

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 17, 2021

TO: James Fields, Chair, State Board of Education and Early Development  
Members, State Board of Education and Early Development

CC: Dr. Michael Johnson, Commissioner of Education Alaska  
Denise Runge, Provost, UAA

FROM: Claudia S Dybdahl, Interim Director, UAA School of Education  
Hilary Seitz, Professor, UAA School of Education

RE: Proposal for a BA in Early Childhood Education

The UAA School of Education is proposing a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education that leads to PreK-3<sup>rd</sup>, Alaska State teacher licensure. UAA is currently in the process of seeking Board of Regents approval for this degree. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, the UA Academic Council approved the proposal and next steps will be the Board of Regents Academic Subcommittee scheduled for May27-28 and the full Board of Regents scheduled for June 3-4.

UAA is bringing this proposal to the State Board of Education to seek the Board's approval to recommend program completers for initial Alaska teacher licensure PreK-3<sup>rd</sup>, while simultaneously pursuing CAEP accreditation for initial licensure programs.

### Program Description

The Bachelor of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education (BAEC), with initial teacher licensure, prepares students to teach and/or work with young children, including infants, toddlers and school-aged students up to third grade (birth-age 8). The program provides a solid foundation in child development theory, as well as child and family success. The program curriculum is holistic in that it addresses health, social, physical environment and community relationships as well as cognitive development. The program has a strong focus on early literacy development and culturally response teaching so that students are prepared to interact appropriately with the many cultural groups in Alaska and to support State efforts to improve literacy proficiency in the early grades. The program requires multiple field experiences in settings with young children, including both Head Start and public schools. Students are taught using innovative strategies, such as STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) that are in keeping with current best practices. The early literacy focus prepares students to work with linguistically and culturally diverse children and families in the development of

reading and writing and incorporates evidence-based teaching strategies. In contrast to other licensure programs in the State, the BA in Early Childhood is unique in that 100% of the coursework and 100% of the field placements focus on children from birth-age 8. In contrast, an elementary education teacher preparation program that prepares teachers for grades K-8 must also include content that addresses grades 4 – 8. Students will be able to complete the program 100% via distance, although some courses will be offered face-to-face as well. See the “Early Childhood Education Fact Sheet” document for additional information.

### **Pathways**

The BAEC curriculum aligns seamlessly with current Early Childhood offerings at the University of Alaska Anchorage. The scope of the curriculum is strategically designed to scaffold students’ learning and professional dispositions as they engage in studies that may begin with the Occupational Endorsement Certificate in Infant and Toddler Development (18 credits), extend to the Associate of Applied Sciences in Early Childhood Development (60 credits), and culminate with the Bachelor’s of Arts degree (120 credits). Courses from each pathway fold into the next pathway and thus students are provided with a strong incentive to continue to advance. The curricula are based on the standards for best practices from the National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC), CAEP and also meet the Alaska State Early Childhood Competencies. The AAS in Early Childhood (60 credits) is a nationally accredited program through NAEYC. See the “Four-Year Plan for BAEC at UAA” document for additional information

### **Plan for National Accreditation**

The School of Education at UAA will seek both NAEYC and CAEP initial licensure accreditation for its BAEC program.

In February of 2020, NAEYC changed its relationship with CAEP. Specifically, it discontinued its Specialized Professional Accreditor (SPA) Program Review with national recognition as part of the CAEP process. Shortly thereafter, NAEYC applied for authority from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to become a national accreditor for baccalaureate initial licensure teacher education programs in Early Childhood Education. Following CHEA’s extensive review process, NAEYC was granted this authority on May 3, 2021 (see “CHEA Decision Summary” document). NAEYC is an internationally recognized association for early childhood education and meeting its standards is assurance that a program is in keeping with best practice and meets the rigorous expectations of the Association for evidence and documentation. The EC faculty is familiar with NAEYC standards and processes as the current AAS program is nationally accredited by NAEYC. It is our understanding that only one cycle of data is required by NAEYC for initial accreditation, which provides a shorter pathway (about three years) to national

accreditation. Since the BAEC is a 2 + 2 program, students will enter as juniors as soon as the program is initiated. The first cycle of graduates would thus be 4 semesters from program initiation.

**NAEYC Three-Year Projected Timeline for National Accreditation**

Semester 1	Semester 2 (Year 1)	Semester 3	Semester 4 (Year 2)	Semester 5	Semester 6 (Year 3)
Admit Students Junior Year	Students Complete Junior Year	Students Begin Senior Year	Students Complete Senior Year	Complete and Submit Self-Study	NAEYC Site Visit
<b>Step 1: Apply for NAEYC Accreditation</b>		<b>Step 2: The Self-Study Phase</b>		<b>Step 3: Accreditation Candidacy Phase</b>	

As required by the State of Alaska and aspired to by the School of Education, UAA will simultaneously pursue CAEP accreditation. The NAEYC and CAEP standards have been aligned and a crosswalk has been completed see “BA in ECE with Licensure Standards Alignment Framework”. CAEP requires three cycles of data. As there will be students ready to begin their junior year as soon as the program is scheduled, it will take only two years to obtain the first cycle of data. Following that time, while it is possible that students could complete each semester (December and May), past trends indicate that students are more likely to be part-time and that it will take four full academic years to collect three cycles of data.

**CAEP Five-Year Projected Timeline for National Accreditation**

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Admit Students Junior Year	Complete Senior Year			
	Admit Students Junior Year	Second cycle of program completers		
	First cycle of program completers	Admit Students Junior Year	Third cycle of program completers	
<b>Apply for CAEP Accreditation</b>		<b>Begin Self-Study</b>	<b>Continue self-study</b>	<b>Complete and Submit Self-study (Semester 1)</b>
				<b>CAEP Site Visit (Semester 2)</b>

## Quality Assurance While Seeking National Accreditation

The School of Education at UAA will assure quality while seeking national accreditation by taking the following steps.

- A robust quality assurance system (QAS) is anchored by the [national edTPA assessment](#), " ... a performance-based assessment process designed by educators to answer the essential question of whether new teachers are ready for the job"
- Other elements of the QAS include two national assessments used by the University of Alaska Southeast - the NExT and the STOT. NExT ([Network for Excellence in Teaching](#)) is administered at entry, exit and transition to teaching (first year following program completion). NExT also has an employer survey component that will be distributed annually. The STOT ([Skills of Teaching Observations Tool](#)) is an instrument for assessing the performance of candidates during student teaching. Both the NExT and the STOT are recognized by CAEP as valid and reliable.
- UAA has also adopted the [Educator Disposition Assessment by Watermark](#) (EDA), which was designed to specifically align with CAEP and the InTasc standards that are embedded in CAEP.
- UAA subscribed to VIA by Watermark for its Advanced Programs and this platform will be available for the ECE initial licensure program as well. The UAA School of Education has trained a VIA administrator who serves the Advanced Programs and who will serve the EC program.
- The UAA School of Education developed a recruitment plan in 2019. This plan met CAEP standards for Advanced Programs (virtual site visit feedback) and will be expanded to include the BA in EC.
- UAA will maintain the NAEYC national accreditation status of its AAS degree program to assure that the first 60 credits of the 120 total credits do fall under a national accreditation umbrella.
- UAA will pay for two-credits of professional development (500-level) tuition for a PACE (Professional Development and Continuing Education) course for graduates who are employed as PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> teachers. This course is designed for new teachers and provides support for the first year induction period.
- Employers of our graduates will be surveyed using the NExT instrument and appropriate follow up/adjustments will be undertaken.

- The UAA School of Education will report to the State Board of Education on a regular basis as requested by the Board.

Please see the document entitled “BA EC Quality Assurance System” for additional information, relevant crosswalks of standards and how assessments align with standards.

### **Meeting Alaska’s Education Challenge**

The BA in ECE addresses Alaska’s educational challenges in multiple ways.

1. There is a critical need in the State for students to read at grade level by the end of grade 3. The BA in EC is a teacher preparation program that prepares teachers who specialize in early literacy development. In this program there are two courses devoted to early reading development, the edTPA portfolio assessment focuses on the development of literacy and all students teach in PreK-3rd classrooms.
2. The BA in ECE Pathway increases opportunities for careers in Early Childhood. The field of Early Childhood is recognized as one of Alaska’s workforce needs.
3. The EC program at UAA is one of the most diverse programs at UAA. In 2019 Institutional Research data showed that 57% of the Early Childhood AAS degree graduates were non-white. With a 2 + 2 model, these AAS students will have the opportunity to continue their education and earn their teaching license.
4. Research from the Regional Educational Laboratory, Northwest in 2019, *Educator Retention and Turnover under the Midnight Sun, Examining trends and relationships in teacher, principal and superintendent movement in Alaska*, found that teachers who are trained in Alaska remain in Alaska longer than those who have been trained outside Alaska. There is no teacher preparation program in Alaska currently that leads to an initial teacher license, PreK-3<sup>rd</sup>.
5. Connecting with families and communities are themes that run through the BA in EC. Assignments for students typically include participation in Creative Activities Fairs, family engagement events and community events. Written assignments include the development of a plan to work with communities. The EC Program at Kenai College is currently working with a tribal representative to support a cohort of 10 tribal members who are enrolled in UAA’s EC AAS program. National standards for Early Childhood programs require demonstration of ways that students are prepared to connect to families and communities.

We are pleased to bring this proposal to you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you to bring it to fruition.

## Documents

1. Early Childhood Education Fact Sheet
2. 4-Year Plan for BAEC at UAA
3. CHEA Decision Summary
4. BA ECE with Licensure Standards Alignment Framework
5. BA EC Quality Assurance Evidence System