

Assessment Plan  
College of Education  
Department of Special and Early Education  
M. S. Ed. in Early Childhood Education  
Fall, 2016  
Myoungwhon Jung, Program Coordinator

## 1. Introduction

The Department of Special and Early Education (SEED) is a relatively new department in the College of Education at Northern Illinois University. It was formed as a result of the College of Education restructuring that began in the 2010-2011 academic year. Prior to being in SEED, the B.S. Early Childhood Studies program was part of the Department of Teaching and Learning (TLRN). SEED currently houses graduate and undergraduate programs in early childhood and special education.

The graduate program in Early Childhood Education (particularly the initial teacher certification program embedded in the degree program) is designed to develop exemplary educators who demonstrate best practice in the field. The program is guided by the following learning outcomes for candidates:

- To 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
- To 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
- To 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
- To 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
- To conduct themselves as members of the early childhood profession
- To reflect upon their satisfaction and preparation of the program (new goals)

These learning outcomes correspond with recent early childhood teacher preparation standards adopted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Also corresponding with these NAEYC/NCATE standards, the program emphasizes effective pedagogy for classroom settings serving young children, skills in accommodating children with special needs, skills in teaching English learners, and appreciation for teaching in highly diverse and fully inclusive settings.

Most of the candidates in the Master's program in Early Childhood Education are seeking initial state certification and the Preschool Special Education Approval. A few candidates are working on additional certification in early childhood, and a few are in the program for professional growth. Those seeking initial teacher certification are assessed more thoroughly and regularly

than the program itself requires. However, because the vast majority of the candidates must meet these assessment milestones, the entire sequence of assessments is described below. The learning of candidates seeking initial certification is assessed using a variety of measures, including program portfolios, performance on particular projects embedded in the portfolio, the content area teacher's certification examination, edTPA, the exit survey conducted by program faculty and university personnel, and candidate's ability to meet the retention GPA for professional courses aligned with particular performance criteria (rubrics, clinical evaluations, etc.).

Several factors place the assessment plan in context. One of the most immediate and pressing factors deals with changes in teacher licensure. At the time of this writing, we have submitted a new program to officials at the State that corresponds with new early childhood licensure. The new licensure prepares candidates to work with children up to and including 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (rather than 3<sup>rd</sup> grade). Therefore, we have revised courses, developed new courses, revised assessments, and developed new assessments to reflect this new licensure grade level. Course syllabi, clinicals, and student teaching experiences must also reflect this new licensure.

Second, during the 2013 and 2104 academic years, the SEED Acting Department Chair requested that faculty revise and update courses to meet new Illinois Professional Teaching standards. Faculty spent a year revising courses, updating syllabi, updating assessments, and resequencing courses to meet the new standards.

Third, the role and responsibilities of early childhood educators continue to change. Many of our program curricular and assessment changes reflect the many roles and responsibilities assumed by early educators. For example, early educators are responsible for assessing children, planning and delivering instruction, collaborating with others, working closely with parents, and working closely with those in community agencies. Our courses and assessment plan have continuously been updated to reflect these and other critical teacher expectations, as recommended by members of our accrediting agencies.

Another factor influencing our curriculum and assessment plan is the accountability movement in higher education. Candidates must now take and pass a number of assessments to gain entry into the program, to continue in the program, and to successfully exit the program. For example, for program entry, candidates must take and pass the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP), ACT, or SAT, have at least a 2.75 GPA, and meet disposition assessments. To continue in the program, candidates must demonstrate mastery of specific state and national standards, and pass disposition assessments. To be recommended for licensure, candidates must pass the edTPA, pass several state licensure tests, and meet disposition assessments. Many of these assessments are now part of our overall assessment plan.

Additional factors contributing to the way we prepare teacher educators and assess their knowledge, skills, and dispositions include on-going changes in teacher preparation, such as

revised and updated standards offered by our accrediting agencies, competition from on-line universities, lower enrolments in teacher preparation programs nation-wide, and declining resources from the state. Consequently, the early education faculty, clinical coordinator, 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 an external Professional Advisory Board (PAC). Members of this committee include early educators, leaders from early education agencies, community members, and early education administrators from the surrounding region, graduates from the program who are working in the field, adjunct faculty, and clinical supervisors. Regular meetings of the PAC provide an opportunity for faculty to present and obtain feedback on new initiatives and learn about potential changes in district policies and practices. 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 Early Education program provides a broad range of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions for candidates preparing to become exemplary early education teachers. Faculty have carefully designed and coordinated field experiences and course work based on policies, standards, and frameworks of the university, the College of Education, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), teacher preparation standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for early childhood teacher preparation, and the Northern Illinois Conceptual Framework for Teacher Education.

## 2. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

### Student Learning Outcomes

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 environments that are 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 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.
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. (revised goal)

### Methods:

Faculty oversees the analysis and use of program assessments, both internal and external. Faculty meets monthly during the academic year, and central to its work is the review of student assessment and program assessment data for program improvement.

Method	Description	Timeline	Person Responsible	Objectives Addressed
Student teaching rating scale or evaluation	Candidates are evaluated by their student teaching supervisors during their student teaching experience with a faculty-approved student teaching rating scale	During student teaching	University supervisor, Cooperating teacher	1, 2, 4, 5
ISBE ECS state examination	Candidates take the state exam prior to student teaching. The exam includes three sub tests	Prior to student teaching	Program coordinator	2, 4
Science Investigation	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	During SEEC 532	Course professor, Program Coordinator	3

	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.			
Classroom Assessment: ed TPA	Candidates complete the edTPA performance-based assessment	During student teaching	Program coordinator	1, 3
Classroom Assessment: 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	During SEEC 504	Course professor, Program Coordinator	1, 3, 4
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.	During SEEC 598	Course professor, Program Coordinator	6
Evaluating Curricular Model	Candidates must select one or two curricular models to investigate and evaluate, using a variety of resources, including current research.	During SEEC 500	Course professor, Program Coordinator	6
Dispositions	Faculty assess all candidates on their dispositions using a faculty-approved disposition rating scale	In all classes and clinicals	Course professor	5

### 3. Program-by-Baccalaureate Student Learning Outcomes Matrix

This second section of the assessment plan is optional but **highly encouraged**. It is an alignment of your degree program student learning outcomes with the university baccalaureate student learning outcomes. **This applies only to undergraduate degree programs.**

**Not Applicable as this is a graduate-degree program**

An optional, but highly encouraged curriculum map begins on the next page.

#### 4. Curriculum Map

The third section is a curriculum map (and is also optional but **highly encouraged**). A curriculum map outlines the scope and sequence of courses students will take and aligns them with the degree program student learning outcomes. The curriculum map is an effective tool for not only sequencing the curriculum and instruction, but also for strategically identifying places for formative and summative assessments of student learning outcomes.

Required core courses are listed along the vertical axis of the matrix in chronological order. Degree program student learning outcomes are listed on the horizontal axis. For each course determine: (1) which outcomes are the **primary** focus of the course, and (2) the degree to which the course supports the outcome (i.e., at a beginning (B), developing (D), or proficient (P) level). Place a B, D, or P in the corresponding cell. It would be *unusual* to find all courses supporting all student learning outcomes—instead, concentrate on the primary focus of each course. This will map out the degree to which core courses support the development of your program student learning outcomes. The Four-Year Degree Path provided by the Office of Student Academic Success may be helpful (<http://www.niu.edu/osas/DegreePaths/>). Look for strengths and gaps in the curriculum. Ideally, all outcomes should be supported with coursework through the proficient level. Below is an example of a curriculum map you can modify or model. Note that each course should address at least one student learning outcome, but does NOT have to support all learning outcomes.

Course	Apply understanding of children's characteristics to create learning environments	Create partnerships with families	Observe, document, and use assessment strategies to support children and families	Integrate knowledge to create positive learning experiences	Conduct themselves professionally	Use of Research
SEEC 500	B				B	B
SEEC 504	B		B	B	B	
SEEC 535		D			D	D
EPS 506	D				D	D
SEEC 510					D	D
SEEC 511		B			D	
SESE 523	D		D	D	D	
SEEC 520	D			D	D	
SEEC 531					D	
SEEC 532	D		D	D		
LTRE 537	D				D	
LTIC 501		D			D	
SEEC 582	D		D	D	D	



<b>Course</b>	Apply understanding of children's characteristics to create learning environments	Create partnerships with families	Observe, document, and use assessment strategies to support children and families	Integrate knowledge to create positive learning experiences	Conduct themselves professionally	Use of Research
SEEC 583	D		D	D	D	
SEEC 585A	P	P	P	P	P	
SEEC 585B	P	P	P	P	P	
SEEC 598	P	P	P	P	P	P
ETR 519/520 /525						P

## UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist

### 5. Assessment Methods

This final section of the assessment plan describes the assessment methods your 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.

#### *Explanation of Assessment Methods Table*

The first part of the assessment methods section is an explanation of each assessment method you will be using to measure student learning outcomes. The description needs to be in enough detail to communicate to others what each assessment is, when it will be given, who is responsible for carrying out the assessment, what the desired target level of individual student performance is (to say a single student met the student learning outcome(s)), and what the desired overall target level of performance is for all students (to say the program is meeting the outcome(s)). Individual student-level achievement targets are often preset scores on an exam, scores on a rubric, etc. Program-level targets are often expressed as the percent of students demonstrating they meet individual student-level achievement targets. See the *UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist* for a list of characteristics seen in well-functioning assessment methods. Below is the table you should use to clearly communicate each of the assessment methods to other stakeholders.

**UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist**

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Student teaching rating scale	The student teaching rating scale s used to evaluate candidates four times during a 16-week student teaching experience. The items on the evaluation are very closely aligned to the 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	<p>A candidate will earn at least 75% of the total points on the student teaching rating scale (SLO 1, 2, 4).</p> <p>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)</p>	<p>80% of candidates will earn at least 75% of the total points on the student teaching rating scale (Student Learning Outcome 1, 2, 4).</p> <p>90% of candidates will earn a score of “3 or “4” ” on every item on the professionalism subtest on the student teaching rating scale (Student Learning Outcome 5)</p>	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 (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
Curricular Models Project	Candidates select one or two curricular models/theories to investigate and evaluate	A candidate will meet or exceed meet or exceed three criteria of the assessment.	80% of candidates will meet or exceed three criteria of the assessment.	During the beginning of the program	Course professor and program coordinator	6

**UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist**

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
State 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 test (SLO 2)</p> <p>A candidate will pass the Learning Across the Curriculum subset on the state test (SLO 4)</p>	80% of candidates will pass the Diversity, Collaboration, and Professionalism subtest (Learning Outcome #2) and the Learning Across the Curriculum subset on the state test (Learning Outcome #4)	Toward end of program but before student teaching	Program coordinator	2, 4
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)</p> <p>-Lesson Plan: Using Developmentally Appropriate Practices (SLO 4)</p>	80% of candidates will earn at least 80% of the points on the unit plan project.	During SEEC 504	Course professor and program coordinator,	1, 3, 4

**UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist**

<b>Assessment Method</b>	<b>Explanation</b>					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
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	During SEEC 532 (toward the middle of the program)	Course professor and program coordinator	3

**UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist**

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Program-Level Target <sup>b</sup>	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
edTPA	In 2012, the Illinois legislature decided to require a performance assessment from all candidates for licensure in the state, and the Illinois State Board of Education selected the edTPA from the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) and Pearson as the instrument to be used. To prepare for the addition of the edTPA as a performance assessment, the program began to require it internally in 2013. In 2014 and 2015, the candidates completed the edTPA as part of their student teaching experience, and the edTPA was scored by external evaluators	A candidate will earn sufficient number of points (35) to pass the edTPA	80% of candidates will pass the edTPA	During student teaching	Program coordinator	1, 3
Disposition rating Scale	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” 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	In every class and every clinical	Course professor	5
<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>						

## UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist

### *Assessment Methods-by-Outcomes Matrix*

The assessment methods section concludes with an assessment methods-by-outcomes matrix that maps which assessments will measure a given student learning outcome. Use your curriculum map to identify key places in the curriculum where you could capture already existing assessment data to use as a measure of program student learning outcomes (e.g., major projects/performances, capstone experiences, etc.). Outcomes are listed in the first row, and each assessment method is listed in the first column. It is useful if assessments are listed in chronological order, from the first students will see, to the last. For each assessment method determine: (1) which outcome(s) it **primarily** measures, (2) if it is being used for formative (F) or summative (S) purposes, and (3) whether it is an indirect (I) or direct (D) measure of the student learning outcome. Formative assessments occur earlier in the curriculum and are used to see if students are on track and progressing sufficiently; summative assessments occur at or near the end of the curriculum and are used to see if students have successfully met the program student learning outcomes. Direct assessments are those that compellingly and clearly measure student performance (e.g., exam score, performance assessment, direct observation). Indirect assessments are rough estimates and proxies of student performance (e.g., self-reports of learning, alumni perceptions, etc.). Place an F or S and an I or D in the corresponding cell. This will map out where your degree program is planning to conduct formative and summative assessments using direct and/or indirect methods. Look for opportunities and gaps. *Capitalize on what you are already doing.* See how it aligns with the curriculum map. Below is an example of an assessment methods-by-outcomes matrix you can modify or model. Note that each assessment method does NOT have to measure ALL student learning outcomes. All assessment methods should be explained in the *Explanation of Assessment Methods* table.

<b>Assessment Method</b>	Apply understanding of children’s characteristics to create learning environments	Recognize and integrate ways to create partnerships with families	Observe, document, and use assessment strategies to support children and families	Integrate knowledge to create positive learning experiences for children	Conduct themselves professionally	Use of research
State test		S, I		S, I		
Student teaching rating scale	S, D	S, D		S, D	S, D	
Science Investigation			F, D			
Dispositions rating Scale during early classes					F, D	
Dispositions rating scale during later classes					S, D	
edTPA	S, D		S, D			

### UAP Academic Program Assessment Plan and Status Report Rubric-Checklist

Assessment Method	Apply understanding of children's characteristics to create learning environments	Recognize and integrate ways to create partnerships with families	Observe, document, and use assessment strategies to support children and families	Integrate knowledge to create positive learning experiences for children	Conduct themselves professionally	Use of research
Curricular Models						F, D
Unit Plan	F, I		F, I	F, I		
Masters Project						F, D