

Elementary Education

What Can I Do With This Major? • Career Pathways

University of St. Thomas

Elementary Education at St. Thomas prepares graduates to be the foundational educators who shape how children learn to read, think, collaborate, and grow. Elementary teachers are among the most impactful professionals in any community — and Minnesota consistently faces teacher shortages in this area. Beyond traditional classroom teaching, this degree opens paths in school leadership, curriculum design, early childhood, and community education.

CONVENTIONAL CAREER TRACKS

All roles below are accessible with a bachelor's degree and appropriate licensure or certification.

Track	What you'll do	Sample Job Titles (BS)
K–6 Classroom Teaching	Teach the full range of subjects to elementary-age children, building foundational academic and social skills.	■ Elementary Teacher (K–6) ■ 1st Grade Teacher ■ 3rd Grade Teacher ■ 5th Grade Teacher ■ Self-Contained Classroom Teacher ■ Multi-Grade Teacher (rural)
Early Childhood Education	Work with children ages 0–8 in preschool, pre-K, Head Start, and kindergarten settings.	■ Preschool Teacher ■ Pre-K Teacher ■ Head Start Lead Teacher ■ Early Childhood Educator ■ Kindergarten Teacher ■ Early Intervention Specialist
Special Education (with add-on license)	Support students with disabilities in inclusive or self-contained elementary settings.	■ Special Education Paraprofessional ■ Resource Room Teacher (with license) ■ Inclusion Support Teacher ■ IEP Coordinator ■ Learning Disabilities Specialist
Literacy & Intervention	Provide targeted reading and writing support to students who need additional academic scaffolding.	■ Reading Interventionist ■ Title I Teacher ■ Literacy Coach (with experience) ■ ELL/ESL Teacher (with endorsement) ■ Academic Support Specialist
School Counseling & Student Support	Provide social-emotional support, guidance, and advocacy for elementary-age students.	■ School Counselor (with M.A.) ■ Student Support Specialist ■ MTSS Coordinator ■ School Social Worker (with MSW) ■ Behavior Interventionist

NON-CONVENTIONAL & EMERGING TRACKS

Beyond the classroom — roles where your subject expertise and teaching skills create unexpected value.

Emerging Area	Roles You Might Not Expect
Curriculum Design & Educational Publishing	Curriculum Developer (K–6) • Instructional Designer • Educational Content Writer • Textbook Author / Editor • Assessment Developer
Childcare & Program Administration	Childcare Center Director • Before/After School Program Coordinator • Youth Program Manager • Camp Director • Family Engagement Coordinator

Corporate Training & L&D;	Corporate Trainer • Learning & Development Specialist • Onboarding Coordinator • Instructional Designer (corporate) • Training Content Developer
Nonprofit & Community Education	Youth Program Coordinator • Community Education Director • AmeriCorps / Teach for America • Literacy Volunteer Coordinator • Family Literacy Specialist

WHERE A GRADUATE DEGREE TAKES YOU

Advanced degrees open leadership, research, and specialized roles — and are often required for licensure advancement.

M.Ed. in Elementary / Curriculum & Instruction	Instructional Coach, Curriculum Specialist, Lead Teacher, Department Coordinator.	Advances salary on the MN pay scale; opens coaching, curriculum, and leadership roles without leaving the school environment.
M.Ed. in Special Education	Special Education Teacher, Special Ed Coordinator, Director of Special Services.	High-demand licensure addition; special education teachers are among the most recruited educators in Minnesota.
M.A. in School Counseling (CACREP)	Elementary School Counselor — required in Minnesota for licensed school counseling roles.	School counselors require a master's degree and state licensure; UST's program is highly regarded in the region.
Educational Administration Licensure (Principal)	Assistant Principal, Principal, Academic Dean, District Office Administrator.	Most principals begin with 5+ years of strong teaching; the administrative license is required for all building leadership roles in MN.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Minnesota has ongoing teacher shortages — especially in diverse urban and rural districts. Use this as an opportunity to choose the community you want to serve.
- Complete your student teaching in a setting different from where you grew up — the experience is transformative and professionally valuable.
- Add an ESL/ELL endorsement during or shortly after your degree — it dramatically increases your hiring options in the Twin Cities.
- Join Education Minnesota (the state union) and your local MEA chapter as a student — they provide resources, advocacy, and networking.
- Consider pursuing a Montessori, Reggio Emilia, or other methodology certification to differentiate yourself in private school markets.
- The best elementary teachers build strong family partnerships — practice community engagement skills throughout your preparation program.

This guide reflects current workforce trends and is updated annually. Licensure requirements vary by state. Visit the UST Career Development Center for personalized advising and employer connections.