

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2025



LITERACY EDUCATION



School of Education
& Human Development
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

CU IN THE CITY 

Responsive Literacy Education Student Handbook

This handbook applies to students in the following graduate programs:

- Master of Arts in Literacy Education: English Education
- Master of Arts in Literacy Education (no endorsement)
- Master of Arts in Literacy Education with Reading Specialist Endorsement, K-12
- Early Literacy Certificate
- Literacy and Language Development for Diverse Learners Certificate
- Digital Teacher Librarian Certificate
- Teacher Librarian Endorsement
- MA in Literacy Education with Teacher Librarian Endorsement

Students' successful experience in Responsive Literacy Education is important to us. This handbook is a tool to ensure that students maintain academic progress according to SEHD and University of Colorado Denver (UCD) policies and procedures.

In addition to this handbook, students should refer to the School of Education and Human Development [Student Policies and Procedures Handbook](#), available on the [SEHD Current Student Resources website](#). The Student Policies and Procedures Handbook includes information on registration, Financial Aid, grades, graduation, and other topics that relate to students in all SEHD programs.

The student assumes full responsibility for meeting all basic requirements for the degree as well as the specific requirements outlined by their program.

Included in this Student Handbook:

Program Philosophy.....	2
Course Plans.....	3
MA in Literacy Education: English Education.....	3
MA in Literacy Education.....	4
MA in Literacy Education: Reading and Writing with Reading Specialist Endorsement, K-12.....	5
Early Literacy Certificate.....	7
Literacy and Language Development for Diverse Learners Certificate.....	8
Digital Teacher Librarian Certificate.....	9
Teacher Librarian Endorsement.....	10
MA in Literacy Education with Teacher Librarian Endorsement.....	11
RLE MA Culminating Portfolio Requirements (COMPS).....	13

Program Philosophy

The University of Colorado Denver's Responsive Literacy Education graduate programs prepare transformative and innovative literacy and English teachers, reading specialists, and leaders who are highly skilled to work with and advocate for the learning and literacy needs of K-12 student populations from a variety of backgrounds. Graduates exiting the program will draw on anti-bias, inclusive, and science of reading supported pedagogies and be equipped to teach and coach teachers to advance children's learning in reading, writing, and oral language skills with deep knowledge in supporting multilingual learners. Graduates will be prepared to positively impact school and community literacy initiatives in both local and national communities.

Our programs draw from the work of the International Literacy Association, National Council of Teachers of English, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, the National Association for Bilingual Education, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Council for Exceptional Children. We believe that K-12 teachers and leaders make a difference in students' literacy achievement and motivation to read, and every student deserves to have an excellent teacher. Excellent reading specialists and literacy teachers and leaders understand how children learn to read and write from birth through adolescence and that students' intersectional identities and cultural, linguistic, and literacy backgrounds are assets upon which to build further learning. Excellent reading specialists and literacy teachers and leaders know how to apply a variety of evidence-based instructional and assessment practices to teach literacy and are confident in adjusting their approaches based on students' strengths and needs.

Importantly, while our university is located in a city-center, we teach and reach educators and their students across the state, nation, and globe. We pride our content and instruction on meeting the needs of K-12 learners, especially learners who have been historically underserved in public education. Our program values the extensive knowledge that educators bring to the program as professionals and fosters collaborative learning in the classes and beyond the program. As part of the professional learning in the program, literacy teachers, leaders, and reading specialists engage in continual learning, critical reflexivity and praxis to refine, deepen, and expand their literacy knowledge, instruction, and leadership.

To ensure that students have the excellent teachers they deserve, we advocate that: Teachers and reading specialists must view themselves as lifelong learners; administrators must be instructional leaders; teacher educators must also view themselves as lifelong learners and instructional leaders as they provide their education students with a solid knowledge base and extensive supervised practice; and legislators and policymakers must understand the complex roles of the teacher. Additionally, parents, community members, and teachers must join in partnerships providing learners with rich opportunities to explore and develop their literacies.

Further, our MA program is designed to center on inclusive, effective, and purposeful literacy learning for all learners, including multilingual and multicultural learners. As such, we draw on theories and pedagogies such as culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2012), anti-bias teaching and learning (Lin et al., 2008), translanguaging (García, 2009; 2017), and equity-focused literacies such as Tatum's framework of the Multidimensional Reading Model (2021) and Muhammad's, five pursuits (2020; 2023).

Three core perspectives bring our program's philosophy into practice in our course content, learning experiences, and the applications for teachers and reading specialists in their own classrooms and schools: 1) rich learning experiences, deep knowledge, and critical reflection, 2) purposeful relationships and integrated support systems, and 3) antiracist and anti-biased literacy education.

Course Plans

MA in Literacy Education: English Education

For the MA in Literacy Education: English Education, there are 5 required literacy courses (15 credit hours). With advice and approval from your faculty advisor, you select 5 elective courses from SEHD or CU Denver's Department of English to personalize your learning (15 credits). For example, you may want to focus on courses that would enhance your background in literature, rhetoric, film; your elementary or secondary teaching and leadership abilities; or your expertise in teaching students of a wide variety of cultures, backgrounds, abilities, and interests.

This degree plan does not include a license or an endorsement.

Degree Components	Courses	Credits	Semester Completed
Concentration Core; 15 credits required			
Core Course 1	LCRT 5200: English Methods (Fall)	3	
Core Course 2	LCRT 5201: Teaching and Learning with Diverse Adolescent Literature (Spring)	3	
Core Course 3	LCRT 5720: Responsive Writing Instruction (Summer/Fall)	3	
Core Course 4	LCRT 5730: Disciplinary Language and Literacy (Summer)	3	
Core Course 5 (Research)	LCRT 6915: Inquiry, Advocacy, and Teacher Research (Spring)	3	
Total Concentration Core		15	
Choice of 5 elective courses from SEHD and the CU Denver Department of English; 15 credits required			
Course 1		3	
Course 2		3	
Course 3		3	
Course 4		3	
Course 5		3	
Total Elective Credits		15	
*Final MA Portfolio due semester of graduation.			
Total Credit Hours		30	

*The MA Portfolio fulfills the comprehensive exam requirement for the master's degree. The portfolio is an accumulation of the performance based assessments completed during program courses and reflects on the student's development over the course of the degree program, and it is usually completed during LCRT 6915.

MA in Literacy Education

For this MA in Literacy Education, there are 5 required courses (15 credits hours). With advice and approval from your faculty advisor, select 5 elective courses from SEHD to customize your learning (15 credits). For example, you may want to customize your selections for elementary or secondary teaching.

This degree plan does not include a license or an endorsement.

Semester offered	Courses	Credit	Semester completed
Concentration Core; 15 credits required			
Spring	LCRT 5810: Language and Literacy Use in Schools, Homes, and Communities	3	
Fall	LCRT 5020: Equity and Joy in Reading Instruction	3	
Fall	LCRT 5055: Literacy Assessment and Informed Instruction	3	
Summer & Fall	LCRT 5720: Responsive Writing Instruction	3	
Spring	LCRT 6915: Inquiry, Advocacy, and Teacher Research	3	
Total Concentration Core		15	
Choice of 5 elective courses from SEHD; 15 credits required			
Course 1		3	
Course 2		3	
Course 3		3	
Course 4		3	
Course 5		3	
Total SEHD Course Elective Credits		15	
Portfolio	*Final MA Portfolio semester of graduation.	-	
Total Credit Hours		30	

*The MA portfolio counts as the comprehensive exam for the master's degree. The portfolio is an accumulation of the performance based assessments completed during program courses and reflects on the student's development over the course of the degree program, and it is usually completed during LCRT 6915.

MA in Literacy Education: Reading and Writing with Reading Specialist Endorsement, K-12

For this MA in Literacy Education with Reading Specialist Endorsement, there are 10 required courses (30 credits hours). Recommendations for endorsements are made by the Literacy Education program, but endorsement is granted by the State of Colorado. Individual state requirements vary and may include teaching experience in addition to a valid teaching credential. Students should consult with the [Colorado Department of Education](https://www.colorado.gov/p3/cde) or another state in which they wish to be endorsed for the most updated endorsement requirements.

Please note: The Colorado Department of Education requires 3 or more years of licensed teaching experience and 30 graduate credit hours to apply for the Reading Specialist endorsement.

This MA Degree Plan includes an endorsement.

Semester offered	Courses	Credits	Semester Completed
Spring	LCRT 5810 Language and Literacy Use in Schools, Homes, and Communities	3	
Fall	LCRT 5020 Equity and Joy in Reading Instruction	3	
Fall	LCRT 5055 Literacy Assessment & Informed Instruction	3	
Fall	LCRT 6910 Practicum in Literacy Leadership	3	
Summer	LCRT 5710 Inclusive Early Literacy Development & Instruction	3	
Summer & Fall	LCRT 5720 Responsive Writing Instruction	3	
Spring	LCRT 5795 Teaching & Learning with Diverse Children's Literature OR LCRT 5201 Teaching & Learning with Diverse Adolescent Literature	3	
Summer	LCRT 5730 Disciplinary Language & Literacy	3	
Spring	SPED 5780 Literacy Interventions for Exceptional Learners	3	
Spring	LCRT 6915 Inquiry, Advocacy, & Teacher Research	3	
	*Portfolio – completed and submitted the semester of graduation	-	Semester of Graduation
	Total Credit Hours	30	

*The MA portfolio fulfills the comprehensive exam requirement for the master's degree. The portfolio is an accumulation of the performance-based assessments completed during program courses and reflects on the student's development over the course of the degree program; it is usually completed during LCRT 6915.

Early Literacy Certificate

This certificate totals 4 courses (12 credit hours) in the specialty area of early literacy. Courses may be taken in any order and the certificate may be completed in one year. Students can begin in any term.

This certificate plan does NOT include a license or an endorsement.

Semester offered	Courses	Credits	Semester Completed
Spring	REQ: LCRT 5795: Teaching & Learning with Diverse Children's Literature	3	
Summer	REQ: LCRT 5710: Inclusive Early Literacy Development and Instruction	3	
Choose two of the following courses: LCRT 5020/LCRT 5810/LCRT 5720/LCRT 5055			
Fall	LCRT 5020: Equity and Joy in Reading Instruction**	3	
Fall Summer	LCRT 5720: Responsive Writing Instruction**	3	
Spring	LCRT 5810: Language and Literacy Use in Schools, Homes, and Communities**	3	
Fall	LCRT 5055: Literacy Assessment & Informed Instruction**	3	
	Total Credit Hours	12	

Notes:

- Any of the courses here count towards the [Masters of Art in Literacy Education with Reading Specialist Endorsement](#), should you choose to pursue an MA degree in the future.
- All courses marked with (**) are required for the [Master of Arts in Literacy Education](#) (without endorsement) should you choose to continue with an MA in the future.

Literacy and Language Development for Diverse Learners Certificate

The fully online certificate totals 12 credit hours and consists of four graduate courses. Courses may be taken in any order and the certificate may be completed in one year. Students can begin in any term.

You will select four courses based on your certificate goals and interests. Please reach out to your Faculty Advisor to make a course plan.

This certificate plan does NOT include a license or an endorsement.

Semester offered	Courses	Credits	Semester completed
Fall	LCRT 5020 Equity and Joy in Reading Instruction**	3	
Spring	LCRT 5810 Language and Literacy Use in Schools, Homes, and Communities**	3	
Spring	LCRT 5795 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Children's Literature Or LCRT 5201 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Adolescent Literature	3	
Fall	LCRT 5055 Literacy Assessment & Informed Instruction**	3	
Summer Fall	LCRT 5720 Responsive Writing Instruction**	3	
Summer	LCRT 5730 Disciplinary Language and Literacy	3	
	Total Credit Hours	12	

Notes:

- Any of the courses here count towards the [Masters of Art in Literacy Education with Reading Specialist Endorsement](#), should you choose to pursue an MA degree in the future.
- All courses marked with (**) are required for the [Master of Arts in Literacy Education](#) (without endorsement) should you choose to continue with an MA in the future.

Digital Teacher Librarian Certificate

The Digital Teacher Librarian (DTL) Certificate program prepares teacher librarians within schools who are not endorsed as a certified school librarian with the knowledge and skills necessary to establish an inclusive learning community that ensures students can find, evaluate, create and communicate information. This certificate will update current librarians' skills based on the Colorado State Library's competencies for the [Highly Effective Schools Through Libraries \(HESTL\) Program](#) and support implementation within the specific K-12 practicum experience.

The certificate totals 12 credit hours and consists of four graduate courses, including a field experience.

This certificate plan does NOT include a license or an endorsement.

Semester Offered	Course	Credits	Semester Completed
Fall	SCHL 5030 Cultivating Learning Skills as a Library Leader	3	
Spring	SCHL 5160 Managing School Library Programs	3	
Fall	SCHL 5913 School Library Field Experience Note: Can be taken for a semester or for a year with an IP at the end of fall semester. Only register once even if going from fall into spring.	3	
Spring	LCRT 5795 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Children's Literature (OR) LCRT 5201 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Adolescent Literature	3	
Total Credit Hours		12	

Notes:

These four courses (12 credits) plus 12 credits in the [Literacy & Language for Diverse Learners certificate](#) may be applied toward the requirements for the [Teacher Librarian endorsement](#).

Teacher Librarian Endorsement

The CDE-approved Teacher Librarian endorsement consists of 24 semester hours (8 courses) and professional field experience. Students must be licensed as a teacher or plan to complete a teaching license prior to seeking the additional endorsement as a Teacher Librarian.

Courses are offered only in certain semesters and courses should be taken in a particular sequence based on when you start the program. Advising is required in order to ensure the most effective course sequencing and availability of courses.

This plan leads to an endorsement.

Semester Offered	Course	Credits	Semester Completed
Digital Teacher Librarian Certificate			
Fall	SCHL 5030 Cultivating Learning Skills as a Library Leader	3	
Spring	SCHL 5160 Managing School Library Programs	3	
Fall/Spring	SCHL 5913 School Library Field Experience	3	
Spring	LCRT 5795 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Children's Literature OR LCRT 5201 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Adolescent Literature	3	
Literacy and Language Development for Diverse Learners Certificate			
Fall	LCRT 5020 Equity and Joy in Reading Instruction OR LCRT 5055 Literacy Assessment and Informed Instruction	3	
Spring	LCRT 5810 Language and Literacy Use in Schools, Homes, and Communities	3	
Summer	LCRT 5720 Responsive Writing Instruction OR LCRT 5730 Language and Literacy Across the Curriculum	3	
Additional Course			
Fall	LCRT 6910 Practicum in Literacy Leadership	3	
Total		24	

To earn a [Master of Arts in Literacy Education](#) with the Teacher Librarian Endorsement, you will need to apply for the MA program and complete the additional required courses as well as a Final MA Portfolio due the semester of graduation.

MA in Literacy Education with Teacher Librarian Endorsement

To complete the MA in Literacy Education with Teacher Librarian Endorsement, you will complete the Digital Teacher Librarian certificate* and the Literacy & Language for Diverse Learners** certificate to earn your [Teacher Librarian endorsement](#) plus the required courses in the literacy program to complete the MA.

This degree plan includes an endorsement.

Semester Offered	Courses	Credits	Semester Completed
Digital Teacher Librarian Certificate*			
Fall	SCHL 5030 Cultivating Learning Skills as a Library Leader	3	
Spring	SCHL 5160 Managing School Library Programs	3	
Fall/Spring	SCHL 5913 School Library Field Experience	3	
Spring	LCRT 5795 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Children's Literature (OR) LCRT 5201 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Adolescent Literature	3	
Total Digital Teacher Librarian Certificate		12	
Literacy and Language for Diverse Learners Certificate**			
Fall	LCRT 5020 Equity and Joy in Reading Instruction	3	
Spring	LCRT 5795 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Children's Literature (OR) LCRT 5201 Teaching and Learning with Diverse Adolescent Literature	3	
Summer	LCRT 5730 Disciplinary Language and Literacy	3	
Fall Spring	LCRT 6910 Practicum in Literacy Leadership OR LCRT 5810 Language and Literacy Use in Schools, Homes, and Communities	3	
Total Literacy and Language for Diverse Learners Certificate		12	
MA Specific Courses			
Fall	Course Choice (selected with faculty advisor)	3	
Spring	LCRT 6915 Inquiry, Advocacy, and Teacher Research *(Portfolio submitted for Comprehensive Exam)	3	
MA Total		30	

*The MA portfolio fulfills the comprehensive exam requirement for the master's degree. The portfolio is an
Updated 6/2025

accumulation of the performance-based assessments completed during program courses and reflects on the student's development over the course of the degree program; it is usually completed during LCRT 6915.

RLE MA Culminating Portfolio Requirements (COMPS)

Revised June, 2025

The MA Portfolio is your comprehensive exam. It permits you to document your development over the course of your degree. The portfolio should reflect the learning, growth and development you have gained through participation in your master's program. Most of the assignments required for your portfolio are performance-based assessments (PBAs) or final papers / projects that you complete during your MA coursework. These artifacts need to be uploaded to Student Learning and Licensure at the time of the final exam in each course. We strongly encourage you to keep electronic copies of all of your MA assignments, however, because you will need to upload some a second time into your final portfolio.

The description of the MA culminating portfolio for the different programs can be found below:

- [MA in Literacy Education: English Education](#)
- [MA in Literacy Education](#)
- [MA in Literacy Education with Reading Specialist Endorsement](#)
- [MA in Literacy Education with Teacher Librarian Endorsement](#)