



**School of Education
Master of Arts
Early Childhood Education
Admissions Essay Guidelines
Scoring Rubric**

Thank you for your interest in the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education at Webster University. Part of the application process is an essay in which you address the following questions:

What motivated you to become an early childhood educator? Based on the following mission statement, program description and candidate learning goals, how do you think your participation in Webster's Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education program will help you to accomplish your personal and professional goals?

Your essay (250-300 words) should be an honest reflection of your experiences, beliefs, and aspirations. In addition to being an example of your best writing, it should be thoughtful, reflect your curiosity for learning, and address the questions posed above. Please submit your Admissions Essay with your MA application.

1. The Mission of the Webster University School of Education

The School of Education at Webster University provides its students with the knowledge, experiences, and practical tools that enable them to guide both themselves and others toward lifelong learning. The School is a community of teacher-scholars who apply critical reflection and creative energies to enhance learning in schools and other educational settings. The faculty strives to do this by modeling effective teaching practices based on sound theory and research. The personalized approaches make for a challenging, yet supportive environment that permits the risk-taking necessary for learning and growth. The School encourages its faculty and students to work actively toward this end, keeping in mind that the actions must be rooted in visionary yet realistic thinking. This thought and action process underscores the development of an inner-directed self-understanding, an outer-directed global perspective, and an appreciation of human diversity that arises from both.

2. Dispositions of the Webster University School of Education

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education defines dispositions as "the values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities and affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth." (Professional Standards, p.53) Interpreting and assessing dispositions is often more intuitive than it is descriptive and measurable. Regardless of the difficulty of assessment, there is significant value in focusing attention on qualities that make an effective teacher. Candidates must demonstrate satisfactory competency in regard to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions identified in the School of Education *Conceptual Framework*.

Understands and Respects Self

- Understands and respects that s(he) may be different from others
- Embraces an openness to change (adaptability and flexibility)
- Exhibits Curiosity
- Engages in Reflection

Understands and Respects Others

- Understands, respects, and responds appropriately to diversity in a variety of settings
- Exhibits empathy
- Commits to fairness and honesty
- Listens respectfully to other points of view

Understands and Respects Professional Communities

- Commits to professional behavior in university and school cultures
- Practices informed decision-making in university and school cultures
- Accepts academic rigor (willingness to work and accept high expectations)
- Effects change with courage and confidence

3. Description of Early Childhood Education Program

Students pursuing the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education engage in observation and documentation to research children's learning processes by analyzing observational data in light of developmental theory, current research and best practices, and historical and social contexts. There is a compelling and reciprocal relationship between theory, action research, brain research, and best practices in early childhood education. Theory not only lays the foundation for Webster's program development, but also provides support for ongoing decision-making and program improvement.

Since the teaching-learning process is a complex cycle that requires continual study and analysis, educators continue to keep abreast of current research in child development and specifically incorporates in-depth study of the internationally acclaimed early childhood education programs of Reggio Emilia, Italy. A set of principles or fundamentals derived from theory and research support and reinforces what has come to be known as the *Reggio Approach*. Central to this philosophy, and upon which all other principles are based, is what the Reggio educators refer to as the image of the child. Children are seen as competent, full of potential, and having a strong desire to experience their world and communicate with others. Recognizing these abilities, students are supported to identify children's interests, respect and encourage their ideas, engage in on-going dialogue, listen to and reflect on what the children convey, and carefully document the children's work to extend learning.

4. Early Childhood Education Candidate Learning Goals

1. To analyze the fundamental principles and values the *Reggio Approach* in regard to the image of the child.
2. To develop and apply the skills and concepts of observation and documentation in the process of making learning visible.
3. To explore and formulate general criteria and contexts for quality learning environments for young children.
4. To examine and analyze the affordances of various materials and reflect upon ways they can be used to focus and organize meaningful learning investigations.

The Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education degree at Webster University aims to achieve the National Council of Teacher Education (NCATE)/ National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) competencies for teacher candidates. *These competencies form an important part of the School of Educations mission here at Webster University.*

We contend that the ability to write sound academic English is crucial to anyone pursuing a graduate degree. The submission of essays by new applicants provide writing samples that we use to judge their potential for success within our program. When writing samples are judged to be deficient, we do not consider those candidates to be a suitable for the rigor of our courses. If, however, writing is less than proficient, but content and GPA are within our criteria, individuals might be counseled to use the Writing Center and still be admitted (see "special status" letter).

The essay also helps us qualitatively measure candidates' level of self-respect, demonstrated curiosity for learning and for the program, and ability to engage in reflection. We believe that the essay provides insight into all three of these dispositions and aides us in determining the suitability of a candidate for our program.

Scoring Rubric for the MA in Early Childhood Education Admissions Essay

The chart below describes the criteria for scoring the MA in Early Childhood Education Admissions Essay. If a candidate's essay receives scores of 2.5 or above, the candidate will be accepted if all other admissions requirements are satisfactory. If the essay receives a score of 1.49 or below, the candidate's application will be deferred. Upon deferment, a plan of remediation will be developed and implemented the first term at the end of which the application must be resubmitted. Within four (4) weeks the application will be reviewed and a determination made. If improvements have been made, the candidate is allowed to register for a second semester. If a candidate's second try is unsatisfactory, the candidate will be denied.

| Criteria | Advanced 3.5 or 4.0 | Proficient 2.5 or 3.0 | Nearing Proficiency 1.5 or 2.0 | Deferred 1.0 | Denied <1.0 |
|--|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| School of Education Mission Statement | Admissions essay shows high motivation and an excellent understanding of the mission of the School of Education | Admissions essay shows good motivation and an understanding of the mission of the School of Education | Student appears to have some motivation. Admissions essay shows some understanding of the mission of the School of Education | Student appears to have very weak motivation. Admissions essay does not show understanding of the mission of the School of Education | Essay submission not satisfactory |
| Dispositions of the School of Education | Prospective student is very likely to benefit from study in the MA in ECED | Prospective student is likely to benefit from study in the MA in ECED | Prospective student may benefit from study in the MA in ECED | Prospective student is not likely to benefit from study in the MA in ECED. | Essay submission not satisfactory |
| ECED Candidate Learning Goals | Prospective student and program definitely fit | Prospective student and program fit | Prospective student and program may fit | Prospective student and program do not fit | Essay submission not satisfactory |
| Critical Thinking and Writing Skills | Critical thinking, in-depth analysis, and reflection are present in the essay. Writing is clear, descriptive, succinct, and reflective | Prospective student has thought about the two questions in the essay. Ideas are adequately developed. Many elements of good writing are used | Ideas are somewhat developed Some elements of good writing are used | Ideas are not developed and/or writing skills are deficient | Essay submission not satisfactory |

Admissions Results

Candidate's Name

Accepted [] Date _____

Deferred [] Date _____

Denied [] Date _____

Reviewer's signature

SCORES

_____Mission

_____Dispositions

_____Learning Goals

_____Critical Thinking/Writing

GPA _____