Background Information

Wheelock College, located in Boston, Massachusetts, is one of the nation's premier post-secondary institutions offering professional education in the fields of elementary education, human development, and family studies. For over fifteen years, Wheelock College has collaborated with RTRC Asia and other educational institutions in Singapore to offer state-of-the-art educational programs for professionals in the field of Early Childhood and Elementary Education. Wheelock College offered similar Master of Science programs in collaboration with RTRC Asia during 1991-1992, 2002-2003, 2004-2005, and 2005-2006. Wheelock College and RTRC Asia have also collaborated to develop and deliver a two-year Diploma Program in Early Childhood Care and Education. This Diploma program is validated by Wheelock College and is accredited by the MOE-MCDS Preschool Qualification Accreditation Committee. The Diploma in Pre-school Education—Leadership was also launched in conjunction with Wheelock College. The Master of Science program is recognized by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) as an international master’s program of study.

In 1998, as standards were first being established for international programs, Wheelock College’s Master of Science in Early Childhood and Elementary Teaching program in Bermuda, sponsored by the Center for International Education, Leadership, and Innovation, was the first to be evaluated and approved for accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Wheelock College’s programs, including international programs leading to a bachelor of science and a master of science, were again evaluated by NEASC in 2004. This voluntary accreditation serves the dual purpose of quality assurance and quality improvement. NEASC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation as being a reliable authority on the quality of institutions of higher education. Other degree programs offered by the Center for International Education, Leadership, and Innovation are designed to meet all standards established by relevant accrediting bodies.

Distinctive Program Features

The Wheelock College/RTRC Asia Master of Science program in Early Childhood Education with a Focus on Inclusion and Special Education presents an overview of exceptionality, inclusive education, and special education within the Singaporean culture. This program prepares early childhood and primary school educators, child care professionals, and administrators to better identify, assess, and understand the range of individual needs in order to develop more effective inclusionary educational practices for young children and their families. This Master of Science
program provides an excellent model to prepare professionals for leadership, management, policy making decisions, and teaching in inclusionary classroom environments. Distinctive features include:

- Builds a cadre of educators and leaders who can support others to teach, care for, and continue to improve the quality of lives for children with special needs and families in the 21st Century
- Serves as a “trainer of trainers” program and supports inclusionary practices throughout Southeast Asia
- Enhances professional development and a commitment to lifelong learning to create an upgraded core of trainers, educators, and leaders in inclusive early childhood and primary education settings
- Develops learners’ understanding of the historical background, legislation passed, and lessons learned from such countries as Denmark, Sweden, and the United States regarding care, support, and education for children with special needs
- Explores a spectrum of beliefs and perspectives regarding inclusion among educators, policymakers, and others
- Exposes learners to models of exemplary inclusionary practices through readings, case studies, guest lectures, and videotapes
- Develops a comprehensive understanding of the terminology associated with working in an interdisciplinary environment caring for and educating young children with special needs
- Prepares learners to work in both educational programs and clinical services
- Offers knowledge and competence for professionals to be effective in developing developmentally appropriate curricula for children with special needs
- Enables learners to develop individual lesson plans and schedules for children with special needs to facilitate their adaptation to inclusive environments
- Supports learners in the development of a professional portfolio
- Encourages learners to research and pursue an area of interest
- Approved as an internationally recognized master degree program by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) as a United States degree. Evaluated and approved for accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of NEASC and recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, among others.

As a requirement for graduation from this program, learners must compile an extensive Professional Teacher Portfolio. Professional teacher portfolios encourage and reinforce the importance of lifelong learning and clearly articulate the importance of career development. Learners follow a plan to compile, build, and develop their portfolios throughout the entire program and they are submitted for review during the last phase. This comprehensive Professional Teacher Portfolio is the result of an ongoing process and reflection on learning.

The program combines local and international faculty who are experienced in educating adult learners. Each selected faculty member possesses extensive experience in their identified area of expertise. The program offers a total of 30 credit-hours of graduate study to be offered in Singapore. Courses are taught in intensive one-week sessions, with the classes being held during evenings and weekends in order to accommodate the learners’ work lives and other schedules. Required readings and assignments are provided prior to the beginning of each course and follow-up projects and assignments must be completed within a specific timeframe. Learners are required to complete every assignment, to prepare for and attend every class session, and to contribute actively in class discussions. Additionally, the program is designed to ensure that learners develop a sense of community among other participants thus facilitating their working together as educators.
Courses and Course Descriptions

EDU 900 Independent Study in Education (6 graduate credits)
Provides an opportunity for learners to work individually or in teams to pursue research projects and/or applied studies that relate to topics such as: Effective Inclusionary Practices, Informal Assessments of Children with Special Needs, Designed Parent Programs to Support Children with Special Needs, Alternative Learning Environments for Children with Special Needs, and Services Available to Children with Special Needs in Singapore. Each learner or team must engage in the identification of a project, outline objectives and/or hypotheses generation, and the means for achieving and assessing the research studies. Learners must utilize a contract form, which is to be completed and approved before the study can be pursued. Individuals and teams are required to build upon the existing body of knowledge and published research literature. Every effort to conduct and implement the study is highly recommended.

HDF 501 Lifespan Development: Birth to Adulthood (3 graduate credits)
Examines models of development in individuals from conception to adulthood including physical, cognitive, social, moral, and emotional aspects. Special attention is given to the changes that take place during these periods of development in an Asian context, especially Singaporean. Theory and research from different psychological and philosophical approaches are discussed, including psychoanalytic, ecological, structuralist, and others.

EDU 520 Introduction to Inclusive Early Childhood Education in Multicultural/Multiracial/Multilingual Society (3 graduate credits)
Examines historical, philosophical, and theoretical foundations for early childhood education for children (from ages 3 to 9) and their families and investigates the application of those principles to models of care and education. Issues of curriculum design and assessment are introduced as inter-related processes that include structuring learning environments and experiences that are responsive to children’s interests and abilities. Learners analyze and evaluate curricula that foster language, social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and moral development through play, exploration, experimentation, and other developmentally appropriate models of learning for children. Strategies for developing learning opportunities that are appropriate for all children including children with special needs and children from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds are surveyed.

RES 723 Teacher as Researcher (3 graduate credits)
Offers learners opportunities to design and implement a research project to answer questions they have about the teaching and learning process in their classrooms and schools. Learners review and compare a number of teacher research projects across the country and examine the concept and practice of teacher researcher as a strategy to build collaboration in schools and strengthen the professional role of teachers, particularly in program evaluation and assessment.

CFS 516 Curriculum Planning and Program Development in Early Intervention (3 graduate credits)
Focuses on program issues of models of service delivery, program evaluation and efficacy studies, policy development, and advocacy in early intervention. Curriculum resources and intervention strategies for infants and toddlers with special needs are reviewed with emphasis on interdisciplinary planning and implementation.

EDU 528/529 The Impact of Special Needs on Learning and Development: The Early Years (3 graduate credits)
Introduces the range of special needs experienced by some children. This course explores the impact of mild to severe disabling conditions on development in early childhood (birth to age 8). Learners study legislation governing the rights and services affecting children with special needs.
and their families. The attitudes and stereotypes of the larger society are explored as they affect children, families, and the larger community itself. Major areas of special needs are examined, including those traditionally called mental retardation, emotional and behavioral disorders, speech and language disorders, sensory impairment, physical disabilities, substance affected infants, and attention deficit disorders. Uses categorical labels to help learners gain knowledge of differences in children’s development, however, emphasis is on understanding children as individuals with varying performance and rates of development, rather than as members of a disability group with common understandings.

**CFS 606 Working with Families of Children with Special Needs (3 graduate credits)**

Introduces a family systems perspective for analyzing and exploring issues facing families with an infant, preschool, or school-age child with special needs. Addresses individual concerns of mothers, fathers and siblings; family interaction; the importance of social networks and the role of extended family members; and psychological adjustment and concerns across the life span. Emphasizes the nature of the parent-professional partnership and explores different models of support programs for families. The legal rights and responsibilities of parents in regard to their child’s health and education, and their roles in due process procedures are considered.

**EDU 550 Issues in Early Childhood Literacy and Numeracy Development (3 graduate credits)**

Introduces theoretical frameworks for how children begin to read, write, and reason mathematically. Each discipline emphasizes particular questions, organizing constructs of symbolization systems, and methods of inquiry that is examined in terms of their importance in selecting developmentally appropriate curriculum materials and activities that maximize children’s growth. Explores language and mathematical thinking as tools of inquiry that are acquired gradually and integrated in many domains to understand and interpret the world. Analyzes connections between observation and assessment of children’s emerging mathematical or language skills and various instructional strategies.

**EDU 615 Educational Environments for Children (3 graduate credits)**

Assists the learner in designing, planning, implementing and evaluating developmentally appropriate environments that encourage the growth and active learning of children, with a focus on infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and early elementary-aged children. Principles of environmental design and plans for implementation of early childhood settings are presented. Learners gain practical, hands-on experiences that aid them to select, organize, create, and evaluate various educational programs, products and environments that allow children to grow and learn. Learners are also supported in redesigning spaces in their current centers as they address multiple issues. Attention is given to meeting the individual needs of children and the constraints of specific environments.

**EDU 680 Presentation of Portfolios**

Learners are required to submit an extensive Professional Teacher Portfolio to a team during the final phase. Professional teacher portfolios encourage and reinforce the importance of lifelong learning and clearly articulate the importance of career development. Learners follow a plan to compile, build, and develop a Professional Teacher Portfolio throughout the entire program. The key features of a Professional Teacher Portfolio include:

- Resume
- List of one’s competencies (papers, projects, workshops, list of skills, and achievements)
- Brief summary of one’s professional growth and development (career goals and objectives, professional affiliations, resources, and contacts)
- Statement of one’s personal teaching philosophy
- Formal classroom observations
- Videotapes, audiotapes, and photos of the classroom and pictures of classroom activities, bulletin boards, room arrangements, and field trips
- Records of strategies and challenges mastered from experience
- Clippings, reports, newsletters, and articles
- Notes and comments received from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators
- Selections from a teaching journal that highlight the growth of a learner
- Self-evaluation and reflection on feedback (includes self-reflection and documentation of improvement towards one’s stated goals)
- Samples of students’ creative and exemplary work and projects
- Well articulated lesson plans
- Student test results and awards
- Writing samples (best recent paper)
- Visual works of the students
- Evidence of participation in school and after-school community events and activities
- Pre- and post-test scores as it relates to teaching a unit of study
- Assessment instruments used to date
- Other documents related to professional development and/or education (publications, grants, honors, awards, and/or certificates).

Total: 30 Graduate Credit Hours