

# Academic Degree Programs Assessment



**Northern Illinois  
University**

Submitted to the University Assessment Panel

AY 2022-2023

## **Part I: Assessment Plan**

College of Education  
Department of Special and Early Education

Early Childhood Education  
M.S.

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## Introduction

The Department of Special and Early Education (SEED), formed during College of Education restructuring in 2010-2011, houses educator licensure programs in early childhood education (ECE) with both B.S. and M.S. degrees. The goal of the graduate program in Early Childhood Education is to develop exemplary educators who demonstrate best practice in the field. The program emphasizes a) effective pedagogy for classroom settings serving young children and their families, b) skills in accommodating children with special needs, c) skills in teaching English learners and connecting with/supporting their families, and d) appreciation for teaching in highly diverse and fully inclusive settings. The following student learning outcomes (SLO) guide coursework in the licensure program [candidates will...]:

- Apply their understanding of young children’s characteristics and needs and of multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning to create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for all children.
- Recognize and implement ways to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families and to involve all families in their child’s development and learning.
- Observe, document, and use effective assessment strategies in a responsible way, in partnership with families and other professionals, to support children’s development and learning.
- Integrate their understanding of and relationships with children and families; their understanding of developmentally effective approaches to teaching and learning, and their knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for all students.
- Conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession.
- Interpret, examine, and use research in child development, family studies, and early childhood education. (revised goal as of 2016).

These SLOs, developed as part of the 2016 program review, correspond with teacher preparation standards adopted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Further, the transition from National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) standards required that program faculty update and realign program coursework to these standards. Course objectives in the ECE program are aligned with the Gateways standards; therefore, candidates completing the M.S.Ed in ECE earn a Gateways Level 5 credential required in Illinois for employment in different EC settings. Finally, the ECE licensure program aligns with Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTTS, completed in 2015). A matrix showing the full course sequence and alignment with these diverse governing organizations is available in Appendix A.

In 2022-2023, the ECE faculty will transition from the IPTS standards to the new Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Standards (CRTLS). This realignment is required by the state for implementation prior to 2025.

Although some candidates enrolled in ECE graduate courses are working on additional certification in early childhood or professional growth, over 90% are working toward ECE educator licensure with Special Education Approval (birth to age 5). As part of the application to the Graduate School/M.S.Ed. program, candidates provide transcripts, letters of recommendation, and a personal statement (writing sample). Accepted applicants must have a 3.0/4.0 cumulative GPA from prior coursework and maintain this GPA throughout their ECE program at NIU. Other assessments embedded in ECE program coursework include a variety of measures such as program portfolios, performance on particular projects embedded in the portfolio, state-mandated licensure examinations (ILTS content test and edTPA), student teaching evaluations, dispositions exit survey conducted by program faculty and university personnel, and cumulative GPA in professional courses aligned with particular performance criteria (rubrics, clinical evaluations, etc.).

After course and assessment revisions were completed in 2016, course syllabi, clinical assignments/placements, and student teaching experiences were updated to reflect new grade bands in ECE (birth to grade 2, rather than grade 3). Many of our program curricular and assessment changes to date reflect the varied roles and responsibilities assumed by early educators such as assessing children, planning and delivering instruction, collaborating with others, working closely with parents, and working closely with those in community agencies.

Our assessment plan includes state-mandated licensure test and a common disposition assessment, which addresses professional attitudes and behaviors of candidates in field experiences. The ECE state-mandated content test was updated in 2018 to reflect changes in the field. The format of questions also changed, shifting to an emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving and requiring that candidates select the best choice from several good options. This shift in the test demand created a barrier for candidates unprepared for this type of examination. Therefore, we provided tutoring supports for the test, made resources available to them while we planned for coursework to align with these types of demands. To be recommended for licensure, candidates also have to pass the edTPA (suspended spring 2020 – spring 2023). We prepare candidates for the instructional cycle throughout program coursework with assignments that required data collection, lesson planning, and post-instruction reflections; however, preparation of the reflective narratives for the edTPA was completed in workshops. The edTPA itself was completed during student teaching, with 100% pass rate for our M.S.Ed. candidates. We have opted to exclude the edTPA results for this midway report due to the gaps in the data caused by the Governor's Emergency Proclamation suspending the test in 2020. The dispositions survey, completed by university supervisors and cooperating teachers at the end of student teaching, provides data on the professionalism of teacher candidates in the areas of

caring, collaboration, creative and critical thinking, lifelong learning, and diversity, equity and inclusion.

The ECE faculty, clinical coordinator, instructors, and advisors meet regularly to plan and evaluate program initiatives, evaluate programmatic assessment activities, discuss issues related to clinical and advising practices, and review student concerns and the effectiveness of the dispositions process. These regular meetings provide a regular forum to discuss formative (and summative) assessment results and make program changes, accordingly. The program is also guided by a group of professionals from the ECE field participating in an external Professional Advisory Committee (PAC). PAC members (i.e., early educators, leaders from early education agencies, community members, early education administrators from the surrounding region, graduates from the program who are working in the field, adjunct faculty, and clinical supervisors) meet once per year for a formal meeting during which faculty present updates about the program. PAC members also give faculty feedback. They also provide a forum for discussing program goals and objectives, program strengths, areas for improvement, and partnerships among the Early Childhood program, school districts, and cooperatives. Information gained from faculty meetings and PAC meetings is essential to the planning and assessment cycles of the program. As a result, faculty engage in critical thinking about program planning and future directions, course offerings and rotation of courses, changes to the field and student teaching.

The ECE program provides a broad range of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions for candidates preparing to become exemplary ECE teachers. Faculty have carefully designed and coordinated field experiences and course work based on standards and policies developed by professional organizations and governing bodies. In addition, NIU and the College of Education's mission, vision, and value statements and the college's Conceptual Framework explicitly delineate the program's commitment to preparation of exemplary educators who can work with learners from a range of backgrounds.

### **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

Teacher candidates will:

1. Apply their understanding of young children's characteristics and needs, and of multiple interacting influences on children's development and learning, to create an environment that is healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging for all children.
2. Recognize and implement ways to create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families and to involve all families in their child's development and learning
3. Observe, document, and use other effective assessment strategies in a responsible way, in partnership with families and other professionals, to support children's development and learning.
4. Integrate their understanding of children and families; their understanding of developmentally effective approaches to teaching and learning; and their knowledge of academic disciplines, to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for all students.

5. Conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession.
6. Interpret, examine, and use research in child development, family studies, and early childhood education.

## Curriculum Map

Course	Program Student Learning Outcomes					
	1. Apply understanding of child characteristics to create learning environments	2. Create relationships, support, and empower families	3. Use effective assessment strategies to support learning	4. Integrate understandings to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning	5. Act as members of the early childhood profession	6. Interpret, examine, and use research in child development, family studies, and early childhood education
EPS 506	D				D	D
<b>ETR 520 (research class)</b>						P
SEEC 500 (Anal of ECE)	B				B	B
SEEC 504 (DAP)	B		B	B	B	
<b>SEEC 532 (Phys World)</b>	D		D	D		
<b>SEEC 535 Or SESE 526 (Families)</b>		D			D	D
<b>SEEC 540 (LA and Soc St)</b>	D		D	D		B
LTLA 537 (Lang Acquis)	D				D	
SESE 523 (ECSE Assessment)	D		D	D		
LTIC 501 or LTIC 520 (Multi-Cult)		D			D	
LTRE 516 (Emergent Lit)	D		D	D		
SEEC 582 (PreK Field)	D		D	D	D	
SEEC 583 (Primary Field)	D		D	D	D	
SEEC 586 (Infant/Toddler Field)	D		D	D	D	

Course	Program Student Learning Outcomes					
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SEEC 585A, 585B (student teaching)	P	P	P	P	P	
<b>SEEC 598 (MS Proj)</b>	P	P	P	P	P	P
<p><i>Note.</i> B=beginning, D=developing, or P=proficient level. SEEC 511 was removed from the program since the 2016 UAP report was submitted. SEEC 540 (<i>Language Arts and Social Studies for Children Grades K – 2</i>) is a new course added to the program beginning fall 2022.</p>						

## Assessment Methods

This final section of the assessment plan describes the assessment methods the degree program will be using to measure how well students are meeting program student learning outcomes. See the [UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist](#) for a description of characteristics seen in well-functioning assessment methods.

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs Covered
Student Teaching Evaluation	The student teaching rating scale is used to evaluate candidates four times during a 16-week student teaching experience. All items are closely aligned with NAEYC professional standards and based on the key indicators in each standard. Both cooperating teachers and university supervisors use this form to provide feedback to student teachers	A candidate will earn at least 75% of the total points on the student teaching rating scale (SLO 1, 2, 4). A candidate will earn a score of “3 or “4” ” on every item on the professionalism subtest on the student teaching rating scale (SLO 5)	80% of candidates will earn at least 75% of the total points on the student teaching rating scale (SLO 1, 2, 4).  90% of candidates will earn a score of “3 or “4” ” on every item on the professionalism subtest on the student teaching rating scale (SLO 5)	During student teaching	University supervisor, Cooperating teacher	1, 2, 4, 5
Masters Project	Candidates must demonstrate the ability to pursue a topic of professional interest in depth, synthesize the available research, and draw conclusions by submitting their research paper.	A candidate will meet or exceed one criteria of the assessment rubric (Use of Research Literature)	80% of candidates will meet or exceed one criterion of the Masters project assessment.	During the end of the program	Course professor and program coordinator	6

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs Covered
Evaluating a Curricular Model	Candidates select one or two curricular models/theories to investigate and evaluate	A candidate will meet or exceed meet or exceed one criterion of the assessment.	80% of candidates will meet or exceed three criterion of the assessment.	During the beginning of the program	Course professor and program coordinator	6
State-mandated licensure test	Early childhood candidates must take and pass the Content Area Test prior to student teaching. This makes this test a late-program assessment. It has an overall passing score of 240. The test content has been designed to closely align with the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS) and the Professional Standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).	<p>A candidate will earn a score of at least 240 on the Diversity, Collaboration, and Professionalism subtest on the state-mandated licensure test (SLO 2)</p> <p>A candidate will earn a score of at least 240 on the Learning Across the Curriculum subset on the state-mandated licensure test (SLO 4)</p>	80% of candidates will pass the Diversity, Collaboration, and Professionalism subtest (SLO 2) and the Learning Across the Curriculum subtests on the state test (SLO 4)	Toward end of program but before student teaching	Program coordinator	2, 4

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs Covered
Unit Plan	Candidates prepare a thematic unit plan to develop important understandings, skills, and core concepts that are aligned to a developmentally appropriate theme/central focus for a given grade level. The thematic plan, includes 3-5 successive lesson plans that are multidisciplinary, connecting learning experiences to other disciplines	<p>A candidate will earn at least 80% of the points on the unit plan project (SLO 1) and specific criteria:</p> <p>-Lesson Plan: Evaluation (SLO 3)—scores in the “meets standards” range for all items</p> <p>-Lesson Plan: Using Developmentally Appropriate Practices (SLO 4) — scores in the “meets standards” range for all items</p>	80% of candidates will earn at least 80% of the points on the unit plan project.	SEEC 504 course project, week before final exams	Course instructor	1, 3, 4

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs Covered
Math/Science Investigation	For this assignment, candidates select a science topic, plan and teach one science lesson that is inquiry-based, meaningful, and challenging for the students. The candidates must use appropriate approaches, effective instructional strategies, and tools that positively influence students' learning. In addition, candidate must provide a coherent analysis of the assessment data collected during implementation and describe how it will be useful in supporting children's learning.	A candidate will earn at least 80% of the total points on the student teaching rating scale.	80% of candidates will earn at least 80% of the total points on the student teaching rating scale	SEEC 532 course project, week before final exams	Course instructor and program coordinator	3

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs Covered
edTPA  Suspended due to Governor's Emergency Proclamation, spring 2020 through spring 2023	Teacher Performance Assessment required by Illinois State Board of Education. Students plan, deliver a learning segment designed to meet needs of focus learners, and evaluate the outcomes of instruction during their student teaching placement. For each area (planning, instructing, assessing), teacher candidates write in-depth commentaries (reflections) in which they connect their instructional decisions to learner outcomes and research/theory.	A candidate will earn sufficient number of points to pass the edTPA.  Target score set annually by State of Illinois (35 in 2016, 39 in fall 2019; out of 75 points possible)	80% of candidates will attain a passing score on the edTPA	During student teaching	Program coordinator	1, 3
Dispositions Evaluation (D)	Candidates are assessed every semester in every class by their professors on a faculty-approved Dispositions rating scale that includes items associated with behaviors expected of teaching professionals	A candidate will earn a score of "1" (distinguished) on every item on the Disposition Rating Scale	90% of candidates will earn a score of "1" on every item on the Disposition Rating Scale	All methods courses (formative), early field experiences (formative) and student teaching (summative)	Course professors (formative), student teaching supervisor (summative) and cooperating teachers (summative)	5

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs Covered
Cultural Case Study  <b>Then</b> Family Systems Theory Analysis: Case Study (new 2021-2022)	Candidates conduct interviews with families of young children and search of school/community resources to provide a comprehensive analysis grounded in research/theory	3-point rubric (does not meet, meets, exceeds expectations); 80% of points on the assignment rubric for passing score; assumes teacher candidates meet or exceed standards on all items, or a score of B for the assignment	85% of candidates achieving a passing score (meet or exceed standards on all items)	SEEC 535 Or SESE 526 (Families course), part of final project due the week before the end of the semester	Course instructor	2
<p><i>Note.</i> <sup>a</sup> Student-level target is the score or performance an individual student must demonstrate to say the student met the student learning outcome.  <sup>b</sup> Program-level target is the percent of all students that must demonstrate they meet the student learning outcome.</p>						

## ASSESSMENT METHODS-BY-OUTCOMES MATRIX

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcome						
	1. Apply understanding of child characteristics to create learning environments	2. Create relationships, support, and empower families	3. Use effective assessment strategies to support learning	4. Integrate understandings to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning	5. Act as members of the early childhood profession	6. Interpret, examine, and use research in child development, family studies, and early childhood education	Left blank intentionally
Student Teaching Evaluation	S, D	S, D		S, D	S, D		
Masters Project						S, D	
Evaluating a Curricular Model						F, D	
State-mandated licensure test		S, I		S, I			
Unit Plan	F, I		F, I	F, I			
Math/Science Investigation			F, D				
edTPA	S, D		S, D			S, I	
Dispositions Evaluation (student teaching)					S, D F, D (methods courses and early field experiences)		
Cultural Case Study		F, D			F, I	F, I	

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcome						
	1. Apply understanding of child characteristics to create learning environments	2. Create relationships, support, and empower families	3. Use effective assessment strategies to support learning	4. Integrate understandings to design, implement, and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning	5. Act as members of the early childhood profession	6. Interpret, examine, and use research in child development, family studies, and early childhood education	Left blank intentionally
Family Systems Theory Analysis: Case Study (new 2021-2022)		S, I			S, I	S, I	
<i>Note.</i> F=formative assessment, S=summative assessment, D=direct assessment, and I=indirect assessment. See the paragraph above for an explanation of each type of assessment. Family Systems Theory Analysis is a newly added assessment in 2021 to replace the Cultural Case Study.							