

BA in Elementary Teacher Education Program
UAF School of Education
Summary Statement of Program Changes Made Based on Data Analysis
Summary Statements for Academic Year 2011-2012

***NOTE:** In early September, our Department of Elementary Teacher Education submitted a comprehensive report on both the BA in Elementary Education Degree and the Post-Baccalaureate Licensure Program to the national professional group that reviews the quality of teacher education programs in the United States—the Association of Childhood Education International (ACEI). This is an in-depth report, prepared every five years, in which we are required to demonstrate how well our students and our programs meet the sixteen ACEI standards. All of the criteria assessed in our Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan are comprehensively addressed in our 60 page report to ACEI. The final section of the ACEI report requires that we describe how we use our assessment results to improve the performance of our students and strengthen our programs. Since this report was recently prepared and since it thoroughly addresses all of the components of our Student Outcomes Assessment Plan, we are submitting this section of our ACEI report as our Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan Narrative this year. The full elementary faculty is frequently and meaningfully involved in examining and reflecting upon our candidate and program data. The ACEI report was prepared by Dr. Amy Vinlove.*

The ACEI program review process allows the faculty in the University of Alaska Fairbanks elementary certification programs to critically examine our program requirements as well as our candidates' progress through our programs. The process of collecting, aggregating and examining data on our program's capacity to prepare new teachers to meet the standards of the Association for Childhood Education International allows us to see where our strengths lie and where we have areas that require closer examination. Although our programs were nationally recognized in the last accreditation cycle, we recognize and embrace the idea of continuous improvement and continue to critically examine all aspects of our program on a regular basis. This section will discuss program and candidate performance relative to content knowledge, professional and pedagogical skills, knowledge and dispositions, and candidate impact on student learning, and also present some of the challenges our program has encountered with data collection and analysis as well as plans we have for these areas in the future.

One challenge with data collection and analysis to mention up front is the small numbers associated with each of our cohorts when the data is disaggregated by on- and off-campus cohorts and by undergraduate (BAE) candidates and post-baccalaureate (licensure only) candidates (presented in a separate report). During the internship year, our interns work together in two cohorts: one "on-campus" group of undergraduate seniors and post-bac students completing all of their internship requirements and fieldwork in Fairbanks (usually approximately 25 students), and one "off-campus" group of undergraduate seniors and post-bac students completing all of their internship requirements and fieldwork in communities anywhere from 60 to 1300 miles from Fairbanks (usually between 6-12 students). Disaggregating these already small numbers gives us data that sometimes has n numbers as small as 3 or 5. While we examine these numbers closely, we also recognize that we need to look at data over time (i.e. several years of cohorts clumped together) in order to see patterns that might suggest a need for program changes. This is a particular issue with the "off-campus" cohorts, as those are the groups with the smallest numbers. For this reason some of our data analysis looks at differences between our on- and off-campus cohorts, rather than differences between cohort years over the three years represented in this report.

A second aspect of data collection that impacts the data presented in our report is that interns are required to achieve a rating of "target" or "acceptable" in all internship year critical assessments in order to successfully complete the internship year. For this reason, data do not show any ratings at an unacceptable level. If an intern is assessed initially in a skill or competency at an unacceptable level, he or she will be offered additional opportunities for success and/or remediation. Completion of our program is contingent on achieving acceptable ratings in all areas. We realize, however, that this creates data that does not show areas where we might not succeed in our instruction the first time, or even at all (if a candidate is not able to finish the program). For this reason, we are making changes to the data we will collect in future years so that we can better learn from our areas of challenge as well as our successes. Information on these plans will be discussed at the end of this section.

For each of the three preparation areas examined below principal findings from key assessments are summarized, then an interpretation for the findings will be offered. Changes made to primary program assessments over the past years or planned for future years will be discussed.

Content Knowledge

Our program uses multiple rigorous assessments to determine and monitor candidate content knowledge in language arts, math, science, social studies, art, PE and health. The State of Alaska requires that elementary teachers pass both the Praxis I basic competency exam in reading, writing and math and the Praxis II elementary content test prior to receiving an elementary certificate, so passing scores on both tests are required for admission to the internship year. One hundred percent of our BAE candidates received passing scores on both tests prior to beginning their internship year. The data demonstrate that our off-campus cohorts typically score 2-3 points lower on all portions of the two Praxis tests than do their on-campus counterparts. This is likely due to the fact that 42% of our off-campus students are Alaska Native students who sometimes have challenges with English proficiency having grown up in dual-language communities. The percentage of students with this background on campus is six. Challenges with standardized tests among LEP populations is well documented and we make strong efforts in our program to minimize these challenges by offering additional tutoring and assistance to LEP students prior to them taking the Praxis tests. The numbers show that although the off-campus cohorts scores slightly lower they do all pass the tests prior to beginning the internship year. The Praxis I and II testing requirements and cut scores have not changed since our last program report, as they are mandated by the State Department of Education.

Our second method of ensuring solid content knowledge is through the requirement of a rigorous set of content area courses in all major areas in the years leading up to the internship year. Data on content area coursework show that our candidates average between a 3.0 and 4.0 GPA in all major content areas as undergraduates. There does not appear to be a statistically significant difference between the GPAs of students prepared on-campus and off-campus, although the off-campus GPAs seem slightly lower in science. This may be due to the challenges in providing high quality hands-on science coursework via distance delivery methods, although this is an area that warrants future investigation for understanding. The lowest overall grades across all cohorts appear to be in non-elementary education focused math courses (functions for calculus or algebra), although candidates appear to perform at an acceptable level in the math coursework that requires them to apply their math understanding in an elementary teaching context (math for elementary school teachers and math methods and curriculum development). Required content area coursework and standards for admission have not changed since our last program report. Future cohorts will not have to complete an introduction to psychology (PSY 101) course in the future, as the content was found to be redundant with the required child development (PSY 245) course and we were able to work with the psychology department to remove the requirement that PSY101 be completed as a pre-requisite to PSY 245.

During the internship year our program assesses content knowledge, as well as pedagogical content knowledge, preparation and planning, through the requirements that candidates prepare, teach, and reflect on major units of instruction in language arts, math, science, social studies, art, PE and health. Interns are assessed on their knowledge and presentation of accurate subject area content in the preparation of week-long instructional units in the four major content areas. These “weeks of teaching” also provide them with hands-on experiences in preparation, planning, assessment and reflection and allow them to integrate best practices in pedagogical content knowledge associated with each content area.

Data relative to their content area knowledge presented in assessment three shows that all candidates, both on- and off-campus, achieve an acceptable or target rating in the preparation and delivery of these instructional units.

Requirements for preparing and teaching units of instruction in the content areas have not changed since our previous program report submission, although instructors in individual courses have made minor adjustments to rubric criteria and guidelines based on assessment information gathered and through analysis of student work. An example of changes in guidelines is an increased focus on the meaningful integration and assessment of Common Core Standards in instructional units following the adoption of Alaska’s version of the common core standards in 2012. Recognizing that preparation for teaching math, science, art, PE and health are as important as preparation for teaching language arts and social studies,

we have reallocated credits during the internship year to make all methods courses three credits (beginning in 2013) instead of two. Prior to 2013 language arts and social studies method were the only three credit methods courses.

Professional and Pedagogical Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions

Candidate progress and proficiency in ACEI areas 3 (Instruction) and 4 (Assessment), as well as their pedagogical knowledge in each of the major content areas is assessed through a variety of assessments directly tied to their year-long internship/fieldwork experience. Because our interns spend a year in an elementary classroom they have multiple opportunities to consolidate their professional and pedagogical knowledge, skills and dispositions. The movement from undergraduates to competent practitioners ready for their own classroom is monitored in several ways over the course of the internship year. Data from multiple assessments show that interns are rated as target or acceptable in pedagogical skills by the end of their internship year.

Our Professional Characteristics Feedback Form (PCFF) data show that our candidates are assessed throughout the internship year as possessing characteristics aligned with those of a practicing teacher. Applicants to the program who have received consistently low scores on the PCFF prior to beginning the internship year (of which we have had only two in the last ten years) are met with prior to applying to discuss the lack of congruity between their professional characteristics and those found in practicing teachers. This has led to the individuals choosing a different major.

Data from our field-based Summative Observation and Feedback Form (SOFF) show that our candidates score somewhat lower in the areas of “adaptation to diverse students” and “assessment for instruction” than in some of the other assessed areas. This aligns with data gathered from a larger research investigation into pre-service teacher preparation programs in Alaska showing that candidates desire additional preservice experiences in differentiation and culturally responsive teaching. In response to this data, we have integrated more direct instruction and experiences in differentiation, particularly for different ability levels, into our internship coursework. We continue to emphasize and expand the discussion on strategies for working with diverse student populations in all of our internship courses.

Course-based program requirements that allow candidates to hone their professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills (as reflected in ACEI areas 3 and 4) include the series of assignments promoting collaboration with families and community (assessment 8), the weeks of teaching content areas (assessment 3) and the full time student teaching requirements (assessment 6). The assignments promoting collaboration with families and community allow candidates to describe how they will structure their future classroom to promote active engagement in learning (ACEI standard 3.4) and help them practice their skills in effective communication techniques to foster collaboration and cooperation among students and families. It is interesting to note that the off-campus scores on this set of assignments appear to be higher than those of on-campus students. The most likely reason for this is that the majority of off-campus students are working in small to very small communities (some under 200 residents) and opportunities for collaboration (as well as the need for cooperation and collaboration) appear to be greater in small rural communities where everyone typically has to chip in and do many things. The requirements associated with this set of assignments have not been changed in significant ways, although in recent years an additional assignment has been added requiring candidates to learn something from a “non-traditional” knowledge source in order to practice skills in listening and collaborating with families and students.

The Full Time Student Teaching assignment requires that candidates take over all classroom responsibilities for a period of three weeks in the spring semester. As part of this requirement, candidates must plan for instruction, document student learning gains, collect student work samples, and reflect on successes and challenges both weekly and in summary. At the end of the three-week period, candidates submit a binder with extensive documentation of their teaching experiences. These binders assess competency in multiple ACEI standards (see assessment 6) and the data show that our candidates exhibit these standards at a target or acceptable level. As mentioned in regards to data collection challenges, candidates must achieve a target or acceptable rating to successfully complete the internship year. In order to better understand where our candidates have challenges during the full time student teaching experience we plan to begin collecting data examining the areas where candidates needed remediation or second chances in order to achieve an acceptable rating. More on these plans is described below. We are also planning some changes to the documentation required of candidates following their full time student teaching as we have found it to be cumbersome, time consuming and, in some cases, redundant. We are revising those requirements and associated rubric criteria this year.

Student Learning

In addition to the full time student teaching documentation, which requires collection of student assessment data and work samples generated over the three week period of full time responsibility, candidates in our program complete two year-long assignments that allow them to examine and document their impact on student learning. In recognition of the importance of acquiring the skills to adequately monitor and make changes to instruction based on student progress, the assignment on Monitoring Literacy Progress (assessment 5) has recently been extracted from the language arts methods course and given its own one credit standing. This assignment requires candidates to monitor the reading and writing progress of a small group of students (5-8) throughout an entire year. Candidates must evaluate assessment evidence and generate ideas for improving student learning based on the evidence. They revisit the same students at multiple points throughout the year to monitor learning gains and use assessment information to inform instruction. Data gathered from this assessment shows that all candidates completed the assignment at an acceptable or target level.

The second assignment requiring candidates to consider their impact on student learning and teaching them skills necessary to make adjustments to instruction based on assessment evidence is the year-long Looking at Student Work

series. In these assignments candidates gather student work samples from instructional activities and examine them systematically using a series of steps inspired by the protocols from Harvard's Project Zero and the National School Reform Faculty. After gathering and examining the work candidates consider the learning gains that are visible in the work and where further instruction in the subject area could go based on demonstrated student understanding. Data from these assessments show that candidates complete this series of tasks (seven total, roughly one per month during the internship year) successfully over the internship year. This assignment has not been changed substantially since our last program report submission.

Future Plans for Data Collection and Analysis

As mentioned previously, we have determined that although the data we currently gather is useful in some regards it would also be beneficial to closely examine the areas or assignments in our program where candidates frequently require remediation or second chances to meet an acceptable rating. Towards this end, following examination of the data generated for this program report the elementary program faculty decided to engage in a "remediation analysis" over the course of the upcoming academic year. To facilitate this process one faculty member (the author of this report) will meet with all internship year faculty at the end of the semester and gather both quantitative and qualitative data documenting areas or assignments in which candidates required second chances or remediation to achieve an acceptable rating. Data will also be gathered on the approaches used to assist candidates in achieving an acceptable rating. It is hoped that these data, once organized and presented to the faculty (prior to the start of the 2014/15 year) will allow us, as a program, to better find where our weaknesses lie and allow us to consider program changes or modifications to help our candidates be successful without a need for additional remediation.

Although we do not have this "remediation analysis" data available for the cohort data presented in this report, we were able to look back at the last three years of graduates and determine how many either did not finish the program or finished, but not in the semester intended. We looked carefully at these data and determined several trends. Between 2010 and 2013 (the cohort years included in this report) five BAE candidates began the program but did not finish. Of the five, we had strong indicators that difficulties might arise during the internship year for four of them. These indicators were present in application materials, but were not significant to the extent that the individuals were denied admission to the internship year. Multiple factors contributed to the individuals' lack of success in completing the certification program. Many had two or more contributing factors. Three had documented issues with professional dispositions or work habits that manifested themselves in their fieldwork placements and led to unsuccessful fieldwork experiences that required faculty intervention. Two had academic challenges that were not mitigated through remediation. Two had personal issues that were external to the program, and two determined that their personalities were just not a good "fit" with the profession of teaching. Of the five, two dropped out on their own, two were unsuccessful in completing program requirements, and one is best characterized as a combination of choosing to leave and not experiencing success in the program. Given that these five represent just 6% of candidates who started the program we feel that a success rate of 94% is satisfactory and reflects the fact that not everyone is meant to be a teacher.

During this same three-year time period, five BAE students began the internship year, but did not finish in the semester intended. All five, however, did eventually go on to receive their certification or are expected to this coming year, most often with only one additional semester extension. In examining the circumstances of these five students, we determined that three of them required additional time to complete a course or courses simply because they had not done so prior to the internship year and not because they were unsuccessful in an initial attempt. Two of the students required second attempts at internship courses because they were unsuccessful in their first attempt. Two required additional time to complete their degrees due to personal and family issues outside the program, and one student had to complete additional fieldwork in order to gain experiences in areas in which s/he was unsuccessful the first time around. It is significant to note that all five students needing additional time to graduate and complete their certification program were parents of school age or younger children and were "non-traditional" in that they were between 30 and 60 years of age. For these students it appears as though flexibility and understanding of life experiences is key in allowing them to eventually experience success in the program.