

Walden University

**Teacher Preparation
Program with a
Master of Arts in
Teaching (M.A.T.)**

**Candidate Guidebook
Abridged Version**

The Richard W. Riley
College of Education and Leadership

WALDEN UNIVERSITY

Walden University
The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership
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Contents

Introduction.....	1
The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership.....	1
The Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.)	4
Part I: Program Information.....	6
Academic and Professional Standards	6
Admissions Criteria	6
Satisfactory Academic Progress	8
Description of Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.).....	9
Field Experiences.....	10
Professional Portfolio.....	12
Part II: License Information.....	13
Transition Points	13
Minnesota Board of Teaching Required Licensure Tests.....	13
Licensure Information.....	13
Part III: Other Information Important To Your Success.....	15
Academic Grievances	15
Background Checks	15
Credit for Prior Coursework and Experience.....	17
Preferred Placement Form	17
Professional Dispositions.....	17
Professional Liability Insurance	18
Proof of Immunization and TB Clearance	18

Introduction

Welcome to Walden University's Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.). Our programs help you obtain the professional knowledge and experience you need to become a well-informed and skilled educator.

This abridged guidebook will help you gain a general understanding of the guidelines and requirements of the Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.). While this abridged guidebook will answer many of your questions, you will also need to stay in close touch with Walden, especially with the Academic Advising Team and program director, for specifics regarding your individual program. We are here to build a relationship with you and help you be successful all the way through your coursework, field experiences, and demonstration teaching.

You will be issued the unabridged guidebook when you matriculate as an enrolled teacher candidate.

Important note: This guidebook refers to the *Walden University Student Handbook* for specific information on university policies and courses. Candidates should be sure to have the handbook available to reference. (Go to www.WaldenU.edu/catalog and choose the current handbook from the dropdown menu at upper right.)

The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership

The following vision and mission statements represent the commitment of Walden University's Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership to pursue academic excellence, embrace our rich diversity, value all of our stakeholders, and encourage civic responsibility through the promotion of positive social change. For our graduates to cultivate habits of lifelong learning and continuous advancement of their knowledge, we consider it essential that these statements guide us as we seek to ensure the quality and synergy of our programs.

Vision

The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership fosters a dynamic and diverse network of educational leaders who seek to support learners globally by leveraging the power of teaching and technology and who are committed to the pursuit of positive social change through education.

Mission

The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership provides access to high-caliber programs that prepare learners as scholar-practitioners and leaders who can inspire, influence, and impact their diverse communities by helping to meet the challenges and opportunities of education worldwide.

Conceptual Framework

Walden University has developed a conceptual framework in collaboration with the professional community that articulates the shared vision of the unit's efforts to prepare educators to work in P–12 schools. The conceptual framework provides our philosophical foundation and serves as a guide for decision-making within the unit.



Critical Components

Eight critical components were identified to serve as our unit outcomes or institutional standards based on our guiding philosophy, as well as on our vision and mission at the unit and institutional levels. We believe our critical components distinguish our candidates from those who graduate from other institutions.

- Teaching and Lifelong Learning
- Research with Application
- Reflective and Analytic Thought
- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Diversity
- Social Change

Professional Education Unit Outcomes

Professional Education Unit (PEU) Outcomes include the eight critical components of the conceptual framework and three additional unit outcomes addressing professional disposition, and the diversity and technology proficiencies.

We expect our candidates to successfully demonstrate each of the critical components upon completion of our programs:

- 1. Teaching and Lifelong Learning.** Demonstrate current knowledge and skills with the understanding that educators are lifelong learners who continually add to their knowledge and skills.
- 2. Research with Application.** Analyze educational issues in light of current research and best practice through Walden University's scholar-practitioner model.
- 3. Reflective and Analytic Thought.** Reflect on and analyze educational issues in light of current research to inform best practice in P-12 classrooms.
- 4. Leadership.** Demonstrate leadership to build a shared vision for effective teaching and learning that positively impacts all stakeholders within a given educational community.
- 5. Collaboration.** Demonstrate collaborative skills that integrate multiple perspectives in order to create ongoing support for the learning environment.
- 6. Communication.** Demonstrate skills to communicate effectively and appropriately in a variety of professional and interpersonal contexts.
- 7. Diversity.** Act in ways that honor multiple perspectives and affirm the dignity and respect of all individuals internal and external to the learning environment.
- 8. Social Change.** Demonstrate the skills and professional dispositions that advocate for social change to make a positive impact where the educator works and lives.

Additional unit outcomes addressing professional dispositions, and the diversity and technology proficiencies:

- 9. Diversity Proficiencies.** Create educational opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners and remove barriers that inhibit learning.
- 10. Professional Dispositions:** Build meaningful relationships to improve student learning by effective planning, communication, use of assessment data, and high-caliber delivery of instruction.
- 11. Technology Proficiencies:** Design and develop learning environments that integrate various technology tools and applications, connect technology usage to content areas, and embed technology into assessment strategies.

The Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.)

The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership is committed to preparing candidates with the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions of exemplary educators who work in diverse settings and utilize the best educational practices based on research and theory.

The college is committed to attracting candidates who seek to become skilled classroom teachers and to providing those candidates developmentally appropriate, student-centered learning experiences that build their students' knowledge and skills. To that end, candidates begin their program of study with a set of core courses and then are increasingly challenged as their studies advance in specific subject areas, as well as in the pedagogy and technology necessary for effective and creative teaching.

The Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching helps candidates achieve six outcomes:

1. Demonstrate teaching competency, knowledge, and pragmatic skills to meet requirements for both Walden and Minnesota Board of Teaching standards.
2. Establish an inquiry, reflective, and research stance.
3. Demonstrate professional verbal, nonverbal, and written communication practices.
4. Apply, analyze, and evaluate effective collaborative teaming principles, inclusive of parents, colleagues, agencies, and disciplines.
5. Validate and creatively defend a broad-access professional disposition to educational services.
6. Contribute to positive social change in the field of education.

Notes on Licensure

The Minnesota Department of Education grants teaching licenses, not Walden University. Walden University is approved by the Minnesota Board of Teaching to offer teacher preparation programs that lead to Minnesota licensure in early childhood education (birth through grade 3) and special education (K–12 learning disabilities and/or K–12 emotional/behavioral disorders). Candidates for teacher licensure must successfully complete one of Walden University's state-approved teacher preparation programs, which may make them eligible for the Minnesota teaching licensure in the teaching area of the program completed. Before Walden can recommend a candidate for licensure to the Minnesota Department of Education, he or she must also pass the required exams for Minnesota licensure adopted by the Minnesota Board of Teaching pertinent to basic skills, teaching content area, and pedagogy; undergo a Minnesota background check; and complete any other Minnesota Board of Teaching requirements beyond completion of Walden's state-approved teacher preparation program.

For individuals seeking a comparable teaching license in a state other than Minnesota, Walden's advisors can provide guidelines and other information about licensure. It remains the individual's responsibility to understand and comply with the out-of-state licensure requirements for the state in which he or she seeks to be licensed, as requirements vary state by state. Walden University makes no representation or guarantees that successful completion of any program or coursework will permit them to obtain state certification or licensure in their home state.

In all states, there are policies regarding out-of-state procedures that must be followed when someone is eligible for or has received licensure through an out-of-state institution with a state-approved program, such as the Minnesota Board of Teaching-approved programs at Walden University. Some states require that an individual obtain the out-of-state license first; other states do not require the actual license, just completion of a state-approved program. For more information, please contact your Walden University enrollment advisor, who can provide information on licensing requirements. It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand and comply with the most up-to-date licensing information for your state.

Prospective students must review their state licensure requirements prior to enrolling. For more information, please refer to www.WaldenU.edu/educlicensure.

For Candidates in Alabama, Pennsylvania and Washington State

- Prospective Alabama candidates: Contact the Teacher Education and Certification Division of the Alabama State Department of Education at 1-334-242-9935 or www.alsde.edu to verify that these programs qualify for teacher certification, endorsement, and/or salary benefits.
- Note to all Pennsylvania residents: Walden University's teacher preparation program and special education endorsement programs are approved by the Minnesota Board of Teaching as leading to licensure and endorsement, respectively. Because these programs are not reviewed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, candidates are instructed to apply for Pennsylvania certification as out-of-state graduates of a teacher preparation program.
- Prospective Washington state candidates are advised to contact the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction at 1-360-725-6320 or prof.educ@k12.wa.us to determine whether Walden's programs in the field of education are approved for teacher certification or endorsements in Washington State. Additionally, teachers are advised to contact their individual school districts as to whether this program may qualify for salary advancement.

Part I: Program Information

Academic and Professional Standards

High academic standards are important to your professional success. The skills learned in the course of academic pursuit will be the same skills necessary for success in the workplace: the ability to communicate effectively, the ability to analyze a situation objectively, and the discipline of study.

The Minnesota State Board of Education and Board of Teaching have a set of standards that clearly define what a teacher needs to know. The Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers and the appropriate subject matter standards (such as Standards for Teachers of Early Childhood Education and Standards for Teachers of Special Education) are covered in Walden's courses. These standards include the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions needed to be a teacher. Teacher candidates in the Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching will demonstrate that they have met these standards through their coursework, performance assessments, and major assessments in their portfolios.

The Riley College of Education and Leadership faculty members are here to help you meet those standards. They keep a watchful eye on your academic progress. Through teaching, advising, and tutoring, they assist you in developing the skills, knowledge, and professional dispositions necessary for your academic and professional success. Further, Walden has an array of student services to support you. Please refer to the *Walden University Student Handbook* (www.WaldenU.edu/catalog and choose the handbook in the dropdown menu at upper right) and the Walden University website (www.WaldenU.edu) for more information about these candidate services.

Admissions Criteria

Transition Point One: Conditional Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) Admission

Teacher candidates can expect to complete the components of Transition Point 1 during the admission process. Teacher candidates who are admitted into Walden's Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) are admitted conditionally.

1. Admission requires a bachelor's degree in a discipline or field related to the program for which application is made, from a U.S. school accredited by one of the six regional accrediting associations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, or from an appropriately accredited non-U.S. institution. **Note:** Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (ECE, www.ece.org) must evaluate a degree awarded from a non-U.S. institution as equivalent to a bachelor's degree awarded by a U.S. institution.
 - If a potential candidate holds a bachelor's degree from an institution that is not regionally accredited but is accredited by a professional/specialized or national accrediting organization recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA, www.chea.org), or holds a bachelor's degree from a non-U.S.

institution, the candidate must complete a master's degree, in addition to Walden's teacher preparation program, before Walden can recommend the candidate for licensure. It is Walden's policy, consistent with the policy of most states, that all U.S.-licensed educators must complete a degree, either at the bachelor's or master's level, from an institution that is regionally accredited by one of the six associations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Walden University is regionally accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and a member of the North Central Association.

- Degree programs that include a liberal arts or general studies core are advantageous to the future success of teacher candidates. Walden recommends that potential candidates demonstrate completion of college-level work in communication (including composition), humanities, and social/behavioral sciences, as well as in mathematics and natural sciences.
2. A cumulative GPA of 2.5, or its equivalent, must be reflected on the transcript that verifies the awarding of the bachelor's degree.
 - Candidates with a 2.30-2.49 cumulative GPA are eligible for conditional admission. These candidates must provide additional information in their application goal statement that includes an explanation of their GPA and a rationale for why they should be granted conditional admission to the program. These candidates must meet all requirements of Transition Point 2 before they can continue in their selected programs.
 3. For graduates of non-U.S. institutions, proficiency in English must be verified by a TOEFL score or waiver option. (See details in Table 8.)
 4. Candidates must complete a goal statement that describes why they want to become a teacher in the chosen area. The statement should include any prior work with children and families and/or with diverse populations.
 5. Admission requires the completion of all application materials, including a signed acknowledgment of background check and fingerprinting guidelines, as well as immunization and TB guidelines.
 6. Admission requires a transcript review to ensure all incoming teacher candidates have completed coursework in multicultural and/or global studies during their bachelor's degree program. Coursework would include, but is not limited to: Global Studies, Multicultural Studies, Diversity Studies, Cultural/Ethnic Studies, Linguistic/Language Studies, or Social Studies with an international focus (world or regional economics, sociology, political science, religion). If candidates are not able to fulfill this requirement through coursework as determined by a transcript analysis, they will be referred to the admission committee for a final review. If the admission committee determines they have no applicable courses in their undergraduate program, the prospective candidates will need to take a course in this area prior to being admitted to the program. They may fulfill this course through Walden or a different institution.
 7. Candidates must take the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exams—Basic Skills and scores must be received by Walden prior to admission in the program.

****English Language Proficiency Requirements***

The language of instruction at Walden is English; therefore, academic success depends upon a candidate's ability to converse in, write, and understand English. Candidates must possess an associate's degree or higher from an institution in one of the following countries:

- Australia
- Belize
- British Caribbean
- British West Indies
- Canada (except Quebec)
- England
- Guyana
- Ireland
- Liberia
- New Zealand
- Philippines
- Scotland
- United States
- Wales

If a candidate does not meet the above requirement, he/she must submit official English proficiency scores (no more than 2 years old) reflecting at least the minimum required scores on one of the tests as outlined below:

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

- ◆ Paper-based—at least 550
- ◆ Computer-based—at least 213
- ◆ Internet-based—at least 79

Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB)

- ◆ Paper-based—at least 82

Academic Modules of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

- ◆ Overall band score—6.5

Graduates from universities in countries not listed above, where course instruction and evaluation were conducted in English and for which university verification is available (through the *International Handbook of Universities*, published and edited by IAU/UNESCO, 2003), may request that this requirement be waived. Additional information may be requested from the registrar's office to verify that the instruction was conducted in English.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

In addition to meeting the professional standards set by the Minnesota State Board of Education and Board of Teaching, you also are responsible for meeting the satisfactory academic progress standards set by Walden University. Faculty members in the Riley College of Education and Leadership monitor your academic progress on a regular basis to make sure you are making progress toward program requirements and degree completion. You are expected to maintain a 3.0 GPA throughout the program, as described in the transition points. (See the [Transition Points](#) section below for additional information.)

We believe that teacher candidates must take responsibility for their own academic experience, including knowing the standards, regulations, rules, and processes of both Walden University and the Riley College of Education and Leadership. In addition to reading this abridged version, once you are enrolled in the program you must thoroughly read the *Teacher Candidate Guidebook*, the *Field Experience and Demonstration Teaching Handbook* for your respective specialization, as well as the applicable sections of the *Walden University Student Handbook*.

Description of Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.)

Please note: Walden University reserves the right to make program changes as needed in order to ensure the highest quality program.

Specializations Offered

The Riley College of Education and Leadership offers three specializations that lead to initial teacher licensure:

1. Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) with a specialization in Early Childhood Education (Birth–Grade 3)
2. Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) with a specialization in Special Education, Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (K–12)
3. Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) with a specialization in Special Education, Learning Disabilities (K–12)

Program Design and Structure

The teacher preparation program is an accelerated, intensive program, offered entirely online, with concurrent field experiences. Courses are offered in a prescribed sequence, with completion expected in five semesters. Most courses are five weeks long. During most semesters, candidates take three courses, which allows for a week off between each 16-week semester.

Each course is taken singly with the exception of the semester during demonstration teaching when there is some overlap with required coursework. Teacher candidates will also complete a semester with two consecutive 8-week research courses. This innovative model is based on research that indicates adult candidates benefit from accelerated models of education with enrollment in only one course at a time. In a total of 43 credits, you will complete the Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.), allowing you to achieve your goal of becoming a teacher who can enter into the licensed educational workforce in a timely manner.

Within the teacher preparation program is a group of core courses. These provide the foundation of educational knowledge and understanding necessary for all teachers. These core courses also meet the Minnesota Board of Teaching's Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers.

Field Experiences

Field experiences are an integral part of the teacher preparation program at Walden. These experiences provide you with opportunities to apply course concepts in real environments that allow for increasing levels of responsibility. The field experiences relate to your professional goals, provide you the opportunity to connect theory and practice, and prepare you for daily classroom responsibilities. You are informed, monitored, and evaluated throughout all field experiences.

Beginning with the second semester, you are required to complete a minimum of 7.5 hours of field experiences in pre-primary, elementary, and secondary classrooms or similar educational settings (such as early childhood education centers) in each course. In addition, each course provides you with 3 to 5 hours of specially designed Virtual Field Experiences (VFE[®]) that are classroom-focused and interactive and that relate to the course learning objectives, standards, and skills for effective teaching.

Classroom-Based Field Experiences

Each course (except first-semester courses, demonstration teaching, and its co-requisite seminar) requires a minimum of 7.5 hours of supervised, classroom-based field experiences. Classroom-based field experiences must take place at the age and/or grade level for which you are seeking licensure. Further, the exact age and/or grade levels required for field experiences are determined by each program and specified in each course.

Important note: You will have to adjust your own weekly schedule (that is, your personal and professional commitments) during each course after the first semester to accommodate the need to be in a classroom for your field experiences while school is in session. The time spent each week in field experiences is approximately 1.5 hours per week until you enter demonstration teaching, when it is a full-day, every-day commitment lasting 14 weeks.

Virtual Field Experience

Virtual Field Experience (VFE[®]) is an organized, purposeful, and thought-provoking experience that allows you to see best practices demonstrated on video by master teachers across the United States.

Through the VFE[®] you are exposed to diverse students, teachers, teaching styles, and classroom settings. The master teachers—men and women who are filmed in their own classrooms during regular school hours—represent a racial diversity, including African American, Latino, Asian American, and Caucasian. Most of the classrooms also reflect diversity in their student bodies, with children from many ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, creating a full-fledged multicultural classroom. Some classrooms are in urban settings, while others are in suburban or rural settings. The videos include a span of ages and grade levels, from infancy to early childhood to high school. Class activities are equally diverse.

Demonstration Teaching

Demonstration teaching (also known in some universities as “student teaching”) is the culminating field experience in the Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching. Demonstration teaching is a supervised practicum that provides you with opportunities to gradually assume responsibility for total classroom management, including curriculum development, daily instruction, and other duties of a professional educator.

Demonstration teaching is described clearly in the *Field Experience and Demonstration Teaching Handbook*, including policies, structure, and placement requirements. You will be issued this handbook when you matriculate as an enrolled teacher candidate.

Host and Cooperating Teachers

The teacher of the classroom in which a candidate completes his or her early field experiences is referred to as the *host teacher*. The qualifications for the host teachers are outlined in the *Field Experience and Demonstration Teaching Handbook*. Host teachers will be asked to complete an evaluation on each candidate’s knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions. They will also verify the number of hours spent in the field. Candidates are responsible for submitting evaluations and time sheets for verification in their ePortfolio.

The teacher of the classroom in which a candidate completes his or her demonstration teaching is referred to as the *cooperating teacher*. The qualifications for cooperating teachers are outlined in the *Field Experience and Demonstration Teaching Handbook*. The cooperating teacher will complete a *Demonstration Teaching Evaluation* and an evaluation on the candidate’s professional dispositions. At the conclusion of the demonstration teaching experience, the cooperating teacher will also verify the number of weeks the candidate spent in the field.

For more information on the evaluation of demonstration teaching performance, see the *Field Experience and Demonstration Teaching Handbook*.

No Field Experience or Demonstration Teaching During Summer Months

Important note: The Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) does not offer any courses during the summer that have field experience or demonstration teaching requirements.

Diversity of Field Experiences

Diversity in field experiences (both classroom-based and demonstration teaching) is highly valued. Candidates will be placed at sites that meet diversity criteria in their state in race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, first language, and learning exceptionalities. At the minimum, candidates will be placed in one site classified as diverse. Teacher candidates are also exposed to a wide range of diverse classroom settings through the VFE[®] in each course.

Professionalism

Remember to maintain a professional attitude with respect to confidential information about children and with respect to relationships and practices with colleagues.

Also, it is important to dress appropriately in the field and present yourself as an educator. Even if other teacher candidates (or, for that matter, classroom teachers) do not dress professionally, you need to do so. Remember, you have only one chance to make a good first impression and you are becoming a role model for young people.

Professional Portfolio

The completion of a professional portfolio is a requirement of the program. You will carefully construct your portfolio throughout the program by completing a series of major assessments. Because the portfolio is electronic (and thus is sometimes referred to as the ePortfolio), you can access it anytime and conveniently share it with prospective employers.

The portfolio will demonstrate the candidate's mastery of the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers, as well as the standards set forth by the leading professional organization in the candidate's specialization: Early Childhood Education (National Association for the Education of Young Children) and Special Education (Council for Exceptional Children).

Part II: License Information

Transition Points

Walden University's teacher preparation program has four transition points: specific times during the program when candidates must meet certain teacher preparation program and Minnesota Board of Teaching requirements in order to move on in the program and ultimately be recommended for licensure.

The requirements for each transition point help ensure that your education and teaching knowledge, skills, and performance are of high caliber. At the same time, we recognize that when you obtain your license, you will be a novice teacher. Our goal is to ensure that you are a highly capable novice teacher.

Keep in mind that it is your responsibility to manage your own progress through the four transition points. Please contact the Academic Advising Team at any point for help and support. You will learn more about the four transition points when you are accepted into the program.

Minnesota Board of Teaching Required Licensure Tests

On Sept. 1, 2010, the Minnesota Board of Teaching launched the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exams (MTLE). The exams are aligned to the Minnesota standards.

The Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exams for the specialization in Early Childhood Education (Birth–Grade 3) include:

1. Basic Skills: Reading, Writing, and Mathematics
2. Pedagogy: Early Childhood (Birth–Grade 3)
3. Content Area: Early Childhood (Birth–Grade 3)

The Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exams for the specializations in Special Education, Emotional/Behavioral Disorders (K–12) and Special Education, Learning Disabilities (K–12) include:

1. Basic Skills: Reading, Writing, and Mathematics
2. Pedagogy: Elementary (Grades K–6) **OR** Pedagogy: Secondary (Grades 5–12)

Note: It is recommended that candidate select the test level (elementary or secondary) for the level they would like to teach, but it does not impact the license you will receive.

3. Content Area: Special Education Core Skills (Birth to Age 21)

Licensure Information

If you would like to obtain initial licensure in Minnesota because you live and work in Minnesota, or live in a state that first requires a license (license in hand), then after you complete demonstration teaching, you should go to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

licensure website (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/Licen/index.html>) and in the right column select “Online Licensing System” and complete the online application. In the middle column, you can access guidance on applying for a Minnesota license under the document “*New Licensure Instructions and Registration Guide*.” Send the “Send the Verification of Program Completion” form to Walden’s certification officer at educlicensure@WaldenU.edu.

You will need to follow the directions on the website, establish an online user profile, and submit materials electronically. It is candidates’ responsibility for obtaining licensure.

If you are NOT seeking initial licensure in the state of Minnesota, you should go to your state department of education website and follow the directions for obtaining a license in your state. Please pay special attention to which tests need to be passed to obtain a license.

Part III: Other Information Important To Your Success

Academic Grievances

If you have an academic grievance, you should refer to the Process for Petitions, Appeals, Grievances, and Complaints section of the *Walden University Student Handbook* (under University Policies and Code of Conduct) for specific directions.

Background Checks

Background checks are investigations into one or more of the following: employment history, criminal records, driving records, education records, drug test results, and sex offender lists. Prospective employers usually will require these types of checks before hiring you to work with children.

Why do I need to know about background checks?

Certain background checks are important for you to know about since you are choosing to enter a profession—teaching—that has many regulations governing the people who come into contact with children. Depending upon the state, district, school, site, and/or child care facility, different background checks are required, and they may be performed in different manners.

Background checks are primarily required of people who are to become employees; however, sometimes background checks are required of any person who will come into contact with children, including volunteers or those (like you) who may be on site for field experiences or demonstration teaching.

Thus, as a prospective teacher candidate in Walden’s teacher preparation program, it is important to know about background checks for three specific reasons:

1. You will come into contact with children during your required field experiences through certain methods courses.
2. You will come into contact with children during your demonstration teaching.
3. You likely will seek employment as a teacher or other educator or on-site school personnel once you have obtained licensure.

Although the Riley College of Education and Leadership will not *require* candidates to obtain certain background checks, it is strongly recommended that you do so, because field experience and/or demonstration teaching placement sites might require it.

Which background checks do I need to be most aware of?

The most commonly required background checks are criminal history (including illegal substances and alcohol) and checks of sex offender lists. However, again, the specific requirements vary from state to state and even district to district and child care facility to child care facility.

What should I know about criminal histories?

Any conviction, even one for which you have successfully completed probation, is part of your criminal history. This includes convictions for drug and alcohol offenses and any misdemeanor offenses. Certain exceptions may apply, such as sealed records or records that have been expunged.

How does my criminal history or sex offender history affect teacher licensure in Minnesota?

It is important to understand that teacher licensure in the state of Minnesota (or any state for that matter) is partly dependent upon your character, which includes, but is not limited to, your criminal history and sex offender history. The state needs to feel absolutely sure that not only are you qualified, but that you also have a good character to work with children.

When applying for a Minnesota teaching license, applicants are required by the Minnesota Department of Education to submit fingerprints for a national criminal background check. According to the department:

“All initial licensure candidates must be fingerprinted at a law enforcement agency in black ink on a card supplied by Educator Licensing. E-mail [Educator Licensing](#) to request a fingerprint card. ... You may be charged a separate fee from the law enforcement agency for this service. Provide all of the requested information on the card, but do not make any other marks, bend, or fold it. This background check is for state use only.”

Applicants also are required to complete a Conduct Review. This consists of questions regarding the nature and dates of arrests and convictions, as well as formal disciplinary measures. If a candidate marks “Yes” to anything on the Conduct Review, he or she may be denied a teaching license. See the Minnesota Board of Teaching website for more information (http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Teacher_Support/Board_of_Teaching/index.html).

Important note: If, for *any* reason (whether intentionally or by accident), a candidate misrepresents his/her criminal history in the conduct review portion of the license application, certification will be revoked. Thus, when self-disclosing criminal history or sex offender history, candidates should mark “Yes” if they are unsure about marking “Yes” or “No.”

If a candidate does not mark “Yes,” the lack of disclosure—an apparent attempt to hide facts about his/her past—will reveal an untruthful part of his or her character that is even more troublesome to the state. This is true even if the crime hidden would not otherwise have kept the candidate from becoming a Minnesota licensed teacher.

Credit for Prior Coursework and Experience

Because of the intensive and standards-focused course of study required in Walden University's teacher preparation programs, transfer of credit is generally not advisable. The Teacher Preparation Program with a Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) is five semesters in length, and each course carefully builds on the learning and assignments that come before. In many ways, Walden offers a spiral curriculum: assignments and opportunities for reflection are revisited, added to, and developmentally enriched as candidates prepare increasingly complex and comprehensive materials for inclusion in their ePortfolios.

Prior Coursework Credit

If you have taken previous coursework that closely aligns with Walden's licensure program requirements, you may appeal for a credit-transfer review by contacting the Academic Advising Team at 1-800-WALDENU (1-800-925-3368).

Teaching Experience

Field experiences and demonstration teaching cannot be waived in full or in part, regardless of prior or current teaching experience. If you currently are working as an aide or unlicensed teacher in a P-12 setting, you may list the current work setting on the *Preferred Placement Form* when the setting is deemed appropriate in age, grade, and content.

Preferred Placement Form

One of the earliest deadlines you will need to meet is turning in the *Preferred Placement Form* for field experiences. This form is due during the first course you take. Failure to meet this deadline will delay your placement in field experiences and cause a delay in your graduation date.

Professional Dispositions

A professional disposition is not so much about what you do but about how you do it. For example, being adept with technology (or not adept with it) is not a professional disposition, but a skill (or lack thereof). On the other hand, a professional disposition involves your attitude toward tackling a new skill, such as willing to learn and use technology and being open to its benefits in the classroom and with the children in your care.

Walden University's Riley College of Education and Leadership is committed to recommending only those candidates for teaching who display the professional dispositions expected of a quality educator, someone who can and will make a positive difference in the lives of children and within the collaborative culture of an effective school. Therefore, assessment of candidate professional dispositions is one of the key assessments used by the college to determine eligibility for institutional recommendation for Minnesota licensure. (See the [Transition Points](#) section in this guidebook.) The college's teacher preparation programs have identified several professional dispositions that align with our goals, as well as with the standards published by the state of Minnesota and national organizations.

Professional Liability Insurance

Many school districts require teachers working in our nation's schools to carry professional liability insurance. You will be required to provide proof of professional liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000 during the first course of the program. Failure to meet this deadline will delay your placement in field experiences and cause a delay in your graduation date.

Proof of Immunization and TB Clearance

Because each site may vary in its requirements of observers and volunteers regarding proof of immunizations and tuberculosis (TB) clearance, it is important that you discuss this with your impending placement sites. Some placement sites may require proof of recent TB clearance and immunization to specified diseases.