

**New Graduate Program (Majors, Sequences, Certificates) Proposal  
Illinois State University - Graduate Curriculum Committee**

**Program Department** English

**Initiator** Maggie Morris Davis

**Phone** 438-7596

**Initiator Department** English

**Coauthor(s)** Sarah Hochstetler (shochst@ilstu.edu), Danielle Lillge (dmlillg@ilstu.edu)

**Title of New Program** Master of Arts/Master of Science in English Education

**Submission Date** Thursday, January 21, 2021

**Email** memorr3@ilstu.edu

**Campus Address** 4240 English.

**Version** 4 **ID** 153

**Proposed Starting Catalog Year** 2022-2023

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**Associated Course Proposal(s):**

New Graduate Course proposal ENG 435 titled *Critical Conversations in the Teaching of English*

New Graduate Course proposal ENG 436 titled *Theories of Socially Just ELA Instruction*

New Graduate Course proposal ENG 437 titled *Teacher Action Research Methods*

New Graduate Course proposal ENG 438 titled *Assessing and Analyzing Diverse Student Literacy Data*

New Graduate Course proposal ENG 439 titled *English Teacher Advocacy in Action*

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**1. Proposed Action**

- ✓ New Major
  - New Sequence
  - New Certificate
- ✓ More than 50% of courses in this program are Distance Education

**Degree Type(s)**

Master of Arts, Master of Science

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**2. Provide Graduate Catalog copy for new program.**

**Master of English Education Requirements**

The Master of English Education is a professional degree designed to improve the content and pedagogical knowledge of in service teachers of English language arts (ELA) who already possess a bachelor's degree in English Education. The 34 credit hour degree requires core coursework in English Education and elective coursework in English or related disciplines. It also requires a thesis.

Students who wish to complete degree requirements for a Master of Arts rather than Master of Science, must complete the Graduate School Master of Arts degree foreign language requirement.

**English Education Content:**

- 15 credit hours of the following: ENG 435, 436, 437, 438, 439.

**Elective Content:**

- 15 credit hours from 400-level courses in English. Students may take graduate courses in other related disciplines such as Educational Administration and Foundations, Special Education, Teaching and Learning, Theater, and Communication. Written permission must be received prior to enrollment from the English Education Graduate Program Coordinator.

**Required Thesis:**

- 4 credit hours of ENG 499 under the direction of English Education graduate faculty advisor or thesis chair

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**3. Provide a description for the proposed program.**

The Master in English Education is designed for certified secondary English language arts (ELA) teachers who wish to deepen their knowledge of socially just ELA content, pedagogy, and research.

Program students, or teacher scholars, will design and conduct research in their own secondary ELA classrooms. By sharing the findings of their research with professional audiences, they will be able to improve the effectiveness of their socially just ELA instruction and advocate for the needs and strengths of all learners. These skills will equip program graduates with critical tools to become reflective instructional leaders in their classrooms, departments, schools, state, and professional field.

Please also see the attached supporting document, in which our Feasibility Study is included.

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**4. Provide a rationale of proposed program.**

This program is a unique, research-based, and data-driven response to national, regional, and state needs as well as needs specific to the Illinois State University Department of English.

In the public sphere and in academic conversations the national teacher shortage has become a common, constant refrain. Illinois schools illustrate these trends, with high need schools in urban and rural areas demonstrating the greatest need.[1] Of equal concern is the lack of diversity in the teaching pool, a direct contrast to the growing diversity in student populations across the state.[2]

While our undergraduate program is strong and growing, this proposed program will allow greater opportunity to more specifically respond to needs within Illinois schools. A major factor contributing to the teacher shortage is teacher retention. Research shows that more early career teachers remain in the profession when they teach within a supportive professional community.[3] Our own graduates routinely remark that a barrier to staying in the profession and thriving in the classroom is the sharp division between their early and often isolating first years of teaching and their time in our program at ISU in a collaborative and supportive cohort and learning community. We see this program as a direct response to the retention problem of early career ELA teachers committed to redressing systemic inequities.

Program alum have, for years, reached out to program faculty and staff to inquire about graduate study within the Department of English; however, the inaccessibility of the current Master's program for full-time practicing English language arts teachers as well as the lack of courses specific to the study of English Education have caused them to go elsewhere for graduate work.

Thus, we have designed the MS/MA in English Education program to be grounded in, emerging from, and contributing to current research in English teacher education as described below:

- Given the increasing diversity of our nation's secondary schools, English language arts teachers need to be "**advocates for and models of social justice and equity.**"[4]
- **Socially just English language arts (ELA) instruction** focuses on teachers' ability to open opportunities for all students' literacy learning, especially as they work within systems of inequity that have historically marginalized students from minoritized racial, ethnic, economic, religious, sexual, gender, and other identifications.[5] Research affirms the need to center socially just ELA instruction and study in teachers' ongoing professional learning across time, diverse teaching contexts, power dynamics, and social interactions.[6]
- Research documents how, even when teachers are committed to enacting socially just ELA instruction, they face challenges in doing so as they work within complex school systems.[7] Graduate study can effectively support their **context-specific negotiation** of these challenges, especially as teacher scholars work to deepen their understanding of the social, economic, and cultural factors that both undermine and support families in high poverty communities.[8]
- **Teacher action research** is key to studying one's own practice in ways that inform future action in support of diverse student learning. Teacher action research methods have a unique history in English education, which benefits teacher scholars in their ability to advocate for the results of their research in local, regional, and statewide conversations.[9]
- The field of English language arts offers a **unique set of interdisciplinary and critical inquiry tools for studying how language shapes teaching and learning** in diverse classrooms.[10]
- Teacher scholars' instruction benefits from opportunities to **learn in community with other secondary ELA teachers**, and this community can play an important role in retaining teachers in the profession.[11]

[1] ISBE, "Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois" (2018); ISBE, "Teach Illinois Report" (2018)

[2] ISBE, "Teach Illinois Report" (2018)

[3] American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE) Supply and Demand Report 2018-2019 (p 10)

[4] Boyd, F., Ariail, M., Williams, R., Jocsen, K., Sachs, G., McNeal, K., . . . Morrell, E. (2006). Real teaching for real diversity: Preparing English language arts teachers for 21st-century classrooms. *English Education*, 38(4), 329-350.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2010). Toward a theory of teaching for social justice. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Educational Change* (Vol. 1, pp. 445-467). New York, NY: Springer.

[5] Moje, E. B. (2007). Developing socially just subject-matter instruction: A review of the literature on disciplinary literacy teaching. *Review of Research in Education*, 31, 1-44.

[6] Rex, L., & Schiller, L. (2009). *Using Discourse Analysis to Improve Classroom Interaction*. New York, NY: Routledge.

[7] Um, S. J. (2019). Politics of hybridity: Teaching for social justice in an era of standards-based reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 81, 74-83.

Williamson, T. (2017). Listening to many voices: Enacting social justice literacy curriculum. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 61, 104-114.

[8] Lazar, A. (2013). Degrees toward social justice teaching: Examining the dispositions of three urban early-career teachers. *Urban Review*, 45, 701-727.

[9] Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1999). The teacher research movement: A decade later. *Educational Researcher*, 28(7), 15-25. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X028007015>

[10] Alsop, J., Emig, J., Pradl, G., Tremmel, R., Yagelski, R., Alvine, L., . . . Sawyer, M. (2006). The state of English education and a vision for its future: A call to arms. *English Education*, 38(4), 278-294.

Beach, R., & Beauchemin, F. (2019). *Teaching Language as Action in The ELA Classroom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

[11] Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1999). Chapter 8: Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Communities. *Review of Research in Education*, 24(1), 249-305. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X024001249>

Sleeter, C. E. (2019). Considering core assumptions about what it means to teach. *Teachers College Record*, 121(6), 1-4.

Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Darling-Hammond, L., & Bishop, J. (2019). Strategies for attracting and retaining educators: What does the evidence say? *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(38). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3722>

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**5. Describe the expected effects of the proposed program on existing campus programs (if applicable).**

This is a non-traditional program for non-traditional students not otherwise coming to campus. Therefore, it does not negatively impact other programs on campus. This program will, however, increase enrollment in existing English Department graduate courses and, potentially, other related disciplines.

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**6. Describe the expected curricular changes required, including new courses. If proposals for new courses that will be or have been submitted, please reference those related proposals here:**

There are five required core courses. These courses provide instructional support so that teachers can design, conduct, write about, and disseminate teacher action research that affects instructional change.

Parallel to this proposal, we are submitting a Course Revision Proposal to change the name and revise the course description of one existing course, ENG 395, and its newly proposed 400-level parallel course, 435, from “Problems in the Teaching of English” to “Critical Conversations in the Teaching of English.” In this course students will learn reading, writing, and rhetorical moves for mapping and then entering current critical conversations in the field of English education.

Four of the five required core courses are new. These course proposals are being submitted parallel to this proposal as well:

436 – Theories of Socially Just ELA Instruction – This course invites students, or teacher scholars, to deepen their understanding of the history of English education in relation to theories of socially just English language arts (ELA) instruction and research. Teacher Scholars will complete a literature review and a theoretical framework articulation, as well as draft a tentative inquiry question. Collectively this work will demonstrate their ability to situate their own questions and inquiry in relation to historical and present conversations in the field of ELA, draw on theories to explain their inquiry approach, and continue to develop their own framework for socially just ELA instruction.

437 – Teacher Action Research Methods – Students, or teacher scholars, will study and join current conversations about how to research their socially just English language arts (ELA) teaching. Teacher Scholars will revise and refine their locally situated research question; write a biography essay that explores how they come to the work and how their research question emerges through their teaching; and draft a research proposal, including a revised theoretical framework and articulation of their chosen methodology and methods that support researching this question. The study of Teacher Action research ethics and teacher identities and positionalities, especially in relation to their students and communities (school and local), will guide this work.

438 – Assessing and Analyzing Diverse Student Literacy Data – Students, or teacher scholars, will learn techniques and research methods to analyze their study data as well as classroom assessment—both formative and summative—methods and practices in the field of ELA; identify the need for new data, as their research project grows in response to continued analysis of student learning; write a “research-based practice brief” that articulates the value of a particular ELA classroom assessment approach; and write lab reports from hands-on, in class work with data from secondary ELA classrooms. This course stresses the recursive process of collecting, generating, and working with data within Teacher Action Research and emphasizes the everyday work of the teacher scholars’ classrooms.

439 – English Teacher Advocacy in Action – Students, or teacher scholars, will articulate their tentative findings from data analysis drawn from their teacher action research and determine how they may frame their emerging understandings for dissemination. Teacher scholars will learn how to advocate for all learners and socially just ELA instruction in their local contexts and within particular policy and political dynamics by rhetorically analyzing and then identifying audiences, purposes, and venues for sharing their findings in order to effect change.

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**7. Anticipated funding needs and source of funds.**

Please see Financial Implication Form.

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**8. No Does this program count for teacher education?**

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**9. The following questions must be answered.**

**Yes** Have you confirmed that Milner Library has sufficient resources for the proposed program?

**N.A.** Have letter(s) of concurrence from affected departments/schools been obtained?

*A departments/school is affected if it has a program with significant overlap or if it teaches a required or elective course in the program.*



