

# REVIEW OF THE B.S., B.S.ED. IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 13.1210  
Early Childhood Education and Teaching

## OVERVIEW

The B.S., B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education program at Illinois State University is housed in the School of Teaching and Learning within the College of Education. The School of Teaching and Learning awards degrees in the following programs: Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Middle Level Education. A teacher candidate is able to earn additional endorsements on their professional education license. Early Childhood teacher candidates may earn the following endorsements: bilingual, reading teacher, and/or English as a second language (ESL). Middle level candidates must choose two of the following endorsements for their plans of study: language arts, math, science, social science, or English as a second language (ESL). In addition to the above-mentioned endorsements, Early Childhood candidates may pursue a Special Educator Letter of Approval that is highly desired by Illinois districts, and they may also pursue a minor in bilingual education. The School of Teaching and Learning provides a professional educator sequence for many secondary education programs. Finally, the School offers graduate programs which include: a Master's in Teaching and Learning, a Master's in Reading, and an Ed.D. in Teaching and Learning. The School also offers a post-baccalaureate program for the Library Information Specialist endorsement. The last review of the B.S., B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education program occurred in 2012-2013.

The program is based on the conceptual framework "Realizing the Democratic Ideal" and is closely aligned with the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS) and the standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The professional course-work of the program focuses on preparation for teaching in public school Pre-K through grade 2 classrooms, child care centers, pre-schools, and birth through age 3 early intervention programs.

Completion of the Early Childhood Education Program leads to an initial Illinois Educator License with endorsement for teaching in programs serving children birth to age 7 (grade 2). Upon the successful completion of their academic program, clinical experiences, edTPA (state licensure exam), and student teaching, Early Childhood candidates are recommended by the university to Illinois State Board of Education for licensing. Early Childhood candidates may complete coursework within the program that allows them to secure additional endorsements on the professional educators license (PEL). These additional endorsements are reading, English as a Second Language (ESL), or bilingual. The ESL endorsement option was added since the last university program review cycle due to demand in the field. Early Childhood teacher candidates may also pursue the Special Education Letter of Approval through additional coursework for which there is also a high demand in the field.

### Enrollment and Degrees Conferred, 2012-2019

#### B.A., B.S., B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Enrollments, fall census day	218	222	242	272	319	338	343	331
Degrees conferred, graduating fiscal year	76	63	34	60	62	69	72	86

Table notes:

Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT**

### **Program goals**

The program goals are developed from the National Association for the Education of Young Children standards.

- **Relationships:** The program promotes positive relationships among all children and adults. It encourages each child's sense of individual worth and belonging as part of a community and fosters each child's ability to contribute as a responsible community member. Warm, sensitive, and responsive relationships help children feel secure. The safe and secure environments built by positive relationships help children thrive physically, benefit from learning experiences, and cooperate and get along with others.
- **Curriculum:** The program implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive. A well-planned written curriculum provides a guide for teachers and administrators. It helps them work together and balance different activities and approaches to maximize children's learning and development. The curriculum includes goals for the content that children are learning, planned activities linked to these goals, daily schedules and routines, and materials to be used.
- **Teaching:** The program uses developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child's learning and development in the context of the curriculum goals. Children have different learning styles, needs, capacities, interests, and backgrounds. By recognizing these differences and using instructional approaches that are appropriate for each child, teachers and staff help all children learn.
- **Assessment of Child Progress:** The program is informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to provide information on children's learning and development. These assessments occur within the context of reciprocal communications with families and with sensitivity to the cultural contexts in which children develop. Assessment results benefit children by informing sound decisions, teaching, and program improvement. Assessments help teachers plan appropriately challenging curriculum and tailor instruction that responds to each child's strengths and needs. Assessments can also help teachers identify children with disabilities and ensuring that they receive needed services.
- **Health:** The program promotes the nutrition and health of children and protects children and staff from illness and injury. Children must be healthy and safe in order to learn and grow. Programs must be healthy and safe to support children's healthy development.
- **Staff Competencies, Preparation, and Support:** The program employs and supports a teaching staff with the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and interests. Teachers who have specific preparation, knowledge, and skills in child development and early childhood education are more likely to provide positive interactions, richer language experiences, and quality learning environments.
- **Families:** The program establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child's family to foster children's development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture. To support children's optimal learning and development, programs need to establish relationships with families based on mutual trust and respect, involve families in their children's educational growth, and encourage families to fully participate in the program.
- **Community Relationships:** The program establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children's communities to support the achievement of program goals. Relationships with agencies and institutions in the community can help a program achieve its goals and connect families with resources that support children's healthy development and learning.
- **Physical Environment:** The program has a safe and healthful environment that provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments. The environment includes facilities, equipment, and materials to facilitate child and staff learning and development. An organized, properly equipped, and well-maintained program environment facilitates the learning, comfort, health, and safety of the children and adults who use the program.
- **Leadership and Management:** The program effectively implements policies, procedures, and systems that support stable staff and strong personnel, and fiscal, and program management so all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences. Effective management and operations, knowledgeable leaders, and sensible policies and procedures are essential to building a quality program and maintaining the quality over time.

### **Students learning outcomes**

The student learning outcomes for the program are the National Association for the Education of Young Children standards; the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards; the material included in the state content test for Early Childhood teacher candidates; the constructs of edTPA (the state licensure test); and the Charlotte Danielson Framework.

### **Program curriculum** (2018-2019)

The graduation requirements for the B.S., B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education program consist of 45 credit hours of required major courses, 15 credit hours of education-related course, 12 hours of student teaching, 39-44 credit hours outside of the major (including 39 hours of general education courses), and 9 credit hours of elective courses.

### **Program delivery**

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face or blended face-to-face/online instruction.

The School of Teaching and Learning sponsors short-term cultural immersion experiences through partner institutions in United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Finland, Japan, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Ireland, and Panama.

### **Department faculty** (Fall 2019)

42 tenure track faculty members (12 Professors, 16 Associate Professors, and 14 Assistant Professors)

75 non-tenure track faculty members (12 full-time, 63 part-time, totaling 35.50 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 22 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 40 to 1

### **Specialized accreditation**

All teacher education programs at Illinois State University seek accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (now Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, CAEP). The program was reaccredited by CAEP in November 2019. The next review cycle is scheduled for 2025/2026. In addition, the review of individual programs is a review conducted by the state or electronically through NCATE/CAEP and the specialized professional organizations. The Early Childhood Program review is conducted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the national specialized professional organization for Early Childhood educators. The Early Childhood program received National Recognition and accreditation by NAEYC in 2016. The program is also annually approved by the Illinois State Board of Education.

### **Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand**

*Changes in the manner in which students in the discipline are taught:* Early Childhood program faculty within the School of Teaching and Learning have designed instruction to effectively address culturally responsive teaching, framing mindsets from an asset-based perspective of the learner, and effective instruction for diverse learners. Program faculty have designed instruction related to standards-based grading, strategies for engaging students in learning (as opposed to “classroom management”), reading and writing workshop, new science standards and STEM instruction (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and Common Core standards—all constructs that are now guiding the field.

Program faculty utilize flexible seating, collaborative learning opportunities, embedded technology expectations and requirements, and often forms of standards-based instructional methods for their college coursework.

*Changes in the professions for which students are trained:* The Early Childhood program within the School of Teaching and Learning has met the demand for new hiring practices within the field by being approved as an entitled institution for the Gateways to Opportunity ECE credential Levels 2, 3, 4, and 5. As an entitled institution, Early Childhood teacher candidates at Illinois State University have the opportunity to qualify for state recognized

credentials as they take courses or complete a degree through the School of Teaching and Learning. These progressive credentials allow the candidates to be hired and compensated for varying jobs within the field prior to and after their successful completion of the entire ECE program. This credentialing is completed through the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA).

Early Childhood teacher candidates are now able to secure an endorsement in English as a Second Language instruction since the last cycle of program review. The coursework towards this endorsement was developed to meet the demand in the field for teachers who are able to effectively instruct children for whom English is not their first language. Many districts in Illinois are requiring applicants for teaching positions to have an ESL endorsement on their professional educators' license in order to secure an interview and to potentially be hired to teach in the district. The School has met this demand through the creation of the ESL endorsement within the plans of study for Early Childhood candidates.

*Changes in the demand for program graduates:* Illinois is currently experiencing a teacher shortage. Demand for teachers (particularly in urban and rural areas) has increased while the number of Early Childhood teacher candidates enrolled in most Illinois universities has significantly decreased since the last cycle of program review. Some institutions have seen their Early Childhood programs decreased by as much as 85%. The total number of matriculating Early Childhood candidates in public universities in Illinois has decreased by 40% between 2009 and 2016, per Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) data. The Early Childhood program within the School of Teaching and Learning has seen an increase of 13% between 2009 numbers and 2016 numbers.

Anecdotally, School administration believes the decrease in enrollment in Early Childhood teacher preparation programs is due to a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the following: ongoing negative media publicity related to state workers' pension plans and compensation rates; the increased competition for students from out-of-state institutions; the cost of a higher education degree compared to the starting salaries of novice teachers; and the increased number of families/potential students moving out-of-state.

Graduates of the School of Teaching and Learning remain in high demand for hiring by Illinois districts as well as many districts in the United States due to their strong reputation as conscientious, highly professional educators with a solid knowledge of instructional strategies and theories that support children in today's classrooms. Anecdotally, principals, human resource directors, and school superintendents (among other district personnel) continue to share that they begin their hiring processes with graduates from the School of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University.

*Changes in the demand for the program by prospective students:* Per available PRPA data, prospective Early Childhood educators are choosing the School of Teaching of Learning when they decide to matriculate as teacher candidates. While other Early Childhood programs in the state have seen as much as an 83% decrease in enrollment in their Early Childhood numbers within the last cycle of program review, the School's enrollment for the same program in the same time period has experienced a 13% increase. Since the last cycle of program review, the Illinois State Board of Education has changed the licensure band structure to create "specialists" in the following grade bands: Early Childhood (birth through 2nd grade); Elementary (1-6 grade); and Middle Level (5-8 grade). This has caused candidates to identify their chosen grade range early in the program.

An average of 180 applicants applied as freshman to the Early Childhood program from 2011-2017. An average of 51 applicants enrolled as freshman from 2011-2017. The number of freshman student applicants and transfer student applicants has varied and/or decreased since 2011; however, the percentage of freshman applicants and transfer student applicants actually enrolling has increased between 2011 and 2017, significantly so for transfer students.

### **Responses to previous program review recommendations**

The 2012-2013 program review resulted in five recommendations.

1. *Continue efforts to develop a reading teacher endorsement.* In the process of curriculum redesign required by the Illinois State Board of Education, Early Childhood education faculty developed coursework leading to a reading endorsement on an educator's license. Early Childhood teacher candidates are now able to complete a

- reading endorsement through successful completion of their program of study, the successful completion of two additional courses, and the successful completion of the Reading Teacher Test (#177).
2. *Continue to monitor “sculpted enrollment” for each of the undergraduate teacher programs.* The number of teacher candidates has increased since the last program review (from 253 in 2011 to 343 in 2018). This number is partially related to the sculpting of the elementary candidate enrollment to encourage more students into the Early Childhood and Middle Level programs since the last program review cycle.
  3. *Determine feasibility of collaboration between the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences for development of bilingual discipline related programs.* Faculty within the School of Teaching and Learning have crafted a bilingual elective track that Early Childhood candidates may complete for additional experience in bilingual education that uses existing clinical courses (bilingual classroom placements) and bilingual education courses within the program. Early Childhood teacher candidates may add a bilingual endorsement to their Professional Educators’ License (PEL) through the successful completion of one additional course and the Target Language Proficiency Test.
  4. *Continue to develop and support recruitment initiatives for student candidates and faculty hires.* Since the last cycle of program review, available PPRPA data indicates that the number of minority students within the Early Childhood program has increased from 39 (2014) to 86 (2018). Departmental faculty and administration have taken an active role in participating in all student recruitment events offered by the university, and the department is working with the director of enrollment management and transition services for the College of Education to continue supporting additional efforts for recruiting minority students from local and suburban Future Teacher Clubs and community colleges. When hiring new faculty, Early Childhood program faculty seek candidates who have shown commitment to social justice, cultural diversity, and inclusion in professional, scholarly, and personal contexts. These constructs are included in the hiring language of job descriptions.
  5. *Explore ways to better integrate the current clinical schedule with methods courses and provide students better experiences in diverse clinical settings.* Since the last cycle of program review, the department has maxed clinical course numbers at 16 teacher candidates per clinical course instructor in order to better support Early Childhood teacher candidates in diverse clinical settings. Program faculty have integrated assignments across methods courses and clinical courses to create effective clinical experiences that support the implementation of theory into practice.

### **Major findings**

The Early Childhood education program in the School of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University is an exemplary program for candidates wishing to teach children from birth through second grade. Faculty continue to engage in robust research implementing effective instructional strategies that maximize the learning of their students. Demand for the program remains strong even in the face of decreasing numbers of individuals choosing the field of education.

Early Childhood faculty have evidenced a robust research agenda related to issues of diversity, and they have infused content related to issues of diversity throughout their curricula. The number of minority candidates in the Early Childhood program has increased since the last program review cycle, and program faculty remain committed to supporting students and faculty of color and continue to support the diversity initiatives of the School of Teaching and Learning and the College of Education.

The program’s cycle of assessment and redesigned curricula continue to effectively meet the state’s requirements for licensure. As indicated above, program faculty will be engaging in alignment work with newly developed state competency-based standards during the next cycle of review.

Since the last program review cycle, Early Childhood program faculty have designed a non-licensure route to graduation allowing candidates who could not have formerly graduated from the program to do so. This route to graduation is available to candidates who do not choose the licensure route (with the required testing) or who are not able to pass the required testing for licensure to receive a 4-year degree in Early Childhood education without licensure. This program was created as there is a path to employment as pre-school agency directors with 4-year education degrees.

As a result of the self-study related to the recent CAEP accreditation process, the Early Childhood faculty will be reinstituting an advisory board comprised of state and community leaders, teachers, and other school personnel to

provide ongoing feedback, support, and guidance to program faculty and students. Members of the advisory board have already been identified, and the board will commence in October 2019. This advisory board is scheduled to meet twice during each academic year. Additional involvement will be determined at those meetings.

Recognizing the issues with the newly redesigned content test for Early Childhood teacher candidates, the state board of education has announced that they will be redesigning the content test to better reflect current norms in the field and to address the problematic wording of the questions. However, as a result of the self-study related to program assessment, Early Childhood faculty have begun embedding additional curricular support related to the state content test to support candidates while the re-design is occurring. Working with the undergraduate program coordinator, program faculty have targeted specific content areas and edTPA portfolio rubrics for designing embedded curricula that supports candidates towards licensure.

### **Initiatives and plans**

Early Childhood faculty will work to do the following related to supporting diverse students in the next review cycle (to continue the work already begun and to build upon the work already begun):

- Work to increase the number of students of color who decide to be teachers through the work with Future Teachers Clubs and community colleges and the National Center for Urban Education
- Support students of color more effectively in coursework, clinical experiences, and campus life by:
  - Conducting annual student surveys to measure the department's effectiveness in this endeavor
  - Making this support a key element of program review and assessment
  - Forming a student committee/panel to examine the issues and to offer suggestions for support and ways of moving forward
- Ensure that the infusion of content related to issues of equity and diversity is measurable and comprehensive
- Continue conversations with faculty of color to determine how best to support them and their work
- Continue and increasing targeted support for clinical experiences and faculty research opportunities that relate to issues of diversity and equity
- Award more scholarship monies to diverse student populations
- Provide professional development related to supporting students of color for faculty
- Most importantly, better identify the challenges that students of color experience at Illinois State University and work more intentionally to support them in their coursework, clinical experiences, and campus life

Early Childhood faculty will embed state-created and approved competency-based standards to all program assessments during the next program review cycle.

The program will conduct a targeted campaign in the 2019-2020 academic year (and beyond) to make Early Childhood teacher candidates more aware of the social media accounts of the School of Teaching and Learning and will engage more faculty and alumni in posting and updating the accounts.

Early Childhood faculty will develop the role of the newly formed advisory council in the next cycle of review.

### **PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Review Outcome:** The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.S., B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee commends the program on its efforts to engage in an ongoing review process and prepare a self-study report that included faculty input over a period of three semesters. The committee further recognizes the faculty efforts that have resulted in the creation of advisory councils, the development of additional supports for the Early Childhood Education content test for teacher required for licensure and administered by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the use of survey data from both students and faculty to determine

areas of celebration and concern and to inform program planning and development. The committee commends the program for receiving National Recognition by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in 2016.

The committee also commends the program on its ability to continue to limit enrollments in their courses. This is in keeping with the University's commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities and continues to set the program apart from other options at other institutions.

The committee recognizes that 95% of Illinois State Early Childhood Education graduates scored at the "proficient" or "excellent" levels on their first-year performance evaluations administered by their school districts. These high evaluations are a reflection of the thorough preparation students receive while in the program. The committee also commends the program on the success of their graduates with respect to the increases in employment rates within the industry. Finally, the committee recognizes the efforts of the program to continuously conduct assessments and redesign the curriculum to effectively meet the State's requirements for licensure.

The committee makes note of the numerous opportunities the program provides students to study abroad and commends faculty for remaining committed to providing a variety of these transformative experiences to students. The committee also makes note of the many outside-the-classroom opportunities for their students through participation in registered student organizations, tutoring, and other co-curricular opportunities.

The committee notes that the fluctuation in graduation rate of First-Time in College Early Childhood Education relative to the University-wide average. In Fiscal Year 2016, 65.7% of first-time in college Early Childhood Education students graduated within four years in comparison to the University-wide average rate of 63.9%; in Fiscal Year 2017, 48.7% graduated in four years (compared to 67.3% across the University); and in Fiscal Year 2018, 69.8% graduated in four years (compared to 72.0% across the University). The committee encourages faculty and staff to continue monitoring time to degree during the next program review cycle. The committee also notes that retention rates are at or near University-wide averages over the period of review.

The committee commends the program's efforts to promote a climate of inclusiveness through their varied activities related to diversity, equity, and culturally responsive teaching. The committee applauds the program's multifaceted plans to increase and support both student and faculty diversity and strongly encourages the faculty to pursue the self-identified areas of growth in these areas. The committee notes the leadership role that many of the faculty have taken with the Culturally Responsive Campus Community Conference held at Illinois State University.

### **Follow-up Reports.**

**Assessment Plan.** The Academic Planning Committee recognizes faculty efforts in developing an assessment plan that aligns with the standards of external bodies, such as the NAEYC and ISBE, and in implementing the assessment plan to address these standards and modify the curriculum. However, in its current form, there are no indirect measures of learning in the assessment plan, and the processes for using assessment information to revise the program are not specified. The committee notes that references to both of these components were made throughout the self-study report and asks that the program work with University Assessment Services to refine the existing plan so that it not only continues to align with the standards of external bodies, but also provides meaningful information to guide faculty in their program revisions. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to submit a revised assessment plan to the Office of the Provost by May 1, 2021.

**Comparator and Aspirational Programs.** The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational programs in the self-study report guidelines to provide faculty with opportunities to consider the niche their program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The committee would like the program to revisit the aspirational section of the self-study. Although the faculty did discuss other institutions when describing the creation of a MAT in Early Childhood Education, the same process was not followed in the discussion of the Grow-Your-Own partnership or the creation of additional supports for state licensing exams. In a subsequent follow-up report, the committee asks the faculty to address this section through an expanded analysis of aspirational programs, including aspirational programs nationwide, that could help to develop strategies for addressing priority initiatives faculty have identified for the next review, such as increasing student-faculty research collaborations, expanding professional development opportunities for faculty members, and further increasing faculty scholarship. Studying aspirational programs might also help faculty with the exploration of alternate program delivery methods.

Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to revisit their discussions of comparator and aspirational institutions and to summarize the findings of those discussions in a report submitted to the Office of the Provost by May 1, 2021.

**Recommendations.**

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty and staff of the B.S., B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education program for the opportunity to provide input regarding early childhood educator preparation at Illinois State University through consideration of the submitted self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with Early Childhood Education faculty and staff. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2027, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

**Continue to focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity.** As indicated in the self-study report, the committee encourages the program to pursue its goals related to further developing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

**Complete a review of the curriculum.** The committee encourages faculty to complete a comprehensive review of coursework in the Early Childhood Education program to ensure it appropriately aligns with forthcoming competency-based InTasc standards. As part of the review of curriculum, the committee suggests a consideration of how the program might also focus on incorporating clinical placements in rural areas in order to broaden students' preparation for work in diverse settings.

**Monitor the effectiveness of bilingual elective track.** The committee acknowledges the program's development of a bilingual elective track during the period under review and suggests that in the next cycle faculty monitor student outcomes in order to determine whether the new program is effectively meeting students' needs.

**Continue to monitor enrollment trends.** In light of IBHE's concerns related to statewide teacher shortages, the committee encourages faculty to continue to actively evaluate the program's (and the School of Teaching and Learning's broader "sculpted enrollment") recruitment and retention plans to ensure that Illinois State University is meeting the needs of both the program and the State are met.

**Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan.** The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.