**B. New Program for Licensure Endorsement**

*Early Childhood Special Education Endorsement*

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**Needs Summary**

***Statement of Purpose***

The purpose of this program is to prepare eligible candidates to complete the coursework towards an endorsement in Early Childhood Pre-K Special Education (ECSE). The goal of the ECSE endorsement is to prepare currently licensed teachers in Early Childhood Pre-K, Early Childhood P-4, or Elementary Education K-6 to support children with diverse needs in pre-kindergarten (ages 3-5) classroom settings. The ECSE endorsement will prepare well qualified preschool special educators with the requisite knowledge of child development, core content areas, effective environments, policies, pedagogies, and inclusive practices.

***Program Need/Rationale***

Early childhood learning experiences critically shape outcomes of young children with and at risk for disabilities and shape trajectories for future learning. Unfortunately, Arkansas’ preschool data shows significant gaps in the experiences of young children across the state. The state’s LEA Annual Reports for 2019-2020 show that the most resourced school districts underperform on expectations for child find, early childhood transition of children referred by Part C, rates of parent involvement, and early childhood outcomes across indicator 7. Further, expulsion and suspension rates in early childhood settings across the United States, including Arkansas, evidence considerable concern for overrepresentation based on race/ethnicity/national origin and gender. The United States Department of Health and Human Services in a *Policy Statement* *on Exclusion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings* (2020), points to critical preparation of educators in competencies and evidence-based practices that prevent exclusion, suspension, and other exclusionary discipline practices. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2016 report on *Spotlighting Progress in Policy and Supports*, highlights Arkansas’ efforts in addressing high exclusion and suspension rates, especially in certain groups of Arkansans and the Arkansas Department of Human Services 2022 update *BehaviorHelp: Supporting Teachers So Children Can Reach Their Potential!* follows up on this progress. The addition of the ECSE endorsement will certainly continue to expand the impact of other statewide efforts to address this critical concern.

According to the Arkansas Department Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Education is a critical shortage area in teacher licensure. Despite this critical need, there are currently too few licensed special educators or those pursing initial licensure in special education to fill teaching positions across Arkansas. Further, the Department states “Public school districts in Arkansas have an obligation to provide the personnel and resources necessary to effectively provide a Free Appropriate Public Education for students three to five years of age with disabilities in each student’s least restrictive environment.  This obligation includes having an adequate number of highly qualified educators who are skilled in providing the supports students need to progress in the general education curriculum.”

This endorsement will expand the pathways for educators wishing to teach in early childhood contexts to gain the competencies and skills to meet the diverse academic, social, and behavioral needs of students – especially those young students with disabilities and at-risk for developmental delays. Given the Arkansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s initiative to enhance inclusive practices across learning contexts, it is critical to build teacher knowledge and readiness for promoting learning and achievement for all students. Providing more Arkansas teachers with the competencies in Early Childhood Special Education standards and use of evidence-based practices across early childhood contexts will impact the learning trajectories of young children with and at risk for disabilities and expand the state’s teacher pool.

**Institutional Approval**

***Institutional Approval Process***

The institutional approval process for EPP programs at the University of Arkansas is described well here: <https://sites.google.com/view/education-program-changes/university-protocols?authuser=1>. When new programs of study are proposed for educator preparation the following process is utilized in alignment with the following Academic Policy 1622.20 (<https://provost.uark.edu/policies/162220.php>)

“Following initial approval, the online form and associated documents will be submitted to the next approval level and proceed through the college approval process until the proposal reaches the office of the dean for college or school approval, or all participating deans, if more than one school or college is involved.

Proposals for all program changes proceed from college or school to the Graduate School, which will forward the proposals to the University Course and Programs Committee for review. For actions to be reviewed by the University Course and Programs Committee in a given month, the proposal must be at the University Course and Programs Committee level by the first Friday of that month.

Actions involving curricula of undergraduate or professional programs (including law) must be reviewed by the University Course and Programs Committee and, for core courses, by the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) prior to action by the Faculty Senate. Actions involving changes to graduate programs must be reviewed by the University Course and Programs Committee prior to action by the Graduate Council and Faculty Senate.

Actions involving only administrative or organizational changes that have no impact on degree requirements, such as changing a name or code, eliminating or creating departments, moving degree programs from one unit to another, or changing a center or non-academic unit are forwarded following unit review, for information only (no vote) to the initiating college faculty program approval process, the University Course and Programs Committee, the Graduate Council (if appropriate) and the Faculty Senate, before being sent to the provost for review and approval by the chancellor and other entities as required and for implementation. A separate form, the [Miscellaneous Request Form](https://nextcatalog.uark.edu/miscadmin/), is used for these requests.

Certain program changes must be approved by or reported to the Board of Trustees and the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (see [Board Policy 620.1](https://www.uasys.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2018/04/620.1-Academic-Programs-Addition-Deletion-etc.pdf)and the ADHE Criteria document identified on page one for further details). Among them are the initiation of new programs and substantive program changes including offering a program at an additional (off-campus) site. Many other changes must be reported (such as name changes and changes in organizational structure) and may be reviewed for action. All program change proposals are reviewed following campus approval to determine which are to be sent forward. All campus actions requiring action by either board or notification to either board will be handled by the provost, on behalf of the chancellor. Such actions will be reported by letter to the president for inclusion as agenda items for one or both boards. All materials for either board must be submitted to the office of the provost in electronic format. Items will not be submitted to ADHE for review until they have been approved by the Faculty Senate. Given that agenda items must be submitted no later than 120 days prior to the target AHECB meeting, Faculty Senate approval must be received at least four months in advance of that date.

Following any required approvals and notifications off campus, notification of approval is made by the provost to the originating dean (including graduate dean as appropriate), the registrar’s office, the Office of Institutional Research, and the catalog editor for the action to be implemented and recorded and entered in the program inventory file, catalog copy, and other official records. For programs requiring no off-campus approval, Faculty Senate approval will be considered notification to the campus that the program change will be implemented effective with the academic year in which the change is included in the catalog or the proposed effective date, if different, unless other notification is provided by the provost.”

***Approval Process and Timeline***

The ECSE Endorsement applications for approval at the university level and through the Arkansas Department of Education are being submitted simultaneously with the goal for all to be approved for delivery by January 2023. Given the immediate need for this application given its links to the Early Childhood Special Education Academy. The University Teacher Education Review Board will review our application immediately, provide feedback, and upon acceptance move promptly to the Provost for approval and submission to the Department for Elementary and Secondary Education. Three of the courses within the currently proposed plan have been developed and will require revision to a specific Early Childhood Special Education section. Only one course will be new to the program. Given the close alignment of learning objectives across Division on Early Childhood and the Council for Exceptional Children these challenges will not necessitate new courses being added and approved. That course *Introduction to Early Childhood Special Education* will require approval to be added to the course catalog starting Fall 2023. We plan to offered that course as a masters level seminar while the we complete the process to approve the addition of the course to the course catalog in the Special Education program’s offering. Once that course has been approved, we will contact DESE with new course number and title. Thus, we intend to be prepared to offer the four courses leading to this endorsement starting January 2023.

**Program Description**

***Program Overview***

This graduate-level program is designed to prepare licensed Arkansas teachers for Early Childhood Special Education serving children with disabilities 3-5 years of age.  Eligible candidates for the program must be currently licensed in Early Childhood Pre-K, Early Childhood P-4, or Elementary Education K-6.  Requirements include the completion, B or higher in all courses, of a 4-course sequence that will take one year to complete. Their endorsement will reflect the level of their being highly qualified in Early Childhood Special Education.

***Program of Study***

The Early Childhood Pre-K Special Education endorsement coursework will contain the core concepts of individualized and inclusive education at the preschool level. Content will include essential policies and procedures, core concepts in child development, classroom guidance and family relationships, creating effective learning environments for preschoolers with a variety of support needs, and assessment and intervention strategies for inclusive preschool education. Courses in the ECSE endorsement will utilize the expertise of the Birth-Kindergarten / SPED Integrated Teacher Licensure Program faculty, as well as experts from EI/ECSE professions, the university, and the state.

Students completing this program will add the Early Childhood Pre-K Special education endorsement to their already existing license in Early Childhood PreK, Early Childhood P-4, or Elementary Education K-6. The four courses are arranged in a way that students will be able to start coursework in the Spring session and graduate with the endorsement at the completion of the Fall session. This allows students to work concurrently while completing coursework to identify opportunities and apply content in an applied setting.

***Required Coursework***

The endorsement will consist of four graduate level courses (12 credit hours) aligned with competencies established for ECSE Pre-K endorsement. ([ECSE Pre-K Competencies](file:///C:\Users\suzannekucharczyk\Library\Application%20Support\Box\Box%20Edit\Documents\1015215833279\(https:\dese.ade.arkansas.gov\Files\PreK_Special_Education_Endorsement_Competencies_Final.docx_20220323181851.pdf))). The proposed courses for the endorsement are as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course** | **Semester Offered** | **Core Competency Focus** |
| **\*SPED 599V** Special Topics: Introduction to Early Childhood Special Education  *\*New course number and title will undergo review by University for Fall 2023 coursework and we will inform DESE of these changes as soon as the approval is final.* | Spring | History and Current State of ECSE  Child Development and Learning  Survey of Exceptionalities |
| **SPED 5733** Inclusive Practices for Diverse Populations – ECSE Section | Summer | Review of all *Recommended Practices*  Review across all competencies  Apply understanding of curricular knowledge |
| **SPED 5783** Family and Professional Partnerships – ECSE Section | Fall | Collaboration with team (e.g., families, paraprofessionals, general educators, students)  Learning goal development |
| **SPED 5873** Assessment and Programming for Students with Disabilities – ECSE Section | Fall | Assessment  Progress Monitoring  Using Multiple Sources |

See Appendix A for individual course syllabi.

***Delivery Method***

The endorsement will leverage the University of Arkansas Global Campus supports to deliver engaging online courses that foster educator skill development of recommended practices and application through critical reflection. By utilizing distance learning technologies, the endorsement will be well positioned to recruit candidates from small, rural districts across Arkansas. By emphasizing recruitment in rural regions this endorsement will develop educator readiness in particularly high need areas. The Special Education program has developed strong competencies across faculty in the use of innovative technologies, such as VoiceThread and VOSAIC, to support engaged, collaborative learning of our students.

***Curriculum Matrix***

Each course includes objectives that align with appropriate ADE Educator Competencies, NAEYC and CEC standards, DEC recommended practices, Praxis Content topics, and TESS frameworks.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **SPED 599V**  **Intro to ECSE** | **SPED 5733**  **Inclusive Practices** | **SPED 5783 Family and Professional Partnerships** | **SPED 5873 Assessment and Programming** |
| **1. Child Development and Early Learning** |  |  |  |  |
| 1.1 | X |  |  |  |
| 1.2 | X | X | X | X |
| 1.3 | X | X | X | X |
| 1.4 | X | X |  | X |
| **2. Partnering with Families** |  |  |  |  |
| 2.1 |  |  | X |  |
| 2.2 | X |  | X |  |
| 2.3 |  |  | X |  |
| **3. Collaboration and Teaming** |  |  |  |  |
| 3.1 | X | X | X | X |
| 3.2 | X | X | X | X |
| 3.3 | X |  | X | X |
| **4. Assessment Process** |  |  |  |  |
| 4.1 |  |  | X | X |
| 4.2 |  |  | X | X |
| 4.3 | X |  | X | X |
| 4.4 | X | X | X | X |
| 4.5 | X |  | X |  |
| 4.6 |  |  | X |  |
| **5. Application of Curriculum Frameworks in the Planning of Meaningful Learning Experience** |  |  |  |  |
| 5.1 | X | X | X | X |
| 5.2 | X | X |  | X |
| **6. Using Responsive and Reciprocal Interactions, Interventions, and Instruction** |  |  |  |  |
| 6.1 |  | X | X |  |
| 6.2 | X | X | X | X |
| 6.3 | X | X |  | X |
| 6.4 |  | X |  |  |
| 6.5 |  | X |  |  |
| 6.6 | X | X |  | X |
| 6.7 | X | X | X | X |
| **7. Professionalism and Ethical Practices** |  |  |  |  |
| 7.1 | X |  |  |  |
| 7.2 | X | X |  | X |
| 7.3 | X | X | X | X |
| 7.4 | X |  |  |  |
| **7. Early Interventionist/Early Childhood Special Education Field Experience** |  |  |  |  |
| 8.1 |  |  |  | X |
| 8.2 | X |  |  |  |
| **Science of Reading – Awareness Level** |  |  |  |  |
| 1.1 |  | X |  |  |
| 1.2 |  | X |  |  |
| 1.3 |  | X |  |  |
| **TESS Domains** |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | X | X |  | X |
| 2 | X | X |  | X |
| 3 |  | X |  | X |
| 4 |  | X | X | X |

***Assessment & Evaluation***

Each course includes objectives that align with appropriate ADE Educator Competencies, NAEYC and CEC standards, DEC recommended practices, Praxis Content areas, and the TESS framework. Endorsement candidate skills will be assessed continuously through assignments and projects embedded in competency aligned courses. In addition to ongoing assessment, all candidates will be assessed using formal assessments including the Educator Disposition Assessment, teacher self-efficacy scale, and TESS aligned observation and evaluation (Appendix B). The disposition and efficacy assessments will be completed at the initiation and completion of the program. Data from these assessments will be used to provide supports for candidates to promote development in areas identified for growth. A TESS aligned observation and evaluation will be completed in the final course of the endorsement program. The instructor in SPED 5873 will observe each student in the ECSE endorsement, evaluate all domains of an adapted TESS rubric (Appendix B), and provide individual feedback. Upon the completion of the coursework, students will be required to pass the Praxis 5692 exam to receive the ECSE endorsement. Data from all formal assessments will be used to evaluate efficacy of ECSE endorsement program and changes to course objectives, content, and assignments will be adjusted.

***Field Experience***

A total of 45 field experience hours are embedded in the ECSE endorsement. Field experience is embedded in SPED 5873 – Assessment and Programming for Students with Disabilities – Early Childhood Special Education course. Across 25 hours, students will be expected to observe and engage in the planning for and use of various assessments appropriate to specific young children in early childhood settings. Another 20 hours of field experiences are embedded in the Introduction to Early Childhood Special Education Course during which students will observe in early childhood settings, conduct reflections of observations of IEP/IFSP meetings, and development and implementation of lessons. Additional opportunities will be a part of the other two courses, including an opportunity to interview a family of a young child with a disability and reflect on family systems and structures in relationship to the systems within which they receive or seek services. Faculty will utilize distance learning technologies, such as VOSAIC, to provide direct feedback on student application of competencies in the field.

**Program Partnerships**

Both the broader EPP and the specific Special Education program at the University of Arkansas’ have strong ties to partners locally, across the state, and nationally. These partners will be instrumental in the success of this endorsement and that of the students completing. Given the focus of the endorsement of recruitment and access to rural communities across Arkansas, the Special Education programs contacts across the state including district partners from small, rural communities. The special education program has ongoing partnerships in K-12 settings across Arkansas. Our Bachelor of Special Education program relies on partnerships across Northwest Arkansas. Our graduate non-degree endorsement and degree programs in special education are successful because of strong partnerships across the state. In the last year, we have provided support to mentor teachers, schools, and students engaging in fieldwork and internships in Van Buren, Forest Park, Alma, Cabot, Siloam Springs, Helena-West Helena, Springdale and others. Given the broader needs of Arkansas, we emphasize relationships with the small, rural districts through partnerships with district and school leaders and mentors. See letter of support from Ms. Felicia Pasley – special education director for the small, rural community districts in Northwest Arkansas for our resource teacher academy. Currently, our faculty work closely with early childhood settings such as Jean Tyson Child Development Center, the Sunshine School, Sageway Behavioral Health, and run our own clinical setting for children 3-5 with autism who will be joining the Farmington Cooperative. As we shift to provide this new endorsement in early childhood special education we will leverage current relationships and form new ones across the state in support of our students.

Further we have strong partnerships across the state and nationally that we will rely on to support course development and our students’ success. Dr. Caldwell and Ms. Lange, who will be integral to the design of this endorsement, have strong ties to the early childhood field, state and national initiatives, and implementation of evidence-based practices across communities in Arkansas and beyond. Ms. Lange serves as moderator to the Governor appointed council to advise and assist the State IDEA Part C, Early Intervention program. She is also the Division on Early Childhood (DEC) and Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) aRPy Ambassador for the promotion and implementation of the DEC Recommended Practices for young children with disabilities or who are at risk for developmental delays. These roles, expertise, and understanding of the needs of the state will help our program identify program partners in support of student fieldwork and other learning experiences. Dr. Caldwell’s role in service provision through the Arkansas Autism Program will similarly provide pathways to support student preparation to apply competencies in early childhood contexts. This endorsement program, given its links to the Early Childhood Education Endorsement and program at the University of Arkansas will take advantage of the collaboration between Dr. Herold and the Special Education program to ensure that the content follows well for students who wish to complete their ECSP Endorsement after completing the Early Childhood Endorsement led by Dr. Herold.

**Admission Requirements**

The following requirements are necessary to be considered for admission to the program.

* Earned bachelor’s from an accrediting institution with a GPA of 3.0 or above.
* Current licensure in Early Childhood PreK, Early Childhood P-4, or Elementary Education K-6.
* Application to the University of Arkansas Graduate school
* Official transcripts from all coursework, undergraduate and graduate

**Retention Procedures**

Candidates are required to maintain a B or higher for each course and a 3.0 GPA overall to continue in the endorsement program. Candidates are supported through the University’s Office of Teacher Education which communicates requirements for completion of endorsement, including support for passing of appropriate PRAXIS exam (5692). Despite being in a non-degree program candidates have access to a faculty member who serves as advisor and provides periodic check-ins as needed and as initiated by the student. Since the program is delivered via distance, the use of streaming media, teleconferencing and other forms of student-to-student and student-to-professor interaction will be utilized to assist the student with being successful in the program.

Students may be dismissed from the program if: a) they do not make adequate academic progress; b) engage in academic or research misconduct; or c) engage in illegal, fraudulent, or unethical behavior as defined in the Code of Student Life.

Additionally, The University of Arkansas’ teacher preparation programs adhere to the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession as established by the National Education Association as described in [NEA Code of Ethics](https://www.nea.org/resource-library/code-ethics-educators), [Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Code of Ethics](https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/educator-effectiveness/plsb-professional-ethicsdiscipline/code-of-ethics-for-arkansas-educators), as well as discipline specific codes of ethics and standards found in program handbooks. Violation of these principles may result in probation, suspension, or dismissal of the internship as described:

Any incident of ethical misconduct or concern will be documented by the faculty member(s), discussed directly with the student and their mentor, and referred to the program’s coordinator or supervising faculty. It may also be reported to the Teacher Candidate Professional Review Committee.

The Teacher Candidate Professional Review Committee evaluates the concerns and recommends a course of action, which may range from a zero score on the academic and/or internship work, a failing grade for the course, probation, up to dismissal from a teacher education program.

Any candidate may be suspended by a Teacher Education Program Coordinator for extreme, unforeseen circumstances such as endangerment of students or others, disruption of schools or classes, felonious behaviors, or ethical violations (i.e. Arkansas Code of Ethics, Code of Student Life). Such suspensions will be referred to the Teacher Candidate Professional Review Committee for review and may become permanent.

The Program Coordinator, in consultation with the Teacher Education Professional Review Committee and the Graduate School, has the authority and responsibility to dismiss a student from the teacher education program for unethical or unprofessional behavior and/or not recommend the student for licensure.

More detailed guidelines about the policies, supports, and other requirements are provided in the program’s handbook, as well as on the [Office of Teacher Education website](https://teacher-education.uark.edu/support/index.php).

Students who have been dismissed by the program on the basis of unethical or unprofessional conduct may appeal the decision following the procedures outlined under the [Unethical and Unprofessional Conduct policy contained in the Graduate Catalog of Studies](http://catalog.uark.edu/graduatecatalog/objectivesandregulations/#grievanceprocedurestext).

**Exit Requirements**

ECSE endorsement candidates will be considered a program completer after they have completed all course requirements and earned a passing grade in all four courses. Upon completion of all required coursework and successful passing of the Praxis examination (5692), students will be eligible to apply for the ECSE Pre-K endorsement through Dr. Myra Haulmark’s in the Office of Teacher Education

**Candidate Follow-Up Procedures**

Following completion of the program, periodic follow up on candidate progress will be conducted as part of annual reviews of the wider EPP and specific special education program outcomes. In conjunction with the graduate school, alumni surveys, and other data regarding placement and program effectiveness at preparing teachers for early childhood special education in preschool settings. The resultant survey response analysis will be utilized in the process of program revision and addressing gaps in preparation.

**Program Faculty**

All faculty and instructors for the ECSE Endorsement at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville must have minimum of a Doctorate in Special Education or equivalent expertise in core content of the course they are teaching. With this requirement, the program will comply with the Academic Coordinating Commission guideline that individuals providing instruction at the university level are to possess one degree higher than the students enrolled. Highly experienced and trained individuals will be sought to participate in the academy. Proposed faculty and instructors include Drs. Nicolette Caldwell and Suzanne Kucharczyk, Karen Lange Ed.S., and consultation from Dr. Laura Herold. See Appendix C for Curricula Vitae.

Proposed Course faculty/instructors:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course** | **Semester Typically Offered** | **Instructor** |
| **SPED 599V** Special Topics: Introduction to Early Childhood Special Education | Spring | Nicolette Caldwell, Ph.D. |
| **SPED 5733** Inclusive Practices for Diverse Populations | Summer | Nicolette Caldwell, Ph.D. |
| **SPED 5783** Family and Professional Partnerships | Fall | Karen Lange, Ed.S.- doctoral student / Suzanne Kucharczyk, Ed.D. |
| **SPED 5873** Assessment and Programming for Students with Disabilities | Fall | Nicolette Caldwell, Ph.D. |

**Institutional Resources**

# The coursework for this endorsement utilizes three of four courses already in existence in the Special Education program and approved for online delivery. Courses are taught by full time staff and faculty at the university and all content is delivered online virtually. The additional course as described under Institutional Approval Timeline is in the process of being designed and reviewed across the University’s approval processes. Global Campus’ support will be utilized to support the instructor for the course in their design to ensure the course meets Quality Matters standards. Since this support is already available to the program as new courses are developed, no additional resources will be required for the program.