CEC Special Education Program Report Guidelines

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) expects all special education preparation programs to submit a performance-based CEC Special Education Program Report demonstrating the candidates in the program master CEC Preparation Standards for the areas in which the programs are preparing the candidates for practice.

In institutions in which programs for preparation of early childhood education and early childhood special education teachers have been merged into a single pre-service preparation program, the institutions may submit a combined program report to NCATE following NAEYC Guidelines. However, this program report must include responses to the CEC Preparation Standards. This program report will be reviewed by members representing the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

CEC accepts accreditation of the American-Speech-Language-Hearing Association in speech pathology and audiology. Consequently, the institution needs only to submit a copy of its ASHA Educational Standards Board’s letter of approval. This should be submitted even though the program may be in another college within the institution.

CEC also accepts accreditation of the Council on the Education of the DEAF (CED), if the institution has been reviewed by CED under the CED standards accepted in 1998. Consequently, the institution needs only to submit a copy of its CED Educational Standards Board’s letter of approval. This should be submitted even though the program may be in another college within the institution.

CEC and the National Association for Gifted Children validated and approved joint preparation standards for teachers of students with exceptional gifts and talents. In programs that prepare teachers of individuals with exceptional gifts and talents should prepare a CEC/NAGC Program Report.

# Using Appropriate CEC Preparation Standards

For institutions offering preparation programs in special education, it is important to respond to the appropriate CEC Standards. To select the appropriate standards it is important to understand how CEC differentiates initial and advanced programs from initial and advanced preparation standards. Both initial and advanced special education professional standards are the basis for recognizing quality special education preparation programs and for developing special educator licensure frameworks. The initial special education professional standards provide a benchmark that jurisdictions can use to ensure that licensed beginning special educators can practice safely and effectively. The advanced standards provide a benchmark to ensure that advanced special education professionals are able to practice at an accomplished level of skill.

**Initial special education professional preparation standards** describe the minimal knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for individuals to enter initial practice safely and effectively as a special education professional.

**Advanced special education professional standards** describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for individuals to practice at accomplished levels of special education and in advanced special education roles. After previously mastering initial special education professional standards, special educators work toward mastery of advanced professional standards at the post baccalaureate levels, including masters, specialists, and doctoral degree programs, as well as non-degree advanced certificate programs.

**Initial Preparation Programs** are programs at the baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate levels that prepare candidates for the first license to teach. *They include five year programs, master’s programs, and other post-baccalaureate and alternate route programs that prepare individuals for their first license in teaching.*

**Advanced Preparation Programs** are programs at post-baccalaureate levels for (1) the continuing education of teachers who have previously competed initial preparation or (2) the preparation of *other school professionals*. Advanced programs commonly award graduate credit and include masters, specialist, and doctoral degree programs as well as non-degree licensure programs offered at the post baccalaureate level. *Examples of these programs include those for teachers who are preparing for a second license at the graduate level in a field different from the field in which they have their first license; programs for teachers who are seeking a master’s degree in the field in which they teach; and programs not tied to licensure, such as programs in curriculum and instruction. In addition, advanced programs include those for other school professionals. Examples of these are programs in school counseling, school psychology, educational administration, and reading specialists.*

After identifying the appropriate level of CEC Standards, the institution use the initial or advanced CEC Preparation Standards as informed by appropriate specialty area knowledge and skill sets to align their program. There are initial level CEC Special Education Preparation Standards and six advanced level CEC Special Education Preparation Standards. The institution uses the appropriate Knowledge and Skill Set to inform their curriculum development and to align program assessments. Programs are **not** expected to have a direct correlation between each of the CEC knowledge and skills in a set to the assessment items in a program assessment plan. The program’s assessment system should ensure that the program’s assessment system comprehensively addresses each of the Preparation Standards as informed by the knowledge and skill set of the specialization and that program assessment data is aligned to the Preparation Standards in a meaningful format.

State licensure frameworks for special education are the most diverse of any discipline area in education. Some states license by disability category. Many states group categories together in various multicategorical licenses, but these groupings vary across states. Since preparation programs are required to meet state standards, preparation programs typically follow state licensure frameworks. Consequently, there is extraordinary diversity in how special education teachers are prepared. Because of this diversity, CEC continues to provide options to preparation programs through its validated Knowledge and Skill Sets. As stated above, the CEC Initial and Advanced Preparation Standards are identical across all programs. CEC has validated Knowledge and Skill Sets that are disability specific (e.g., Learning Disabilities, Emotionally and Behavioral Disorders, Visually Impaired), multicategorical (Individualized General Curriculum and Individualized Independence Curriculum), and age-specific (Early Childhood). These options provide programs the flexibility to address the Knowledge and Skill Set that most closely aligns with their program.

On its website, CEC provides a flowchart to help institutions identify the appropriate CEC knowledge and skill sets to use. For further clarification of how to select and use the CEC standards, please contact prostandards@cec.sped.org, 703-264-9484). CEC also offers a variety of levels of technical assistance.

# The CEC Preparation Program Report

Each program report must include a context statement, a description of the program assessment system, a description of clinical experiences, and aggregated performance data aligned to the CEC Preparation Standards. A description of each is included below.

The lead developer should be the person with primary responsibility for preparing the special education report. CEC will contact this person if it has any questions about the report. CEC does not set a page limitation for the report. However, it behooves the report developer to be concise and salient.

**Organization of the Report**  The institution must submit a separate report for each program or area of specialization.

**Cover Sheet:** The Cover Sheet should include the information requested. The type of program and the CEC Preparation Standards the report addresses should be clearly identified (Initial or advanced and of specialization, and grade range). State test data, if available, must be submitted on the Cover Sheet Addendum.

**Context Statement:** Each program report must include a context statement of no more than 10-15 pages double spaced. The Context Statement should summarize key points, and provide a narrative summary of significant events and factors for the preparation program. It should set the tone for the presentation of the candidate evidence that comprises the remainder of the program report,

The context statement describes the unique attributes that influence the special education teacher preparation program, as well as, the relationship of the framework for the special education teacher program to the conceptual framework used for unit accreditation. It is important that these attributes be considered when performance materials are judged. The context statement helps CEC reviewers understand the context and background of the program, and the ways in which the program provides learning opportunities for candidates. Finally, the Context Statement helps reviewers understand the program’s current and planned system for assessing the knowledge and skills of its candidates in relation to the CEC standards.

The Context Statement should include the relevant policies and practices affecting the institution’s special education teacher preparation program. These help explain how the preparation program is shaped and how it functions. The intent is to identify policies and practices that directly influence the nature of the special education preparation program. Examples might be policies regarding the particular mission of the institution, its orientation to and use of technology, its relationship with field sites, or the characteristics of the candidates it tries to recruit. If such policies appear in student of faculty handbooks or elsewhere, they should be excerpted, described, or summarized, and the submission should explain their effect on the special education preparation program.

A description of the program features and faculty qualifications that provide the basis for confidence in faculty judgments about candidates’ readiness for licensure and initial teaching can be included. Finally, the context statement should describe how the program course of study and experiences provide opportunities for candidates to learn and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the standards. It is not necessary to include faculty vita, as these will be examined during the onsite visit.

The Context Statement should also include the following information.

* Basic description of the program, including degree level, grades or ages covered, and the professional roles graduates of the program are qualified to practice.
* Number of candidates enrolled and completing the program for the last three years.
* Any state requirements for candidates that may impinge on implementation of the specialty area program or on performance of the candidates, with an explanation of how the program accommodates differences between specialty standards and state standards.
* A brief summary of a program’s self-evaluation focusing on perceived program strengths and deviations from specialty organization standards.

In addition the context statement may be used to make a compelling case for:

* A description of the major emphases of the program in relation to the specialty organization standards, a discussion of how the courses and field experiences are aligned to reinforce each other, or a statement on how a capstone clinical experience creates an environment for candidates to observe a student learning as a result of their own efforts.
* Features of the program’s assessment system, the particular qualifications and experience of the faculty as judges of teaching, an extensive professional development activity, or the nature of the state teacher induction program and success of the program’s candidates.

# Performance Assessments and Data Aligned to the CEC Preparation Standards

The principal part of an institution’s program report is the aggregation, interpretation, and summarization of evidence demonstrating that special education teacher candidates acquired the knowledge and skills described in Preparation Standards at the initial level and Preparation standards at the advanced level.

For each CEC Preparation standard, the program report should describe the assessment(s) used to evaluate candidate performance. For each assessment, the report should include aggregated candidate performance data aligned to the CEC Preparation Standard. The achievement of candidate knowledge and skills in the standards is a primary basis for judgments that a standard is met and that the program merits national recognition. In addition to the aggregated data for each assessment, program reports should include the assessment instrument, directions to candidates, and the scoring rubrics for each assessment.

Use the following guidelines in preparing the presentation of the assessment data:

1. Present the assessment information and the aggregated candidate data related to each CEC standard so that the relationship of the information and data to the CEC standard is salient.
2. Interpret data by CEC Preparation Standard. Not only provide summaries of data, but also describe faculty analysis and conclusions about candidate proficiencies from the array of evidence assembled for each CEC Preparation standard.
3. Include rubrics or criteria used to assess proficiency levels in the program together with information on the proportion of the program enrollees or completers who attain each level of performance defined by the program. It is not helpful for reviewers to see mean scores alone; reviewers need the proportion of candidates who achieve at varying levels of proficiency in a format aligned to the CEC Preparation standards or components of standards.
4. Exhibit use of multiple data sources. Summaries, aggregations, and interpretations from multiple data sources should be exhibited in the program report. These should illustrate various points during candidates’ preparation program, the scope of the Preparation standards, and examples of knowledge and skills achieved by the candidates. Multiple measures provide wide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in relation to standards. ???[how does this reconcile with limits on assessments allowed?]

NCATE requires that a program is to have six and not more than eight assessments. The focus of the first five assessments is dictated as follows:

Assessment 1: If the state requires a licensing test, the state licensing test is the first assessment. If the state does not require a licensing test, the institution must have two Preparation assessments.

Assessment 2: The program should have an additional central Preparation assessment in addition to the state required test. If the state licensing test in assessment 1 is general in scope or assesses only the CEC Common Core, the institution must assure the second Preparation assessment aligns with the appropriate specific area of specialization.

Assessment 3: The third assessment should be an assessment of candidate instructional planning. At the initial level this will most likely be a unit plan or lesson plan.

Assessment 4: The fourth assessment is an assessment of candidates’ skill and knowledge demonstrated during clinical/field practice.

Assessment 5: The fifth assessment is an assessment that addresses candidates’ impact on student learning.

Assessment 6: While a sixth assessment is required, the focus of the sixth assessment is at the discretion of the program

Assessment 7: The last two allowable assessments are optional and their foci are at the discretion of the program.

Assessment 8: The last two allowable assessments are optional and their foci are at the discretion of the program.

The program report must include a section that describes the field and clinical experiences required in the program(s). This description should demonstrate how the program(s) meets each element of the following CEC Field and Clinical Experiences Standards: Special education candidates’ progress through a series of developmentally sequenced field experiences for the full range of ages, types and levels of abilities, and collaborative opportunities that are appropriate to the license or roles for which they are preparing. These field and clinical experiences are supervised by qualified professionals.

# Formatting and Submitting the Report

All Program Reports are now submitted electronically at the NCATE website. The NCATE website provides the directions for the essential components and related charts. The program report should be completed electronically and loaded electronically in sections. Following the format and charts and templates provided will make it easiest for reviewers to locate the information needed.

**Guidance for Providing Data** NCATE had a timeline for transition to the performance-based accreditation procedures. This allowed institutions four years to plan, develop, pilot, and fully implement assessment systems that generate candidate assessment information. The transition period has expired. As of September 2009, three years of data on at least five assessments is required.Further details on the expectations for assessment quantity are available at the NCATE website.

**Evidence** Please note that CEC will expect programs to provide data appropriate to the year of their submission.

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