

The word "Foreword" is written in a black, cursive script font. It is centered within a graphic consisting of three concentric, horizontally-oriented ovals. The ovals have a metallic, reflective appearance with a gradient from light to dark, giving them a three-dimensional effect.

The close of the last century brought the growing recognition that something needed to change with teacher education. The rate at which beginning teachers left the profession with less than three years of work experience was escalating, and the demand for teachers was growing. Many factors influence the decision to leave the teaching profession, some of which are exogenous to the teaching profession, and some lie within the teaching profession.

One such factor was the progression of the courses taken in the pursuit of certification as a teacher. Typically, students did not take education courses until they were juniors and did not student teach until in the last semester. In other words, students were not exposed to the “real” profession until just before they graduated and went to work. As a result, many students did not know what they were getting until they were in it. After having invested time and money in a college degree, many went on into teaching but some did not; of those who did, some discovered they liked it but many others did not.

The determination was made that students needed to be exposed to the teaching profession earlier in the postsecondary experience. In 2004 the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board convened an advisory committee to create an Associate of Arts degree in Teaching. The committee, made up of representatives from both four-and two-year schools met to devise a fully transferable associate degree that would introduce students to the teaching profession at the lower division level of college. One of the key results of the effort was the development of two new courses: Education 1301: Introduction to the Teaching Professions and Education 2301: Introduction to Special Populations. Both courses embed substantial field experience to make sure that students are introduced not only to the teaching profession theoretically, but also practically. This textbook is designed to address the topics found in the first course.

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