



University of the Southwest  
NExT+ Professional Learning Assessment Handbook  
2021-2022

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## New Experienced Teachers (NExT+) Program

New Experienced Teachers Program (NExT+ Program), is an online educational program that allows experienced educational assistants to take the “next step” in becoming a certified educator by providing professional learning credit toward an undergraduate degree in preparation for a teacher license. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) Standards for Assessing Learning (Appendix A) standards and expectations for awarding prior learning assessment credit is used as the foundation for the NExT+ Program at the University of the Southwest.

### Program Description

New Experienced Teachers + Program (NExT+ Program), is an online educational opportunity that allows experienced educational paraprofessionals to earn undergraduate credit through a prior learning assessment portfolio submission process. Prior learning is knowledge acquired through work, professional development training programs, independent study, volunteering, or community service. Candidates may obtain up to 30 credits based on prior learning experiences that align with course learning outcomes. Credits earned will apply toward an undergraduate degree in education at University of the Southwest (credits are not transferable). **Candidates must have 5 years of work experience as a paraprofessional in a PreK-12 classroom to apply to the NExT+ Program.**

The University of the Southwest values the diversity of its students. This diversity includes the unique experiences, interests, and intellectual pursuits that lead to the acquisition of knowledge that may be at the college level. College-level learning is the same, whether acquired in the traditional college classroom or through non-collegiate sources. This equivalency is validated by academically sound and rigorous prior learning assessment methods. The University of the Southwest employs prior learning assessment aligned with its institutional mission, academic integrity, and student educational attainment and success.

### Professional Learning Portfolio

“Professional Learning Portfolio” is a term used to describe the assessment of experience and learning gained outside a traditional academic environment for college credit. Students submit a portfolio that demonstrates how learning objectives and goals have been met through time on task, hands-on practice, professional learning, or other learning experiences that are reviewed and awarded college credit.

### Application Process

To apply to USW NExT+ Program, possible candidates complete the following-

1. Be advised by a College of Education program director.
2. Apply and be admitted to the College of Education at USW following the admission process provided at [USW Admissions](#).

3. Declare an academic program- Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood, Elementary, Secondary, or Special Education. See the academic programs and degree plans on the [USW College of Education](#) website.
4. Apply to the NExT+ Program by sending a letter to the director of undergraduate programs that includes the following:
  - a. Name
  - b. Date of application to USW.
  - c. Declared academic program.
  - d. **Statement of 5 years' experience as a paraprofessional in a PreK-12 classroom** (can be a combination of dates and grade level to equal 5 or more years of experience).
  - e. List of name and address of school, dates of employment as a paraprofessional, classroom or discipline (i.e., 6<sup>th</sup> grade science, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade), name of teacher of record for the identified class(es).
5. Approval of admittance, request for further information, or denial to the NExT+ Program will be provided after review and verification of prior experience as a paraprofessional.

## NExT+ Portfolio I and II Course Enrollment

Students admitted to the program are enrolled in two specified NExT+ Portfolio courses. Completion of the course's assignments will gain students 3 credits per course. This credit does not include the possible credit for the submission and evaluation of a prior learning credit portfolio.

NExT+ Portfolio I and II course credit will apply to the candidate's declared academic program and will be placed on the College of Education Bachelor Degree Plan for a total of 6 credits.

- EDU 2223 NExT+ Portfolio I (3 credits) is cross-listed with
  - General Education- EDU 2103 Foundations of Education
  - OR
  - Special Education - SPED 2103 Intro to Sped
- EDU 4133 NExT+ Portfolio II (3 credits) is cross-listed with
  - General Education- EDU 4403 Professionalism, Ethics, & Frameworks
  - OR
  - Special Education - SPED 4023 Collaborative Teaching for Inclusive Education

## NExT+ Portfolio Credit

While enrolled in EDU 2223 NExT+ Portfolio I and EDU 4133 NExT+ Portfolio II, students complete course work and submit a portfolio demonstrating their experience, professional development, and other activities within a school site for professional learning assessment. The maximum number of credits that can be earned through EDU 2223 NExT+ Portfolio I and EDU 4133 NExT+ Portfolio II review is a total of 30 credits through portfolio submission. The total

number of credits that can be earned through enrollment in the NExT+ Program and the two NExT+ Portfolio courses is 36 credits (30 credits through a portfolio submission and 6 credits for the two courses).

EDU 2223 NExT+ Portfolio I Course- 3 credits  
NExT+ Portfolio I submission and evaluation - 15 credits  
EDU 4133 NExT+ Portfolio II Course- 3 credits  
NExT+ Portfolio II submission and evaluation - 15 credits

## Courses Available for NExT+ Credit

Students may demonstrate college-level knowledge of a subject that they have acquired outside a traditional college classroom such as work experience, professional development, community service, or other experiences that are documented through the development of a portfolio for college credit. Professional Learning Portfolio college credit is available for any **core course** on the College of Education Bachelor's Degree Plan for Early Childhood, Elementary, Secondary Education, and Special Education.

- ECE 1122 Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- ECE 2123 Guiding Young Children
- ECE 2133 Family and Community Collaboration
- ECE 2143 Assess. of Children & Eval. of Programs
- ECE 2203 Child Growth, Dev. and Learning
- ECE 2303 Curriculum Dev. through Play (B – PreK)
- ECE 2403 Curriculum Dev. (PreK – Grade 3)
- ECE 2503 Intro to Language, Literacy & Reading
- ECE 3303 Mgmt. & Org. in ECE Setting
- ECE 3403 Young Children with Diverse Abilities
- ECE 4203 Teaching & Learning SS, Fine Arts & Mvmt.
- ECE 4303 Teaching & Learning Math & Science
- ECE 4403 Teaching & Learning Reading & Writing
- EDU 2203 Tech. Integration & Personalized Learning
- EDU 3213 Culturally Responsive Teaching
- EDU 3223 Creating a Culture of Learning
- EDU 3233 Principles & Methods for Teaching Elem. Reading
- EDU 3243 Methods of Teaching Sec. Math and Science
- EDU 3503 Methods & Materials for Reading & Integrated Communication Arts
- EDU 3523 Classroom Assessment
- EDU 4213 Teaching in the Secondary School
- EDU 4413 Reading in the Content Areas
- EDU 4113 Integrated Meth. for the Elem. Classroom
- EDU 4213 Teaching in the Secondary School

- EDU 4303 Literacy Dev. and Instruction for ELLs
- EDU 4413 Reading in the Content Areas
- EDU 4213 Teaching in the Secondary School
- EDU 4413 Reading in the Content Areas
- SPED 2103 Intro to Special Education
- SPED 3423 Access to the Gen Education Curriculum
- SPED 3503 Balanced Literacy Instruction
- SPED 3513 Accessible Instruction for Readers and Writers
- SPED 3523 Assessment for Instructional Decisions
- SPED 4233 Empowered Learning Environments
- SPED 4013 AT & AAC
- SPED 4023 Supported-Decision Making
- SPED 4033 Collaborative Teaching for Inclusive Education

Other General Education core courses

- USW 1001 Freshman Orientation
- COMM 2203 Intercultural Communication or COMM 3123 Professional Communication
- LED 3103 Principles of Effective Leadership
- SOC 3223 Sociology of Organizations

## Portfolio Submission Process

Enroll in EDU 2223 NExT+ Portfolio I

- Obtain syllabi for courses chosen for prior learning credit. Up to 15 credit hours from a portfolio assessment of prior learning are available from the list under the section Courses Available for NExT+ Credit.
- Develop a portfolio following all directions in the handbook.
- Incorporate the following into the portfolio:
  1. Documented activities, professional development, and other experiences that align with the learning objectives for the selected course(s).
  2. Identify critical learning events experienced by the student.
  3. Describe breadth and depth of knowledge and skill(s) acquired in relation to the stated learning objectives of the identified course.
  4. Align the relationship of knowledge and skill(s) to theory, teaching models, and concepts associated with the academic discipline and degree program.
  5. Summarize the application of critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills within the described learning environment.
  6. Collect artifacts that provide documentation of attendance and participation within the school and outside professional development opportunities.
  7. Enroll in NExT+ Portfolio II if an application for additional prior learning credits is desired.

Enroll in EDU 4133 NExT+ Portfolio II.

- Obtain syllabi for courses chosen for prior learning credit. Up to 15 credit hours portfolio assessment of prior learning are available from the list under the section Courses Available for NeXT+ Credit.
- Develop a portfolio following all directions in the handbook and Blackboard course.
- Incorporate the following into the portfolio:
  1. Documented activities, professional development, and other experiences that align with the learning objectives for the selected course(s).
  2. Identify critical learning events experienced.
  3. Describe breadth, depth of knowledge, and skill(s) acquired in relation to the stated learning objectives of the identified course.
  4. Align the relationship of knowledge and skill(s) to theory, teaching models, and concepts associated with the academic discipline and degree program.
  5. Summarize the application of critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills within the described learning environment.
  6. Collect artifacts that provide documentation of attendance and participation within the school and outside professional development opportunities.

## Revisions

Students may submit a revised portfolio upon recommendation of the portfolio reviewer after receiving recommendations for improvement or reasons for credit denial. A resubmission may occur only once during the term. Requests and resubmission of a portfolio must be made within the timeframe of the current term during week 5. An extension will not be provided.

## Assessment of Portfolio

Assessment of portfolio for content and course-specific prior learning course credit will be completed by an appropriately credentialed faculty or staff member approved by USW College of Education. The assessing faculty member will meet the following criteria:

- subject matter expert;
- educational experience and credentials appropriate to a faculty position;
- experience teaching the discipline;
- knowledge of relevant college-level course objectives and outcomes;
- knowledge of overall curriculum and degree requirements;
- evidence of disciplinary writing skills and ability to support writing in the discipline;
- ability to assess goals, objectives, and learning outcomes;
- experience with reflective practice;
- teaching and learning philosophy that includes a commitment to the mission and goals of the College of Education as well as to the value of experiential learning.

## Transcription of NExT+ Credits

Transcription of NExT+ credits occur after a portfolio review. Courses names and credit hours that have been awarded credit will be sent to the College of Education Program Director. The Program Director, under the direction of the Dean, will verify all portfolio credits before sending information to the registrar's office. Once the University of the Southwest registrar's office receives a completed course credit form, the credits will be added to the student's transcript. Credits earned will apply toward an undergraduate degree in education at the University of the Southwest. **Portfolio credits are nontransferable to other institutes of higher education.**

### EDU-2223 NExT+ Portfolio I

(Cross-listed with EDU 2103 Foundations of Education or SPED 2103 Introduction to SPED)

#### Course Description

This course examines American education in its cultural setting as well as provides space for students to submit a prior learning portfolio. The application of theories, research, and philosophies of teaching and learning will be explored. Enrollment is limited to students accepted into the NExT+ with 5 years of experience as a paraprofessional.

#### Course Objectives

Students will:

- Prepare for a career in education.
- Demonstrate competencies that are transferable to educational professions.
- Align the relationship of knowledge and skill(s) to theory and teaching models.
- Summarize the application of critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills within the described learning environment.
- Complete and pass all assignments within the course with an 80% or better for 3 college credits.

## Obtaining Prior Learning Credit NExT+ Portfolio I

For **each identified course** submitted for prior learning credit for portfolio I, students submit the following assignments:

1. Artifact 1: Resume
2. Artifact 2: Educational Goal Statement
3. Artifact 3: Learning Autobiography
4. Artifact 4: Course petition - one for each course for credit under review. Include primary documentation - Letters of recommendation from supervisors, principals, superintendents, or co-workers and secondary documentation - certificates, awards, proof of workshop or training attendance/completion, on the job training.

## EDU-4133 NExT Portfolio II

(Cross-listed with EDU 4403 Professionalism, Ethics, & Frameworks for Teaching OR Special Education - SPED 4023 Collaborative Teaching for Inclusive Education)

### Course Description

This course examines the professional, ethical, and legal aspects of being an educator as well as provides space for students to submit a prior learning portfolio. Enrollment is limited to students that are accepted to the NExT+ Program with 5 years of experience as a paraprofessional.

### Course Objectives

Students will:

- Discuss ethics and the professional activities of a teacher.
- Create a teaching framework based on the personal philosophy of teaching.
- Demonstrate competencies that are transferable to educational professions.
- Align the relationship of knowledge and skill(s) to theory and teaching models.
- Complete and pass all assignments within the course with an 80% or better for 3 college credits.

## Obtaining Prior Learning Credit NExT+ Portfolio II

For each identified course submitted for prior learning credit for portfolio II, students submit the following assignments:

1. Artifact 1: Professionalism for Educators
2. Artifact 2: Personal Code of Ethics
3. Artifact 3: Course petition - one for each course for credit under review. Primary documentation - letters of recommendation from supervisors, principals, superintendents, or co-workers and secondary documentation - certificates, awards, proof of workshop or training attendance/completion, on the job training included.

# NExT+ Portfolio I Assignment Descriptions

NExT+ Portfolio I contain a resume, educational goal statement, learning autobiography, and a course petition for each course submitted for prior learning experience review. The documents are to be placed in one Word or .pdf file. The file will be submitted during week 4 of the NExT+ Program I course for review by your instructor.

## **Portfolio Artifact 1: Education Resume**

The educational resume demonstrates a global view of your educational and professional life. The educational resume shares your skills, expertise, and experience in a chronological listing of employment and other learning experiences. Include details such as training, education, church, and community service. You may also include volunteer work and hobbies.

## **Portfolio Artifact 2: Educational Goal Statement**

The educational goal statement demonstrates your writing ability and provides further insight as to your reasons for pursuing a teaching degree. With the statement, share your personal, career, and educational goals. Assure you are demonstrating your critical and analytical thinking and writing skills. This statement is a reflection on our education and work experiences. The format is:

- Word document.
- Double-spaced
- Times New Roman or Ariel, 12 pt. font.
- Black text only.
- No more than 3 pages

## **Portfolio Artifact 3: Learning Autobiography**

The Educational Autobiography is a story of your experiences, both inside and outside of school, that have influenced your education, growth, and interest in becoming a teacher.

### Writing Expectations

- Write a first-person narrative.
- Present the content in chronological order.
- 4-6 pages, double spaced, Calibri 11 or Times New Roman 12 pt font, 1" margins on all sides.
- Proofread! The final submission should demonstrate a strong writing ability that follows all spelling, grammar, and writing conventions.
- Cite your sources if you use them. Use style manual APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.
- The title page has the date, your name, the title of your Educational Autobiography

## **Portfolio Artifact 4: Course Petition/Course Objective Alignment**

For each course under review, provide the following:

- In 1-2 pages, provide a descriptive narrative of the prior learning experiences to be considered. Include a description of the artifacts provided.
- Syllabi of courses(s) being considered.
- Documentation and description of how learning objectives of the specified course have been met using the [Course Objectives Alignment Chart](#).
- Primary Documentation- Letters of recommendation from supervisors, principals, superintendents, or co-workers.
- Secondary Documentation -Certificates, awards, workshop or training attendance/completion, or job training.

## NExT+ Portfolio II Assignment Descriptions

For prior learning credit for portfolio II, students submit the following assignments:

### **Portfolio Artifact 1: Why Professionalism in Education**

Students write a paper explaining the need professionalism in education, what laws and policy guide this expectation, and their plan to continually practice professionalism in education.

#### Writing Expectations

Write a first-person narrative.

Present the content in chronological order.

4-6 pages, double spaced, Calibri 11 or Times New Roman 12 pt font, 1" margins on all sides.

Proofread! The final submission should demonstrate a strong writing ability that follows all spelling, grammar, and writing conventions.

Cite your sources using style manual APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Correct format of title and reference pages.

### **Portfolio Artifact 2: Personal Code of Ethics**

Students create their own personal code of ethics in a format of their choice (paper, infographic, video).

### **Portfolio Artifact 3: Course Petition/Course Objective Alignment**

For each course under review, provide the following:

- In 1-2 pages, provide a descriptive narrative of the prior learning experiences to be considered. Include a description of the artifacts provided.
- Syllabi of courses(s) being considered.
- Documentation and description of how learning objectives of the specified course have been met using the [Course Objectives Alignment Chart](#).
- Primary documentation - Letters of recommendation from supervisors, principals, superintendents, or co-workers.
- Secondary documentation- Certificates, awards, proof of workshop or training attendance/completion, on the job training.

# Appendix A

## CAEL Standards for Assessing Learning

As the nationally recognized body on prior learning assessment and the only body recognized by all regional accreditors for Professional Learning Assessment, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) Standards for Assessing Learning have become the foundation for most PLA programs. Therefore, the NExT+ Program at the University of the Southwest will conform to these standards.

1. Credit or its equivalent should be awarded only for learning.
2. Assessment should be based on standards and criteria for the level of acceptable learning that are both agreed upon and made public.
3. Assessment should be treated as an integral part of learning, not separate from it, and should be based on an understanding of learning processes.
4. The determination of credit awards and competence levels must be made by appropriate subject matter and academic or credentialing experts.
5. Credit or other credentialing should be appropriate to the context in which it is awarded and accepted.
6. If awards are for credit, transcript entries should clearly describe what learning is being recognized and should be monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
7. Policies, procedures, and criteria applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, should be fully disclosed and prominently available to all parties involved in the assessment process.
8. All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should pursue and receive adequate training and continuing professional development for the functions they perform.
9. Assessment programs should be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated, and revised as needed to reflect changes in the needs being served, the purposes being met, and the state of the assessment arts.

### References

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. (n.d.) Ten standards for assessing learning. <https://www.cael.org/ten-standards-for-assessing-learning>

# Appendix B

## College of Education Program Outcomes

1. The Learner and Learning (PLO 1)
  - **Objective 1** – The teacher candidate creates and maintains a positive learning environment that supports learning.  
(Standards 1. Learner Development, 2. Learning Differences, and 3. Learning Environments)
2. Content Knowledge (PLO 2)
  - **Objective 1** – The teacher candidate applies discipline-specific concepts, tools, and structures to create learning experiences that support mastery of content and the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills.  
(Standards 4. Content Knowledge, and 5. Application of Content)
3. Instructional Practice (PLO 3)
  - **Objective 1** – The teacher candidate uses assessments effectively and ethically to monitor and support learning.
  - **Objective 2** – The teacher candidate plans for and implements coherent instruction that supports meaningful learning for all students.  
(Standards 6. Assessment, 7. Planning for Instruction, and 8. Instructional Strategies)
4. Professional Responsibility (PLO 4)
  - **Objective 1** – The teacher candidate engages in reflective and collaborative practice, using data to inform instructional decisions and continually adapt the practice to better meet learner needs.  
(Standards 9. Professional Learning and Ethical Practice, and 10. Leadership and Collaboration)