

# Reading Specialist Add-On Certification

The **online Reading Specialist Add-on Certification program** at University of Wisconsin–La Crosse prepares Wisconsin educators to serve as literacy leaders at the school and district levels. The six-credit, single term program develops candidates' expertise in literacy instruction, assessment, and systems-level leadership to support comprehensive literacy improvement efforts.

Through rigorous coursework and field-based experiences, candidates develop the capacity to design, implement, and evaluate effective literacy programs across diverse educational settings. The curriculum incorporates the requirements of Wisconsin Act 20, emphasizing structured literacy, science of reading research, universal screening, progress monitoring, and evidence-based interventions consistent with state mandates.

Completers of the Reading Specialist Add-on Certification program are prepared to:

- Model and lead the implementation of best practices in PK–12 literacy education;
- Apply advanced knowledge of the science of reading to support instruction and intervention;
- Lead literacy assessment systems, including screening, diagnosis, and evaluation;
- Coach and support teachers in the use of evidence-based literacy practices;
- Design and evaluate school- or district-wide literacy initiatives aligned with state policy;
- Advocate for equitable literacy outcomes and sustained improvement across systems.

The Reading Specialist Add-on Certification Program is aligned with the 2017 Standards for Reading Professionals of the International Literacy Association and the Wisconsin Administrator Standards (PI 34.003). These standards emphasize leadership in literacy, a broad and inclusive definition of literacy, and the application of research to improve instruction, assessment, and systems-level outcomes.

Completers are eligible for a Wisconsin Reading Specialist (5017) license. Note: the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) requires all Reading Specialists to have a master's degree and a Reading Teacher (1316) license.

This program is offered at various times throughout the year.

## Program requirements

### Admission

Applicants to this program must:

- Meet all UWL graduate application requirements (<https://catalog.uwlax.edu/graduate/admissions/#apply>).
- Provide a resume that documents at least three years of full-time regular teaching experience in a K-12 classroom and current teaching position in a K-12 classroom.
- Have a cumulative undergraduate grade point average of 2.85 or higher on a 4.00 scale.
- Provide copies of teaching licenses or certificates.

- Have a Reading Teacher (1316) license or equivalent.
- Have a master's degree in reading or literacy.
- Have research background in reading or literacy.
- Complete a successful criminal background check (initiated by UWL).

### Criminal background check

The WI Department of Public Instruction (DPI) requires that candidates for admission to a teacher education, administration, or pupil services program successfully pass a criminal background check (CBC) as one criterion for admission. By applying for admission to one of these programs, candidates agree to provide the necessary personal information to UWL in order to initiate their CBC and to complete their portion of the process prior to the deadline specified in their admission letter. Program candidates are responsible for all costs associated with their criminal background check(s).

### Out-of-state applicants

This program may meet other states' licensing requirements. An applicant's state may or may not require that the applicant get a Wisconsin teaching license to be endorsed for their program of study. The Wisconsin licensing process may include taking coursework in Native American Studies (ACT 31). The applicant should check with their state licensing board prior to applying to ensure they understand the appropriate pathway to meet their state's licensing requirements.

## Curriculum

| Code    | Title                                                       | Credits |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| RDG 718 | Guiding and Directing a Schoolwide Reading/Literacy Program | 3       |
| RDG 780 | Reading Specialist Practicum                                | 3       |

## Program completion and eligibility for certification

Eligibility for Reading Specialist (5017) certification is contingent upon:

- Cumulative graduate grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0.
- Passing score on the WI Foundations of Reading Test or hold a WI Administrator license.
- Completed DPI employment verification form (<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/licensing/f1613.pdf>) documenting completion of at least six semesters of employment of teaching experience in K-12 schools or hold a WI Lifetime Educator license.
- Satisfactory completion of Reading Specialist (5017) program coursework, associated experiences, and artifacts.