

Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief)
University of Virginia
Reading Program¹
Audit Dates: October 30 – November 3, 2006

The Summary of the Case is written by the auditors and approved by program faculty. The Summary reflects the auditors' understanding of the case the faculty are making for accreditation.

Authorship and approval of the *Inquiry Brief*:

The *Inquiry Brief* was written by Laura B. Smoklin, Mary Abouzeid, Tisha Hayes, Marcia Invernizzi, and Michael McKenna, and was officially approved by the Faculty members of the Reading Education Program on May 29, 2006.

Overview & program demographics:

The Reading Education Program – with five full professors, one associate professor, and one assistant professor – is nested within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and Special Education at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education. A reading clinic was first established at the Curry School in 1937 and, when reconfigured in 1946, it was named after William Holmes McGuffey, the author of the well-known *Eclectic Readers*. The McGuffey Reading Clinic, renamed a Center in 1973, is home to the longest continually operating reading clinic at any university in the United States. The Center now features both an on-Grounds program and an off-Grounds outreach program named TEMPO (Teaching Educators McGuffey Practica Off-Grounds), which is a replica of the on-Grounds program.

The Curry School's Reading Education Program is distinguished by its emphasis on clinical practice and teaching students to diagnose and remediate reading problems in their students. The program is based on clinical practice and current research in reading, and it is dedicated to service. The Reading Education Program offers three degree tracks: a master's, education specialist, and doctorate (both Ed.D. and Ph.D.). The TEAC Inquiry Brief is limited to the master's degree Reading Education Program.

The Curry School admits graduate students on the basis of their GRE scores (a combined minimum of 850 for a master's candidate) and a B average or better for the last two years of undergraduate study. Since 1995, the Reading Education faculty has adopted "The Rule of 1500" – a formula to admit applicants whose $GPA \times 200 + \text{Verbal GRE} + \text{Quantitative GRE}$ equals or exceeds 1500. Since the academic year 2005-06, the faculty has also begun to consider requiring writing scores of 4.0 and above on the GRE writing portion for master's students.

Successful master's students must complete eight core courses in the Reading Education Program, three cognate courses (selected from five options in the fields of writing, psychology, and literature), and an elective in a teaching-related field for a minimum total of 36 credits. Students must also successfully complete a comprehensive examination and the Virginia Reading Assessment (VRA).

Program's claims:

The overarching claim is that the Reading Education Program prepares teachers who are in compliance with TEAC Quality Principle I and who qualify for the reading specialist endorsement in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The four specific claims (translated into declarative statements from questions posed in the *Inquiry Brief*) are:

1. Graduates have substantial subject matter knowledge in the five key components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
2. Graduates have subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and the technical competencies and insight necessary to assess children's instructional needs in reading and to plan appropriate instruction that will lead to appropriate levels of achievement for all pupils.
3. Graduates have the subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skills to evaluate all aspects of a school's reading program and to recommend measures to improve that program in terms of student achievement and teacher performance.
4. Graduates will pass the Virginia Reading Assessment and gain state licensure.

Method and categories of evidence supporting the claims:

The faculty of the Reading Education Program limited their analysis of program data to a faculty-identified on-Grounds cohort of 64 students who had graduated from the master's degree program, relying on the following measures to assess how well students exhibit the qualities included in the four claims:

- Subject matter knowledge
 - Comprehensive Examination pass rates
 - Virginia Reading Assessment scores (results first available fall 2004)
 - Alumni survey ratings
- Pedagogical knowledge and caring teaching skills
 - Comprehensive Examination pass rates

- Virginia Reading Assessment scores
- Alumni survey ratings
- EDIS 574, EDIS 773, EDIS 774 grades
- Evaluate school's reading program
 - Comprehensive Examination pass rates
 - Virginia Reading Assessment scores
- Pass the Virginia Reading Assessment
 - Virginia Reading Assessment scores

The identified on-Grounds cohort comprises 15.5% of the total number of students in the Reading Education Program from the years 2001-2005. Because students routinely achieve excellent grades and scores on the Comprehensive Examination, the Virginia Reading Assessment, and the core courses in the Reading Education Program, the faculty claims that these measures are both valid and reliable. TEAC's three cross-cutting themes: learning to learn, multicultural perspectives, and technology are incorporated into the core courses required in the Reading Education Program.

Results:

Students enrolled in the Reading Education Program meet (and exceed) the entry requirements advocated by the Curry School. The data tables compiled for the Inquiry Brief report included grades for three courses: 574, 773, and 774 (Table 8, page 23); the fact that all 64 identified students passed the Comprehensive Examination (page 24); that 12 on-Ground students passed the Virginia Reading Assessment, representing a 100% pass rate since the inception of assessment in 2004 (page 24); and percentages of alumni responses to a 2001 and 2006 survey. According to these tables, the 64 graduates of the on-Grounds Reading Education Program met the program's expectations in terms of their knowledge and skills.

Internal audit results:

The Internal Audit was conducted by two faculty members (Program Director Laura Smolkin and research associate Tisha Hayes) with assistance from two doctoral students. They selected 22 students from the database of faculty identified 64 on-Grounds students and made at least 15 distinct probes into the mechanisms the program has in place to monitor and improve its capacity for quality. The auditors discovered that changes to the Curry School's student record system made locating documents difficult and, on occasion, impossible.

The findings of the internal audit included:

- All students completed program requirements, syllabi for all courses were readily available, and courses were positively evaluated by students.
- Surveyed graduates rated Reading Education faculty as competent instructors, and all Reading Education faculty participated in the TEAC process.
- Facilities and resources are adequate.
- The Curry School is financially sound, and fiscal and administrative support for the Reading Education program is on par with that of other Curry School programs.
- Students receive information about resources at annual fall meetings and through the Curry School website.
- Publications regarding academic policies are readily available and adequate, although the internal audit revealed that 23% of the sampled students did not meet the program's admissions standard.
- Course evaluation results are available to all students at registration, and graduate surveys conducted in 2001 and 2006 reflect high student satisfaction with the program.

Evidence of commitment and capacity:

The auditors discovered that the Reading Education Program meets the Capacity Components 4.1 to 4.7 and is in parity with the Curry School and other programs within the University of Virginia. The greatest area of concern is the inadequacy of the database and the need for more specific assessments that would provide evidence of students' teaching skills. The faculty has begun to put new strategies in place – the Tutoring Feedback form, the on-line advisement sheet, and new rubrics to be used in the clinical courses (pages 43 and 32). Overall, however, the faculty conclude that the University of Virginia is committed to the Reading Program and provides suitable capacity for a quality program.

¹ **The program includes options in the following areas and Virginia, following to its own policies and regulations, may grant teaching licenses in these areas to the program's graduates:**

The reading education program includes options at the master's level and education specialist in reading and Virginia, following to its own policies and regulations, may grant teaching licenses in these areas to the program's graduates.