

**Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and Special Education Administrator  
Comprehensive Examination  
Interdisciplinary Master's Degree Policy and Procedure Statement**

**General Description**

Interdisciplinary Master's degree students must pass a comprehensive examination as part of their program of studies in Educational Leadership and Special Education Administration. The intent of the comprehensive examination is to assess the student's overall: 1) knowledge in educational leadership, 2) ability to synthesize and apply that knowledge to develop a cogent discussion of leadership problems or the resolution of significant educational issues, and 3) skill in organizing and expressing ideas in a logical, coherent, literate, and convincing fashion. The examination is a take-home exam found at the end of this document.

**Eligibility and Scheduling of the Examination**

In order to take the examination, students must have done the following: (1) have been granted regular admission to the degree program, (2) have an approved plan of study on file with the Graduate School, (3) have completed 20 semester hours of work applicable toward the degree, not including the internship or practicum, (4) have maintained a grade average of at least 3.00 in the graduate degree program, and (5) obtained approval from their assigned advisor signifying that eligibility has been verified.

The "Permit to Take Written Comprehensive Examination" from the ELPS Forms webpage must be received by the administrative assistant in the ELPS office three weeks before the exam is due.

**Assessment and Evaluation of the Written Examination**

The examination will be read and evaluated by three faculty, at least two of which will be ELPS faculty. The following grading system will be used:

Pass--The student has responded to all questions on the examination in an acceptable manner.

Fail--The student has failed to respond in an acceptable manner to one or more of the questions asked.

**Examination Retake**

Students who fail the comprehensive examination may be allowed one retake. They will be notified by their advisor if a retake is permitted (this retake cannot be done until the next semester). A second "Permit to Take Written Comprehensive Examination" is required for the retake. If students fail the retake of the examination, the degree program will be terminated.

**Notification of Successful Completion of the Examination**

Students will be notified via email if they have successfully completed the exam within three to four weeks after the comprehensive exam has been turned in to the ELPS office. The ELPS administrative assistant will also send the results of the comprehensive exam to the Graduate School by the deadline each semester. Please note that, in order to graduate in the same semester the exam is taken, the results of the exam must be to the Graduate School by the published date. Thus, if a comprehensive exam is submitted after the due dates listed below, the results may need to be considered the following semester:

- Fall semester—comprehensive exams are due by 5 pm the first Monday in October
- Spring semester—comprehensive exams are due by 5 pm the first Monday in March
- Summer term—comprehensive exams are due by 5 pm the first Monday in June

## **Educational Leadership & Policy Studies/Special Education Administration**

### **Interdisciplinary Master's Comprehensive Exam and Rubric**

The comprehensive exam is intended as a final assessment of students' ability to integrate important knowledge and skills learned throughout the program into a final product that will aid in their development as an educational leader. To this end, the comprehensive exam requires students to assess the resources, relationships, and data required to successfully build a collaborative vision for a school and plan strategies that support that vision.

#### **THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM ASSIGNMENT:**

**Identify a special education administration or principal position at any level (elementary, middle, or high school) in a school district other than the one where you are currently or have most recently been employed. Develop an entry plan for this position based on information available from the school district, the school, and the community (students are encouraged to access websites, newspapers, the Colorado Department of Education, and any other information sources that may prove helpful).** Be sure to discuss the specific school circumstances (supported by data), how a vision to address the needs of the school will be collaboratively developed, and what strategies you will lead to development the realization of that vision for school improvement (i.e. student achievement, teacher effectiveness, improved school climate, etc.). Be sure to discuss how you will monitor your efforts to reassess and redirect strategies as needed.

- ✓ You may organize your response in whatever way you think is appropriate but **explain your choice of organization in the introduction to your exam response.**
- ✓ Be sure to clearly label/identify your responses so that evaluators can be certain that you addressed all Colorado Principal Quality Standards, Special Education Administrator Standards, and each stakeholder group in your responses. Reference portions of your responses indicating the relationship to specific standards and competencies/elements. A particular action might meet more than one competency/element. Example: (COQPS 2.A; 4.B). **Integrate your explanation of how your plan addresses the principal and special education administrator standards throughout your paper.**
- ✓ Include concepts learned in your program coursework where appropriate to demonstrate your application of knowledge.
- ✓ Be sure to address the needs and perspectives of all stakeholder groups and consider what resources and contexts each group brings to the educational process, such as the following:
  - Students (achievement and assessment, safety, equity/diversity, culture)
  - Teachers (supervision and evaluation, professional development resources and needs, culture)
  - Parents (perceptions, support, school interactions, communications)

- Community (perceptions, resources, support, interactions, communications)
- School District Office (reporting requirements, resources, rules/regulations, finance, communication lines, hiring/termination processes, evaluation process, negotiated agreements)
- State (reporting requirements, rules/regulations)

**Clearly and logically articulate the following in the entry plan:**

- 1. The data-supported needs of the school**
- 2. What actions you will take to address these needs**
- 3. How these actions you plan to take will positively impact the identified need(s)**
- 4. How the action steps in the entry plan align to the Colorado Principal License Standards and Special Education Administrator Standards (included in this document)**

**Students are encouraged to review the rubric that will be used to assess the final entry plan. The rubric can be found in this document.**

### **GUIDING QUESTIONS**

Entry Plan (for the six months)

- What kinds of data/resources have/will I use to identify the needs of the school?
- What will I do to address the needs I find within my first six months at this school?

Data Use

- How do I integrate the data into my entry plan?
- How will I use and communicate these data to my stakeholders?
- Are my entry plan steps clearly discussed in response to the data?

Relationship Building

- To whom do I reach out initially and then to sustain school improvement efforts?
- How will I reach out to my target contacts/groups?
- How will I continue to build and sustain relationships with the various stakeholder?

Colorado Principal and Special Education Administrator Standards

- Have I integrated the Colorado Principal Quality and Special Education Administrator Standards into my plan?
- Did I clearly reference the specific standard(s) and elements/competency(ies)? Example: (COQPS 2.B)?

- Did I integrate clear explanations of how my plan aligns with the Colorado Principal and Special Education Administrator Standards throughout the paper?

#### Demonstration of Program/Course Learning Application

- How have I integrated the ELPS and EDSE course content into my plan?
- Have I cited (E.g., Shields, 2009) and explained how course materials and concepts helped in the analysis of the situation?
- Have I cited and explained how course materials and concepts support the entry plan steps I created?
- Is it clear throughout my plan that I have grounded my responses on research rather than just my own opinion?

### Interdisciplinary MA Degree Comprehensive Exam Scoring Rubric

Domains	Distinguished Command (4)	Strong Command (3)	Limited/Partial Command (2)	Weak Command (1)	Rating
Candidate demonstrates...					
Application of concepts from ELPS and SE coursework	sophisticated understanding, synthesis, and application of concepts from a broad range of coursework with explained references to program course materials or concepts	understanding, synthesis, and application of concepts from coursework with explained references to program course materials or concepts	some specific knowledge of concepts from coursework generally referred to and/or not explained clearly	general, or superficial, knowledge of concepts in educational leadership which may be referenced but not explained	4   3   2   1
Alignment with Colorado Principal and Special Education Administrator Standards	plan steps are clearly linked to the Colorado Principal and Special Education Administrator Standards and the explanation of how the entry plan steps address each standard is thorough and clear, reflecting the use of the standards in guiding the plan development	plan steps are clearly linked to the Colorado Principal and Special Education Administrator Standards and the explanation of how the entry plan steps address each standard is thorough and clear	plan steps are linked to the Colorado Principal and Special Education Administrator Standards with minimal or general explanation of how the entry plan steps align with and reflect each standard	plan steps are linked to the Colorado Principal and Special Education Administrator Standards with little or no discussion of how the entry plan steps align with and reflect each standard	4   3   2   1
Data Analysis and Use	thorough analysis and use of a diverse array of data while acknowledging the nuances of their implications	thorough analysis and use of relevant data	identification of data with some, or superficial, analysis and minimal application	superficial references to data, with little or inaccurate analysis and minimal application	4   3   2   1
Relationship Building Strategies	specific and innovative strategies for building relationships/coalitions with stakeholders	strategies for building relationships/coalitions with stakeholders	references to stakeholders and relationships, with some discussion of relationship building	few, if any, references to stakeholders and relationship building	4   3   2   1
Overall Organization and Expression throughout the Entry Plan	skills in organizing and expressing ideas in a holistic, logical, coherent, literate, and convincing fashion	skills in organizing and expressing ideas with clarity and persuasiveness	presentation in discrete or minimally integrated steps	a disorganized or confusing discussion of action steps	4   3   2   1
<b>Overall Rating</b>	<p><u>Note:</u> A rating of “1” for any category above will result in overall failure on the exam. An overall rating of “3” or higher from at least two readers is required to pass the exam.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4   3   2   1</p>				

## Colorado Quality Principal Standards (Proposed 2019)

### QUALITY STANDARD I

**Principals demonstrate organizational leadership by strategically developing a vision and mission, leading change, enhancing the capacity of personnel, distributing resources, and aligning systems of communication for continuous school improvement.**

ELEMENT A: Principals collaboratively develop the vision, mission, and strategic plan, based on a cycle of continuous improvement of student outcomes, and facilitate their integration into the school community.

ELEMENT B: Principals collaborate with staff and stakeholders to implement strategies for change to improve student outcomes.

ELEMENT C: Principals establish and effectively manage systems that ensure high-quality staff.

ELEMENT D: Principals establish systems and partnerships for managing all available school resources to facilitate improved student outcomes.

ELEMENT E: Principals facilitate the design and use of a variety of communication strategies with all stakeholders.

### QUALITY STANDARD II

**Principals demonstrate inclusive leadership practices that foster a positive school culture and promote safety and equity for all students, staff, and community.**

ELEMENT A: Principals create a professional school environment and foster relationships that promote staff and student success and well-being.

ELEMENT B: Principals ensure that the school provides an orderly and supportive environment that fosters a sense of safety and well-being.

ELEMENT C: Principals commit to an inclusive and positive school environment that meets the needs of all students and promotes the preparation of students to live productively and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.

ELEMENT D: Principals create and utilize systems to share leadership and support collaborative efforts throughout the school.

ELEMENT E: Principals design and/or utilize structures and processes which result in family and community engagement and support.

**QUALITY STANDARD III**

**Principals demonstrate instructional leadership by aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment, supporting professional learning, conducting observations, providing actionable feedback, and holding staff accountable for student outcomes.**

ELEMENT A: Principals establish, align, and ensure implementation of a district/BOCES plan of instruction, instructional practice, assessments, and use of student data that result in academic growth and achievement for all students.

ELEMENT B: Principals foster a collaborative culture of job-embedded professional learning.

ELEMENT C: Principals demonstrate knowledge of effective instructional practice and provide feedback to promote continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

ELEMENT D: Principals hold all staff accountable for setting and achieving measurable student outcomes.

**QUALITY STANDARD IV**

**Principals demonstrate professionalism through ethical conduct, reflection, and external leadership.**

ELEMENT A: Principals demonstrate high standards for professional conduct.

ELEMENT B: Principals link professional growth to their professional goals.

ELEMENT C: Principals build and sustain productive partnerships with key community stakeholders, including public and private sectors, to promote school improvement, student learning, and student well-being.

**COLORADO STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR DIRECTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Standard One: Foundations of Leadership**

<p>The Special Education Director will have a solid foundation for leadership by: (a) demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of special education organization, programs, laws and best practices; and (b) setting high standards and a positive direction for special education consistent with the values, mission and vision of the state and administrative unit. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:</p>	
1.1	Promote and reinforce the belief that a free and appropriate education is the fundamental right of all students.
1.2	Recognize and accept personal and professional accountability to direct, monitor and continually work to improve the educational processes and practices for which he/she is responsible.
1.3	Articulate and model a clear set of core professional values.
1.4	Demonstrate ethical behavior by acting with integrity of word and action.
1.5	Articulate comprehensive knowledge of the significant elements of special education; its history, organization, programs, laws and best practices.
1.6	Build mutually respectful relationships through effective listening and empathetic responses.
1.7	Participate in ongoing quality professional development.
1.8	Collaborate with others to ensure there is continued awareness of the latest research regarding special education, learning theory and best instructional practices.

**Standard Two: Special Education and School Systems**

The Special Education Director shall: (a) demonstrate knowledge of organizational culture; (b) apply a systems approach to the development of special education programs and processes; and (c) facilitate effective systems change. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:

2.1	Develop organizational relationships between and among: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• federal, state, intermediate and local educational agencies;</li> <li>• district and building levels and the various schools and schooling levels;</li> <li>• special and general education;</li> <li>• the greater community, including but not limited to families, advocates and agencies, and potential employers.</li> </ul>
2.2	Demonstrate an understanding of leadership roles, hierarchies, authority and chain-of-command relationships.
2.3	Promote positive culture within special education and in the greater organization, in alignment with district vision, mission and values.
2.4	Support systems thinking at all levels of the organization.
2.5	Lead change processes consistent with proven change theories at all levels of the organization, inclusive of all stakeholder groups.

**Standard Three: Law and Policy**

<p>The Special Education Director shall be knowledgeable about and able to apply relevant federal and state statutes, regulations, case law and policies that impact all children, including those with disabilities. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:</p>	
3.1	Implement requirements of federal, state and case law in public education, with an emphasis on special education.
3.2	Demonstrate knowledge of policies and procedures required to implement legal requirements.
3.3	Describe legislative processes at local, state and national levels.
3.4	Demonstrate skills in networking and advocating on behalf of students with disabilities in order to develop, influence and impact laws and policies.
3.5	Facilitate the development of student-centered Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to include procedures, processes and legal requirements.
3.6	Identify resources of national organizations in the field of special education.
3.7	Execute federal, state and local data collection, analysis and reporting requirements.
3.8	Provide for an educational environment that is safe, secure, healthy and accessible.

<p>3.9 Implement principles of universal design to assure equal access to students across all educational settings that include specialized transportation, health needs, safety procedures and proactive approaches for students with disabilities in emergency situations.</p>
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**Standard Four: Instructional Leadership**

<p>The Special Education Director shall be able to integrate general education and special education, including curriculum, instructional strategies, and individualized instruction in support of all children, including those with disabilities. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:</p>
<p>4.1 Facilitate the attainment of state standards, expanded benchmarks and access skills.</p>
<p>4.2 Promote high standards for the instruction of all students, including students with disabilities, and for continuously improving their academic achievement.</p>
<p>4.3 Implement assessment systems for identification and programming.</p>
<p>4.4 Develop data driven, evidence-based instructional practices, including behavioral support systems.</p>
<p>4.5 Develop comprehensive approaches to educational planning, including student involvement and self-determination.</p>
<p>4.6 Implement transition plans for individuals with disabilities across the educational continuum and other programs from birth through adulthood.</p>
<p>4.7 Provide leadership to guide appropriate instructional decision-making, focusing on individualization for students with disabilities.</p>
<p>4.8 Facilitate staff development related to evidence-based practices, rigorous content and effective outcomes for all learners, including those with disabilities.</p>

**Standard Five: Program Planning and Organization**

<p>The Special Education Director shall be able to evaluate the efficacy and efficiency of special education programs, facilities, services and monitoring systems and to use the evaluation data to improve the programs and services for all children, including those with disabilities. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:</p>
<p>5.1 Apply program evaluation strategies for determining efficacy and efficiency.</p>

5.2	Implement continuous improvement monitoring processes.
5.3	Develop special education programs, facilities, services, and monitoring systems that are complementary to and mutually supportive of one another and of general education.
5.4	Facilitate strategic planning for program development and implementation to encompass all stakeholders.
5.5	Demonstrate and extend collaborative consultation principles with all stakeholders.
5.6	Facilitate professional development to implement, improve and expand programs.

**Standard Six: Human Resource Functions**

The Special Education Director shall have the knowledge and ability to recruit, retain and evaluate qualified personnel in order to effectively implement programs and services for all children, including those with disabilities. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:	
6.1	Recruit and retain qualified personnel.
6.2	Screen, interview and select qualified staff.
6.3	Facilitate professional development of staff members.
6.4	Implement alternative procedures to ensure appropriate personnel when fully qualified individuals are not available.
6.5	Delineate roles and responsibilities of all special education instructional and related services personnel.
6.6	Adhere to established ethical and legal considerations of human resource management.
6.7	Provide supervision and evaluation of personnel serving students with disabilities.

**Standard Seven: Parent, Family and Community Engagement**

The Special Education Director shall be knowledgeable about and able to facilitate partnerships and engage parents, families and communities in the implementation of special education programs and delivery of special education services. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:	
7.1	Implement a comprehensive communication infrastructure to organize and distribute the flow of information coming from and to the district.
7.2	Facilitate collaborative relationships with all stakeholders.
7.3	Promote parent training and support services to support parents in understanding rights, responsibilities, processes and decision-making within special education.

7.4	Develop interactive opportunities with the local and/or state Special Education Advisory Council, parent advocacy groups, the Parent Training and Information Centers, and the Protection and Advocacy Agency.
7.5	Disseminate current research and best practices to improve student achievement.
7.6	Demonstrate conflict resolution in a variety of contexts.
7.7	Develop and implement intra-agency and inter-agency agreements.

### **Standard Eight: Budget and Resources**

The Special Education Director shall be knowledgeable and able to demonstrate school district budgeting and resource allocation, including those related to special education. The performance indicators for this standard include the following:	
8.1	Identify fiscal issues relevant to the provision of services to learners with disabilities.
8.2	Manage human resources to align appropriate expertise with the individualized needs of learners with disabilities.
8.3	Apply knowledge of local, state and federal reporting requirements to promote responsible fiscal management.
9.4	Develop proposals to external agencies to secure supplemental resources to enhance the services available to students with special needs.
9.5	Implement agreements for contractual services from outside agencies to benefit students with disabilities.
9.6	Establish linkages between preschool, school age and post-secondary programs and services.
9.7	Develop program budgets that allocate adequate resources to school sites and programs, and demonstrate sound fiscal management and planning.
9.8	Allocate available Full Time Equivalency (FTE) positions to special education programs and services to ensure a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to students identified with disabilities.
9.9	Identify current needs and resources for assistive technology to meet the needs of students with disabilities.