefs. As Architects of Change, educator candidates learn to design inclusive, culturally sustaining and relevant learning experiences to create learning communities in which all people are respected and appreciated, and in which academic achievement, positive intergroup relations, and critical consciousness are expected.

Leadership for Learning and Teaching Communities

By modeling successful teaching, questioning assumptions, and posing challenging problems, instructors in the GCSU professional education programs encourage educator candidates to construct their own understanding of education. In this way, candidates may feel empowered to continue learning throughout their lives, to be flexible in adapting to difficulties, to imagine creative solutions, to communicate effectively, and to take necessary risks in meeting future needs. "This is the road I have tried to follow as a teacher: living my convictions; being open to the process of knowing; ... being pushed forward by the challenges that prevent me from bureaucratizing my practice..." (Freire, 2001, p. 69). The professional preparation programs seek to create empowered educational leaders who can cultivate partnership within the schools and community, act as advocates for the students under their care, and collaborate with others to creatively solve problems and make decisions. Our programs foster commitment to equity and social justice and provide students with the opportunity to develop as leaders and Architects of Change.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *The right to learn*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Ferguson, R. (1991). Paying for public education: New evidence on how and why money matters. *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, 28(2), 465-498.

Freire, P. & Clarke, P. (2001). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom*. New York, New York: Teachers College Press.

Hooks, b. *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Taylor and

Francis, Inc.

Hutton, T. (2006). The conflation of liberal and professional education: Pipedream, aspiration, or nascent reality? *Liberal Education*, 92(4), 54-59.

COHORT MODEL

All initial teacher certification programs are offered in cohorts. A cohort is defined as a group of teacher candidates who begin and end the program together. Each cohort is led by a Mentor Leader, a faculty member who teaches courses, advises teacher candidates, and consults with the field experience coordinator to secure placements for the group. The Mentor Leader is responsible for the program implementation and the development of the individual teacher candidate and the cohort. Teacher candidates complete the required program of study with field experiences. The extensive field component of the initial certification programs provides teacher candidates with a wide range of experiences from which to draw as they develop their abilities to plan for and teach children and adolescents. This continual interplay of theory and practice maintains the strength and integrity of the initial certification programs by encouraging teacher candidates to become reflective practitioners who engage in authentic and student-centered pedagogy. The mentoring provided through the cohort model supports teacher candidates in becoming capable, competent, and developing professionals.

CERTIFICATION AREAS

Undergraduate Initial Certification Areas

- Elementary Education (P-5)
- Middle Grades Education (English/Language Arts, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies) (4-8)
- Special Education (General Curriculum) (P-12)

Students who wish to earn an MAT degree in Secondary Education, Special Education, Middle Grades Education, or Elementary Education must possess a bachelor's degree.

Graduate Initial Certification Areas

- Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in Secondary Education (T5) (6-12)
Content Fields: English, Math, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Business Education, and Political Science; (P-12) Spanish, French, and Art
- MAT in Elementary Education (T5) (P-5)
- MAT Health and Physical Education (T5)(P-12)
- MAT in Middle Grades Education (T5) (4-8)
Content Fields: Mathematics and Science
- MAT Music Education (T5) (P-12)
- MAT in Special Education (General Curriculum) (T5) (P-12)

The standard certificate for initial teacher certification in Georgia public schools is the Induction Certificate. To be eligible for this certificate, one must have completed all of the following:

- Complete a GaPSC approved traditional in-state educator preparation program at the appropriate level as defined in the applicable teaching or service rule and receive a recommendation for certification.
- Attain a passing score in the GACE content assessment at the Induction level or higher. If no GACE content assessment is available for the certification field requested, the applicant is exempt from this requirement.
- Attain a passing score in the GACE “Application of the Science of Reading” for **Elem Ed and Special Ed** and “Fundamentals of the Science of Reading” for all other GCSU fields.
- Attain a passing score on the GACE Ethics for Teachers (GACE Ethics).

For information on certification upgrades, students should consult with their Mentor Leader and go to www.gapsc.com (click on certificate upgrade).

For more information about the College of Education programs and faculty, please see our website at <http://gcsu.edu/education>.

ACADEMIC AND ETHICAL QUALIFICATIONS

Continued Enrollment

The following academic standards apply for continued enrollment in the initial teacher certification programs:

- A grade of C or better must be maintained in all course work in the program except for Exceptional Child courses in which candidates must earn a B or better, and a grade of “S” must be earned in all field experiences. A student who receives a D or F in the teaching major or minor course work or a “U” in field experiences may be removed from the program. (Note: Students in the Middle Grades Program are assigned letter grades for all field experiences.)
- A student in the undergraduate program must maintain a minimum of a 2.75 overall GPA (3.0 for MAT) to remain in the program. If a student’s GPA falls below the minimum, they must meet with their Mentor Leader to develop an action plan. No student will be allowed to graduate with a GPA that falls below the program minimum.

Teacher candidates have the right to appeal when they feel that unfair or inappropriate decisions have been made concerning grades or application of policies. When situations arise in which teacher candidates have grievances of this nature, they should refer to the appropriate procedures on the following sites:

[Undergraduate Non-Academic Appeals](#)

[Undergraduate Academic Appeals](#)

[Undergraduate Academic Petitions](#)

[Graduate Academic Appeals](#)

[Graduate Academic Petitions](#)

Personal and Professional Conduct

Students who are fully admitted to a teacher education program at GCSU are expected to maintain a high level of personal and academic professionalism. The State of Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators governs all students enrolled in the College of Education of GCSU. See the following link for specific guidelines:

<http://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/CodeOfEthics.aspx>

Failure to meet this code by engaging in inappropriate personal and/or professional behavior may result in removal from the program upon the recommendation of the Mentor Leader, Program Coordinator, Department Chair, and/or the Dean of the College of Education.

A teacher candidate's unsatisfactory personal or professional conduct may come to light through observations by the Mentor Leader, school personnel, the Partner Teacher, the Field Supervisor, or other GCSU personnel. All teacher candidates are mandated by the COE to self-report any arrests to the Dean's office immediately.

The following violations by teacher candidates will result in dismissal from the program and/or GCSU:

- Use of illegal substances
- Public intoxication and/or underage drinking
- Violation of the Georgia Code of Ethics
- Violation of the GCSU Code of Conduct
- Criminal behavior that violates local, state or federal law

Examples of behaviors which warrant action include, but are not limited to the following:

- Excessive, unexcused absences/Attendance issues (tardiness)
- Dishonesty
- Use of inappropriate language

- Inability to cooperate with school personnel and/or classmates
- Low academic performance
- Unprofessional behavior
- Interpersonal difficulties

Procedures for Addressing Serious Concerns

Continuation in the John H. Lounsbury College of Education's field-based cohort initial teacher education program is contingent upon the teacher candidate's maintenance of a high-level of personal, academic, and professional decorum. The following is the process that will be followed should there be low levels of academic, personal, or professional behavior on the part of the teacher candidate. This behavior might come to light through observations of the Mentor Leader, public school personnel including the Partner Teacher, and/or GCSU instructors. It might include absences, dishonest practices, use of inappropriate language, inability to get along with school personnel and/or classmates, low performance in a course, violation of the Georgia Code of Ethics, inappropriate conduct as outlined in the GCSU catalog, or similar behavior.

1. Upon noting low performance levels in any area, the Mentor Leader may submit a letter defining the deficiency for the teacher candidate. Whether or not a letter is submitted, the leader will meet with the teacher candidate to discuss their performance. It is expected that teacher candidate deficiencies will be corrected at this less formal stage so that the teacher candidate may continue in the program in good standing. A copy of the minutes of the meeting will be given to the teacher candidate and the Mentor Leader.
2. If there is reoccurrence of the same or a similar deficiency (continued unprofessional behavior in the field or at GCSU) then a second, more formal meeting will be held with the teacher candidate, the Mentor Leader, and the department chair. Parties will be expected to produce documentation to support judgments about performance. At this time, the teacher candidate will develop a written plan to correct the deficiency, which is to be approved by the Mentor Leader and shared with the appropriate parties (Partner Teacher, instructor).
3. A date will be determined for correction of the deficiency whereupon the teacher candidate and the Mentor Leader will meet again. Copies of the minutes of this meeting will be forwarded to the teacher candidate, their file, the Mentor Leader, the department chair, and the dean(s). In addition, copies of the initial letter and minutes of the initial meeting will be forwarded to the department chair and the dean(s). This second meeting will serve as notice to the teacher candidate that it is their final opportunity to correct any deficiencies.
4. If an additional meeting needs to be held because of continued deficiencies, it will include the teacher candidate, the Mentor Leader, the department chair, and at least one of the deans. A recommendation will be made for the teacher candidate's dismissal, and the teacher candidate will be removed from the program.

5. Periodically the cohort Mentor Leader will consult with the entire faculty teaching and supervising the candidate. If there appears to be a pattern of low performance in more than one area of the program not necessarily overseen by the Mentor Leader, e.g. incomplete course work, attendance or punctuality with any function, interpersonal difficulties, display of professional dispositions, then a mandatory meeting with the teaching/supervising team and the candidate will be held. This will be considered Step 3 in the above procedure for correcting serious deficiencies.

POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

It is the policy of GCSU to provide accommodations to students identified as disabled in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the 1992 American with Disabilities Act. Students who identify themselves as disabled through the admissions process are referred directly to the Student Disability Resource Center. In addition, faculty and staff who have reason to believe that an advisee has a disability that affects learning may also refer the student to the Student Disability Resource Center.

For more information on policies for students with disabilities, please refer to <http://www.gcsu.edu/disability>.

The Student Disability Resource Center is located in Room 109, Russell Library, Milledgeville, Georgia. The phone number is 478-445-5931.

STUDENT LEARNING AND LICENSURE (SL & L)

Student Learning & Licensure is a **required** component of **all** initial teacher certification programs. SL & L is an online program that is used for:

- Portfolio building and management
- Projects
- Lesson plans
- Standards-based assessments

Instructions for purchasing SL & L

1. Go to: [Watermark](#)
2. Fill in the required information as follows:

- a. Step 1: How to Activate Your Student Account
 - Choose ‘To activate your account with a credit card purchase’ option.
- b. Step 2: Visit sll.watermarkinsights.com and log in with your school email address and the password provided by your school. If you do not have a password, then use the Forgot Password Link.
 - Be sure to use your **Bobcats email address** for your school email address.
 - Be sure to choose **GCSU** as your institution.
 - Review the Terms of Service
 - After you agree to the terms, select the pay with a credit or debit card option.
 - Complete the payment form.

What do I do with it when I get it?

Your professors will require you to use SL & L in different ways. You will receive further information and instructions as you begin your courses each semester.

Where can I get help if I am having trouble either registering or using SL & L?

Watermark has wonderful online and in-person (via phone) technical support. They can help you through any question or problem. Also, the COE SL & L coordinators: Katja Harper and Eric Carlyle are readily available to assist (katja.harper@gcsu.edu/478-445-8594, eric.carlyle@gcsu.edu/478-445-8563).

LAW AND THE INITIAL CERTIFICATION CANDIDATE

All initial certification candidates are bound to maintain the professional standards of conduct as set forth by the Georgia Professional Code of Ethics. The following link provides the specific guidelines <https://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/CodeOfEthics.aspx>

Teacher candidates are also bound to follow the Honor Code and Code of Conduct for GCSU. Those guidelines may be found [here](#). Furthermore, teacher candidates **MUST** be fully aware of and follow county school board policy in the schools in which they work for their field placements. Local board of education policies differ in each county, and it is the teacher candidate’s responsibility to know these policies. Specific topics that all teacher candidates should know include, but are not limited to the following: reporting child abuse; self-defense; possession and use of controlled/illegal substances; privileged communication; administering first aid/medication; conducting field trips; locker and personal searches; discipline codes/procedures; trespass of personal property; supervision and liability issues.

MAT and undergraduate candidates are conditionally admitted dependent upon ability to pass a Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) background check and receive a GAPSC Pre-Service Certificate. An exception would be only for MAT candidates who hold a current PSC-issued Teaching certification for employment. This certification has no cost and should be in place or in processing before starting a program.

Liability Insurance

All initial certification candidates MUST provide proof of liability insurance to their Mentor Leader before attending field placement assignments. Students may obtain coverage through the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE), the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE), or their personal insurance carrier.

GAE: <https://gae.org/>

PAGE: <https://www.pageinc.org/student-membership/>

Technology Policy

Technological communications should not compromise teacher candidate's integrity, reputation, or professionalism or that of the JHL College of Education. Be aware that teacher candidate actions or behaviors, whether actual or online, are subject to scrutiny by the public and may be negatively interpreted even if that is not the intent. It is the responsibility of the teacher candidate to maintain professional standards in all electronic communication as set by the Georgia Professional Code of Ethics and the JHL Social Networking Policy. Additionally, students who fail to follow the guidelines are subject to sanctions according to the Continued Enrollment section of the JHL Handbook for initial certification candidates and the Honor Code and Code of Conduct for GCSU. (approved by COE faculty on 4/11/08).

Social Networking Guidelines

- Do not accept students or members of their families as “friends” or “followers” on any personal social networking sites.
- Decline any student-initiated friend request and do not initiate any social networking with students.
- Do not “friend” parents/guardians of students.
- Do not post or update your social networking page during placement or class hours.
- Do not use technology for unrelated purposes during placement or class hours.
- Do not post student pictures or use student names on any site.
- Post only what you want the world to see.
- Visit your profile and privacy settings. At a minimum, educators should have all privacy settings set to “only friends” or “private account.”
- Do not use commentary or post pictures deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous.
- If you learn information on a social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines (<https://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/CodeOfEthics.aspx>) you must report it as

required by law.

This policy applies to the use and content of all media including, but not limited to: Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, LinkedIn, YouTube, blogs, wikis, web pages, etc. GCSU will verify compliance regarding Digital Safety according to policies and procedures as prescribed by the State of Georgia.

FERPA Compliance

The following guidelines apply to confidentiality requirements concerning student records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Education records include all records, addresses, phone numbers, files, documents, and other materials that contain personally identifiable information on any student, as well as the personally identifiable information itself.

What teacher candidates CANNOT do:

1. CANNOT disclose educational records to other school district employees who do not have a legitimate educational interest in the education records for the purpose of their authorized duties
2. CANNOT disclose educational records to college-level student teachers, consultants, or authorized community volunteers who do not have a legitimate educational interest in the education records for the purpose of their authorized duties.
3. CANNOT disclose education records to persons who are not school district employees, college-level student teachers, or authorized community volunteers, unless authorized by the principal.
4. CANNOT disclose education records to other students.
5. CANNOT post students' grades or final grade point averages to grade book systems or give access to the teacher's grade book.

FIELD EXPERIENCES

Teacher candidates are emerging educators expected to behave with dignity, decorum and consummate professionalism. Teacher candidates should consider themselves as professional colleagues in the schools where they are placed. Therefore, they must follow all the same rules, regulations, and expectations that all professional educators observe.

Start/finish dates for attendance and participation in field activities and days off for undergraduate junior teacher candidates coincide with the GCSU calendar. To provide the most realistic experience and best preparation for candidates, the field experiences for seniors and MAT teacher candidates follow the field placement school calendar.

Professionalism in the Schools

The following rules are applicable to every school.

1. When teacher candidates are placed in Partner schools, they have accepted a guest-Partner relationship with that school. Acceptance of a placement to a Partner school requires the understanding that teacher candidates are expected to:
 - Always act in a professional manner;
 - Abide by the regulations, procedures, instructional practices, professional and personal expectations of the Partner school that have been assigned; and
 - Understand that if personal or professional behavior or ability to work as an effective prospective teacher in the learning environment is not compatible with the expectations of the school district, a teacher candidate may be asked to leave by either GCSU or the Partner school district.
2. Professional relationships are essential to your continued success and professional growth.
 - Teacher candidates are expected to establish and maintain proper and cordial relationships with all school personnel, learning names, and responsibilities to the degree allowed by circumstances.
 - Teacher candidates are to establish and maintain proper professional relationships with students and their parents or caregivers. All Partner Teachers should be present in all meetings with parents.
 - Teacher candidates should not engage in an unethical relationship with school faculty, administrators, parents, or students.
 - Communication with students should always be respectful. Be mindful of casual communication related to sensitive topics.
3. Professional behaviors include exhibiting punctuality, regular attendance, observance of school policies and procedures, and other expectations, which all professional educators in the public school observe.

Dress Code Policy

Part of being a teacher candidate is dressing professionally in schools and other educational settings. When in these settings, we are representing Georgia College, the College of Education, our peers, and educators in general. We are also serving as role models for the children and young adults with whom we work. Despite good intentions, at times our dress can be a distraction in the educational endeavor without our being aware of it. Be sure to obtain a copy of the teacher's dress code from your partner school. Your Mentor Leader or advisor will provide additional details regarding appropriate attire for teacher candidates.

Partner School Expectations

1. Teacher candidates must fulfill the duty requirements and attendance expected of the Partner Teacher. This includes attending professional development, PTO/PTA meetings, and teacher meetings before or after school, family engagement activities, and other duties requested by school administrators.
2. Teacher candidates are expected to sign in and out every time they enter or leave the school. They are also expected to be on time and to stay until the specified time every day unless a variation is pre-approved by the Mentor Leader.
3. If a teacher candidate must be absent, the candidate is expected to notify (call and/or email) the Partner Teacher, Mentor Leader, and the University Supervisor as early as possible before the school day begins. Make-up hours may be assigned by the Mentor Leader and approved by the Partner Teacher and the School Administrator.
4. Teacher candidates are expected to dress professionally (see Dress Code Section in this handbook).
5. Teacher candidates are expected to inquire about (and follow) the school's policy for the use of copy machines, laminators, computers, and other types of instructional equipment. Do not use the school's equipment at **any** time for personal use.
6. Teacher candidates should defer judgment to the Partner Teacher for decisions on use of the school's copier for instructional content.
7. Teacher candidates are not to use cell phones, iPads, or other electronic devices for personal, business, or pleasure during instructional time. Cell phones may be used only for instructional purposes with the Partner Teacher's approval (See Technology and Social Networking Policy in this handbook).

8. Follow all other procedures expected of teachers at the Partner school.
9. Do not smoke or vape on campus or engage in any behavior that violates GCSU or school board policy.
10. Never serve as a substitute teacher. Georgia law requires that a certified teacher or substitute teacher be available to supervise a teacher candidate's classroom performance.

Teaching Duties and Responsibilities

1. Teacher candidates are expected to honor the confidentiality of information about students' grades, test scores, disciplinary records, or any other personal information.
2. Teacher candidates are expected to learn and follow guidelines and practice used by the Partner Teacher including instructional materials and resources, student behavior plans, and to seek prior approval for any learning activities they implement. Any modifications need to be discussed with the Partner Teacher.
3. Teacher candidates are expected to seek the level of involvement expected by the University Instructor, but with the full cooperation of the Partner Teacher.
4. Teacher candidates must provide the Partner Teacher with timely and complete information about assignments given by university instructors to be done in the field placements.
5. Teacher candidates are expected to take the initiative by being observant of opportunities to be instrumental in the classroom and to volunteer for instructional tasks.
6. Teacher candidates are expected to help teach and supervise students on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in other areas of the school campus. Teacher candidates should:
 - Review and report unsafe equipment and environments.
 - Be aware of registered visitors and report visitors who have not checked into the office.
 - Not accept food or money from students or parents.
 - Know the role of a Mandated Reporter.
 - Be aware of the [GaPSC Code of Ethics](#)

Field Experience Progression Overview

This table outlines the field experience expectations for teacher candidates across different programs. These progressions ensure that candidates gain necessary classroom exposure and hands-on experience before assuming full teaching responsibilities. Each program's detailed progression document is linked to its respective row in the table below.

| Program | Field Experience I | Field Experience II | Field Experience III | Student Teaching (Internship) | Program Notes |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Undergraduate Programs | | | | | |
| <u>Elementary BSEd</u> | Junior Fall: Two 7-week placements (EDEC 3001). 15 instructional hours per placement. | Junior Spring: 15-week placement in spring (EDEC 3002). 45 teaching hours. | Senior Fall: 10-day pre-planning placement (EDEC 4000). 15-week placement (EDEC 4001), with 15 full-time teaching days. | Senior Spring EDEC 4960: 10-week student teaching, 50-day minimum. 4 weeks of full-time teaching (at least 2 consecutive). | Grade band placements must align with GaPSC requirements. Some placements may be continued from junior year into senior year. |
| <u>Middle Grades BSEd</u> | Junior Fall: Two six-week placements (Mondays and Wednesdays). At least 5 hours of small group or whole-class teaching in placement I and 5 hours in placement II. | Junior Spring: One 15-week placement. (Tuesday and Thursdays, and some Fridays). Candidates must teach 20 hours of small or whole group instruction. | Senior Fall: Begins with 10 days of pre-planning, followed by part-time placement of Thursdays and Fridays for the first six weeks of Fall. Full-time Fall placement begins the first week of October and continues for 8 weeks. Candidates complete a Teacher Work Sample (TWS) and participate in all professional duties. Candidates' placement includes 10 consecutive days of curriculum development and instruction. | Senior Spring: Full-time student teaching for 11 weeks (50 day minimum) with at least 4 weeks of independent teaching as the "Teacher of Record". | Grade band and senior content placements must align with GaPSC requirements. Participation in teacher-related activities. |
| <u>Special Education BSEd</u> | Junior Fall: 224 hours, two placements, 15+ teaching hours per placement. | Junior Spring: 280 hours, two 7-week placements, 3 days/week. Includes projects like Data-Based Individualization. | Senior Fall: 480 hours, 3 days/week + 3 weeks full-time. Develop Behavior Intervention Plans, Teacher Work Sample. | Senior Spring: 400-hour full-time student teaching. Candidates assume full-time responsibilities. | Grade band placements must align with GaPSC requirements. Field-based assignments integrate closely with coursework. |

| Program | Field Experience I | Field Experience II | Field Experience III | Student Teaching (Internship) | Program Notes |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|
| Graduate Programs | | | | | |
| <u>Elementary MAT</u> | 120 hours across two grade bands. 40 instructional hours. | | 150 hours in the final grade band. 50 instructional hours. | Full-time placement for one semester. Guidelines provided in ELEM 5960 syllabus. | Grade band placements must align with GaPSC requirements. |
| <u>Middle Grades MAT</u> | 100 hours divided between two placements (4th-5th and 6th-8th grade). Candidates teaching provisionally may complete 80 hours in their own classroom and 20 in another setting. | | | 12.5 weeks (minimum 500 hours). 5 weeks of full-time teaching. Compilation of an AMLE standards-based Exit Portfolio. | Grade band placements must align with GaPSC requirements. Some candidates may already be employed in classrooms. Grade band placements must align with GaPSC requirements. |
| <u>Secondary MAT</u> | 100 hours in high school and 100 in middle school. Candidates progressively increase teaching responsibility over 5 weeks. | | | 50 full days of student teaching. Full assumption of teaching duties by week 4. | Grade band placements must align with GaPSC requirements. Candidates are expected to engage in professional responsibilities such as planning meetings. |
| <u>Special Education MAT</u> | Internship I (30 hours) during summer. Placement in different grade levels for diversity. | Internship II Fall (130 hours). Employed candidates teach in their own classroom, non- employed candidates are placed. | Internship III (400 hours). Required field- based projects include Data-Based Intervention and Lesson Study. | Internship IV: Student-Centered Planning Project. Observed at least 3 times per semester by faculty via Go React. | Grade band placements must align with GaPSC requirements. Candidates must document experience in various grade bands for P-12 certification. |

INCIDENT REPORTING PROTOCOL FOR COE FIELD EXPERIENCES

In the event that a teacher candidate is involved in or witnesses an incident during a field placement—including but not limited to injury, physical aggression, illness, or safety concerns—the following steps should be followed:

Step 1: Ensure Immediate Safety

- Seek assistance from school personnel to secure the safety of all individuals involved.
- If urgent medical attention is needed, follow the school’s emergency response procedures.

Step 2: Notify Partner School and CoE Personnel

- Inform the Partner Teacher immediately.
- Notify your Mentor Leader and University Supervisor as soon as possible, preferably the same day.

Step 3: Document the Incident

- Complete the [Incident Report Form for Teacher Candidates](#).
- Include date, time, location, names of individuals involved, a description of what occurred, any actions taken, and follow-up needs.
- Submit the completed form within 48 hours of the incident.

Step 4: Follow-Up and Support

- Mentor Leaders will consult with the Department Chair, Field Placement Director, and relevant parties to determine next steps and support needs for the teacher candidate.
- If appropriate, a meeting may be scheduled to debrief the incident and address academic or placement considerations.

Confidentiality

All information shared in the incident report will be kept confidential and used only for the purpose of providing support, ensuring proper documentation, and fulfilling any legal or university obligations. Reports will be stored securely in accordance with GCSU privacy policies and FERPA guidelines.

Important Notes

- Teacher candidates are not employees of the school and should not assume liability or disciplinary responsibility during an incident.
- This protocol is not a substitute for any mandatory reporting required by law (e.g., mandated reporter duties).

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In addition to maintaining the program's minimum GPA, candidates must take the content area(s) GACE as well as complete CAPS and PBDA assessments during their program. **The GACE attempt will satisfy requirements of the Senior Exit Exam.** Please check with your advisor for the specifics of your program. All teacher candidates must complete a graduation application according to the GCSU deadline (two semesters prior to graduation).

GACE (Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators)

The State of Georgia requires candidates for educator certification to pass the GACE as part of the educator certification process. Information regarding test centers and dates and preparation materials can be found at www.gace.es.pearson.com

To take the GACE, candidates must access their existing MyPSC account.

Mentor Leaders for undergraduate programs must give the certification officer permission to provide eligibility for readiness for candidates before registering for the GACE.

Elementary Education or Special Education Programs are now required to take GACE 418, Application of the Science of Reading Assessment. All other initial certification programs are now required to take GACE 350, Fundamentals of the Science of Reading Assessment.

All teacher candidates also must satisfactorily complete the following to graduate on time:

- Student Teaching Internship
- Teacher Work Sample
- Comprehensive, standards-based Portfolio
- Capstone Experience (Portfolio Presentation, Conference Presentation)

Teacher candidates should check with the Mentor Leader for their specific program's guidelines and requirements for each of the requirements above.

Student Teaching Internship

The student teaching internship is designed so that the teacher candidate will be able to implement several weeks of full-time teaching, which includes assumption of all duties of a full-time teacher in a classroom at an appropriate grade level under the supervision of a partner teacher and a GCSU faculty member. The internship also includes the development and implementation of a professional project (a Teacher Work Sample) in most programs. Some departments require the Teacher Work Sample prior to the student teaching semester. Each department has very clear written guidelines for the Teacher Work Sample.

Standards-Based Portfolio

The Standards-Based Assessment Portfolio is the primary vehicle for teacher candidates to demonstrate that GCSU's John H. Lounsbury College of Education should recommend the candidates for teacher certification. It documents to the COE's accrediting agencies that the teacher candidates have the *knowledge, skills, and dispositions* to be an effective teacher. Therefore, the point of the accumulation of evidence to meet the ten standards, the justification of the evidence and the oral presentation is to show a panel of faculty, themselves knowledgeable in the field, why the student should be certified as a professional teacher. The point of convening the faculty portfolio reading and presentation panels is to verify whether the demonstration has taken place (or not) and at what level. There is a minimum level of thinking, writing, and presentation skill expected, so all components will need to be met minimally for the entire portfolio to "pass" and the candidate to be recommended for certification.

The teacher candidate's portfolio contains artifacts from their entire program that demonstrate the impact of the program and their progress over time as a reflective practitioner. All the artifacts and explanations should convey powerful reasoning for how the material fits the standard while conveying how the candidate has developed as a self-aware professional who engages in pedagogy that best suits the needs of the students. Students may be required to present both written and verbal defenses of their portfolio to a panel of faculty members.

Conference Presentations

Students in all cohort groups have opportunities to conduct research under the direction and facilitation of faculty members and Mentor Leaders. Students in the cohort programs are given opportunities to conduct research and should take the initiative to disseminate their understandings as widely as possible. Students should take advantage of opportunities to attend and participate in conferences on the local, state, regional or national level.

Estimated Teacher Candidate Expenses

| | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| GACE Ethics for Teachers | \$30.00 |
|--------------------------|---------|

| | |
|--|---|
| Student Learning & Licensure (SL & L) | \$139.00 |
| GACE Content Assessment | \$28.50 - \$63.00 (single testlets) \$169.00 (combined) |
| GACE 418 | \$90.00 |
| Application of the Science of Reading Assessment | |
| GACE 350 | \$90.00 |
| Fundamentals of Science of Reading Assessment | |

Additional expected expenses – textbooks and course materials, liability insurance (GAE or SPAGE), professional dues, professional conference attendance, professional attire for field placements and internship, transportation to and from field placements.

**APPENDIX A: INITIAL TEACHER CANDIDATE HANDBOOK
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**



Please print the following information:

Teacher Candidate Name _____

Program _____

Mentor Leader _____

I verify that I have read and understand the contents of this handbook and will act in accord with these policies and procedures as a condition of my continued enrollment in an initial teacher education program within the JHL College of Education.

Teacher Candidate Signature _____

Date _____



APPENDIX B: FIELD EXPERIENCE WAIVER

Georgia College & State University assumes no responsibility for housing, transportation, or any other personal needs that might arise as a result of field experience. GCSU assumes no liabilities for any accident or other mishaps that might be incurred by any participant involved in any way in field experience.

I, the undersigned, acknowledge my own responsibility for the risk of any accident or mishap which might be incurred by participation in this program. Further, I release and forever discharge Georgia College & State University, the Board of Regents, their members individually, officers, agents, or employees of any kind from all claims, demands, and causes of action whatever, foreseen and unforeseen, arising from and by reason of any known or unknown bodily and personal injuries, damages to property, and the consequences arising thereof, resulting from my participation in, or in any way connected with the program.

Printed Name

Signature

Date



APPENDIX C: PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE VERIFICATION OF LIABILITY INSURANCE

PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE VERIFICATION

* As a part of my professional teacher education preparation, I understand that I will participate in certain field experiences in school systems beyond the college campus. I am further aware that the following statement is a part of the Georgia Department of Education Guidelines for Professional Laboratory Experiences in Georgia Teacher Education: "Liability - Prior to professional laboratory experiences placement, students may provide evidence of having adequate tort liability insurance."

VERIFICATION OF LIABILITY INSURANCE THEREFORE:

I, _____, verify that I have tort liability insurance as follows:
(full name printed)

Name of Company

Amount Period of Coverage (verification is required)

Signature

Date



APPENDIX D: CODE OF ETHICS FORM

Please print the following information:

Teacher Candidate Name _____

Program _____

Mentor Leader _____

I verify that I have read, understand, and will abide by the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators. The Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators is found at <http://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/CodeofEthics.aspx>

Teacher Candidate Signature _____

Date _____



Appendix E: Video/Instructional Recording Consent – Parent/Guardian Letter

School/Placement Site: _____

Partner Teacher: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As a teacher candidate in your child’s classroom/learning environment, I analyze and evaluate my teaching practice in order to grow as a professional educator. In order to accomplish this, I will record lessons I teach in your child’s class, which may take place in a face-to-face classroom, a virtual/online classroom, or a combination of both (e.g., video conferencing and/or digital learning platforms).

With your permission, your child may appear on the recording(s) through audio, video, name, written work, chat responses, or other participation visible during instruction. If you choose not to give permission, your child will still participate in all learning experiences as usual. In face-to-face settings, your child will be seated out of camera range whenever possible. In virtual settings, your child may be asked to keep their camera off, use a first name only, and/or participate in ways that are not recorded, depending on the platform and instructional activity.

The recordings will be used solely for the purposes of analyzing and evaluating my instruction and for improving the teacher education programs at Georgia College & State University. The only people who will view the recording(s) are Georgia College & State University faculty and students involved in professional evaluation and instructional improvement. The recordings will not be used in any public settings, posted online, or shared on social media.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(Teacher Candidate Signature)



Appendix F: Video/Instructional Recording Consent Form

Student Name: _____

School/Placement Site: _____

Teacher Candidate: _____

I am the parent/legal guardian of the child named above. I have received and read the project description regarding instructional recordings and agree to the following:

(Please check the appropriate box below.)

I DO give permission for my child's image/voice and/or participation to be included in instructional recordings as he/she participates in a class conducted in-person and/or in a virtual/online learning environment through:

School/Placement Site Name: _____

Teacher Candidate Name: _____

These recordings may include the student's audio/video participation, chat responses, name as displayed on the platform, and/or student work shown during instruction.

Parent/Guardian Name (please print): _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

I DO NOT give permission for my child's image/voice and/or participation to be included in instructional recordings as he/she participates in a class conducted in-person and/or in a virtual/online learning environment through:

School/Placement Site Name: _____

Teacher Candidate Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (please print): _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____