

Submission date: Feb. 10, 2020

Program/s in this review: Early Childhood Development AAS

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC)

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage (KPC and KoC both partner with the Anchorage campus to offer the program for local cohorts in Kodiak and Kenai as well as supporting distance delivery of the program statewide).

Members of the program review committee:

- Hilary Seitz, Professor, Anchorage
- Wei-Ying Hsiao, Professor, Anchorage

1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role (700 words or less)

Relevancy of Early Childhood Education

The EC program serves both students new to the field of Early Childhood Education and those with experience in the early childhood workforce to go broader and deeper with their professional training. The field of Early Childhood (EC) has many avenues and job opportunities. Students who complete the AAS in EC degree programs are highly qualified to teach in private or non-profit preschools such as HeadStart, become a teacher or director of childcare programs, work in agencies that support young children and families, (such as Stone Soup, WIC, Catholic Social Services, RurAL CAP, and Military Child Development Centers, etc.) and paraprofessional in P-12 school district settings. All areas have high employment opportunities and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and degrees are transferable to outside of Alaska for the same agencies or school settings.

The AAS EC program has worked closely with the professional organization NAEYC to gain accreditation. To earn the NAEYC distinction, programs must meet rigorous indicators for course quality, faculty expertise, and partnerships with the community. The AAS in EC program **is accredited through 2025**.

Connections and Partnerships with other UAA programs

The EC program takes pride in knowing that students in the Anchorage community as well as other students across Alaska have a personalized rich learning experience. UAA and its partners (KoC and KPC) work closely together to serve our unique student populations. We offer a variety of courses both face-to-face as well as via distance technologies to support our local communities and their individual circumstances. The Kodiak community is building a cohort of nearly 20 early educators and the Kenai area is doing the same. Through a blended delivery model, we are able to meet our local student needs and needs across the state. In addition, we have very close relationships with community partners, schools, and agencies so we are able to build on these strong relationships in our programs.

The EC program is working with other programs at UAA to provide baccalaureate pathways for the AAS students. We are currently partnering with Social Work, Human Services, and the arts departments. Together, we are creating interdisciplinary degrees that meet the needs of the students such as a "BA in Social-Emotional Learning for Young Children". The Social Work and Human Services departments have created pathways including a draft four-year plan to incorporate the AAS degree in Early Childhood into the BA in Social Work program. The Human Services department created an advising agreement to use some of our EC courses in place of their 100 or 200-level requirements. These intercampus/intercollege relationships have been strengthened this year as we all work to serve our state needs. See Attachments 1 & 2.

Community Partnerships and Funding

The Early Childhood program is **very connected to local and statewide community partners**. See Attachment 3: Letter of Support from the Alaska System for Education and Early Development (SEED) council, a collaborative statewide professional development council in support of this program.

Two grant projects (Cargill) have helped to support local partnerships over the past few years. Together both projects have brought in over 2M dollars for students at UAA and more is expected. These projects program focus on creating collaborative relationships with local schools, agencies, and non-profit arts and cultural organizations. Because of these projects and the work in the EC program, we have sustainable partnerships and relationships with many organizations including: Anchorage School District, Kodiak Island Borough School District, Lake and Peninsula School District, Anchorage Museum, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Alutiiq Museum, THREAD, Providence Hospital Child Development Center, Kids Corp Head Start, Kindercare at BP and Alaska Native Medical Center, CCS Head Start, MatSu Health Foundation, and Military Child Development Centers to name a few.

Alaska's Need - High Demand Careers

The EC field is considered a **high demand** field. There is an extreme shortage of qualified (AAS degrees) teachers in Alaska (and nation). There is currently a federal mandate that all Head Start teachers have a BA but due to limited available qualified teachers (with a BA) AK has a variance. There are not enough AAS degreed teachers to fill this need let alone BAs. Communities, children and families are the ones who bear this burden.

2. Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity (7 year trend; 1400 words or less)

Seven-year degree and/or certificate awards trend

The number of graduates in the AAS program was in a decline but has since begun to rise again. The IR data taken in summer of 2019, is a snapshot from July. To date, the AAS program has had an additional 18 AAS degrees awarded in the summer and Fall of 2019 bringing the 2019 total up to **41 degree - completers**. Spring 2020 final practicum numbers show this trend is continuing.

The decline in degree awards that began in 2014 was due to the loss of and Early Childhood Faculty member, Bonny Headley. The EC population (mostly first-generation non-traditional students) requires additional educational supports for advising, and academics. Without an identified champion the enrollment numbers decline. Due to the loss of the BA in EC program in 2019, Drs. Seitz and Hsiao became the new champions of the AAS program and numbers are increasing.

Credits Per Degree

The EC program is fairly close with the UAA averages for an AAS degree. While average credits slightly exceed others programs in CAS, the average year to completion is 1.6 years less than CAS even though more semesters are needed. Students often take more semesters because they may need additional preparatory coursework and/or require special advising and support for success.

Seven-year majors or program enrollment trend

Based on Banner data on Jan. 17, 2020, the fall totals for admitted to the AAS EC major was **42**. IR snapshot data from July only indicates 37.

The number (42) was from students that applied to the program in early fall as the deadline was Sept. 15. Since that time, the early childhood program has been doing heavy recruitment for spring admissions and we expect the number of majors to continue **to rise**. Per banner (1.17.20), there are 16 students with applications in process for admissions (since the 9.15.19 deadline) and an additional **49** students enrolled in EDEC courses that are **not admitted** to the AAS program. The seven-year enrollment trend follows the seven-year degree trend. The EC population particularly for the AAS program (mostly first-generation non-traditional students) requires additional educational supports for advising, and academics, without an identified champion the enrollment numbers decline. Due to the loss of the BA in EC program in 2019, Drs. Seitz and Hsiao became the new champions of the AAS program and numbers are increasing.

Course pass rates

The AAS EC program has a high rate of success in courses particularly when students reach their final capstone course (EDEC A295). When compared to UAA 100 and 200-level courses, the AAS EC student has a higher course pass rate. This is in part due to the recognition by EC faculty that students require a great deal of support. The EC faculty are available for students seven days a week via email and text.

Internal demand

Spring 2020 courses have 42 admitted (to AAS in EC) and enrolled students and an additional 49 students enrolled (either non-degree seeking or in another major based on banner data 1.17.20). The field of EC requires employees to take courses to fulfill state requirements and move up the career ladder, hence, we have a large number of students enrolled but not admitted. Program provides support to “out-of-major” students as they often apply for admission after taking a few courses.

Seven-year Student Credit Hour (SCH) production trend

The Student credit hours have gone down this year due to the elimination of the BA in Early Childhood. The BA program used the same 100 and 200-level courses. In addition, two courses (EDEC A106 and EDEC A242) were in the Elementary Education (EE) BA program that was also eliminated in 2019. This IR data does not include Fall 2020 when enrollment increased.

The decline that began in 2014-2015 was due to the loss of an Early Childhood Faculty member. The EC population particularly for the AAS program (mostly first-generation non-traditional students) requires additional educational supports for advising, and academics. Without an identified champion the enrollment numbers decline. Due to the loss of the BA in EC program in 2019, Drs. Seitz and Hsiao became the new champions of the AAS program and numbers are **increasing**.

Student Credit Hours per Full Time Employee

The Student Credit Hours per Full Time Employee have declined this past year due to the elimination of the BA programs (EC and EE). **This IR data does not include Fall 2019 when enrollment increased.** The EC program is now dedicated to the AAS program and enrollment is increasing. Early Childhood courses must be capped at 20 (as compared to many courses in CAS) to meet professional national standards for accreditation and the important work of early childhood educators learning how to work with young children.

Enrollment Full Time Equivalent Faculty- Instructional Productivity

The instructional productivity (Enrollment/FTEF) has declined this past year due to the elimination of the BA programs (EC and EE). FT faculty numbers have been streamlined from 5 to 2 in Anchorage. We are rebuilding the program to be more efficient by maximizing the efficiency of the FT faculty and the instructional rotation while still meeting the needs of the students enrolled in the program. Students come from local child care programs, from Head start programs, some are wanting to be a paraprofessional in P-12 schools and others are parents. Most of these students are first-generation, non-traditional students whose ethnicities and cultures reflect the populations they work with in Alaska including Alaska Native and the many other cultures in our state. We work closely with our community campus partners to work with their diverse student population needs. **This IR data does not include Fall 2019 when enrollment increased.**

FTES/FTEF - Instructional Productivity

The instructional productivity (FTES/FTEF) has declined this past year due to the elimination of the BA programs (EC and EE). **This IR data does not include Fall 2019 when enrollment increased.** The EC program is now dedicated to the AAS program and enrollment is increasing. Early Childhood courses must be capped at 20 (as compared to many courses in CAS) to meet professional national standards for accreditation and the important work of early childhood educators learning how to work with young children. The EC program is in discussion with the School of Social Work and the Department of Human Services to provide 4-year degree pathways for our AAS program completers. This will benefit UAA.

Class Size (Average Class Size) - Instructional Productivity

The class size has declined this past year due to the elimination of the BA programs (EC and EE). **This IR data does not include Fall 2019 when enrollment increased.** The EC program is now dedicated to the AAS program and enrollment is increasing. Class sizes are smaller than others in CAS. Early Childhood courses

must be capped at 20 (as compared to many courses in CAS) to meet professional national standards for accreditation and the important work of early childhood educators learning how to work with young children.

Cost/SCH - Instructional Productivity

The student credit hours have declined this past year due to the elimination of the BA programs (EC and EE). **This IR data does not include Fall 2019 when enrollment increased.** The EC program is now dedicated to the AAS program and enrollment is increasing. Class sizes are smaller than others in CAS. Early Childhood courses must be capped at 20 (as compared to many courses in CAS) to meet professional national standards for accreditation and the important work of early childhood educators learning how to work with young children. As class sizes climb to 20, the program will become cost effective.

Tuition Revenue/SCH - Instructional Productivity

Tuition revenue is comparable to CAS for the same level of course (100-200). While the EC program is currently not generating enough tuition to pay for instructional costs for the CAS, the EC program serves as an **important service to the community and state** at-large. See question #1 in the High Demand Need section. In 2019, full tuition was close to covering all instructional costs. As class sizes continue to increase, tuition will pay for instructional costs.

External demand

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, "Employment of preschool teachers is projected to grow 7 percent from 2018 to 2028, **faster than the average for all occupations.** Growth is expected due to a continued focus on the importance of early childhood education." (job outlook paragraph 5).

3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success (1500 words or less)

Specialized Accreditation Process and Status

The AAS in EC program works closely with the national professional EC association, the National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The NAEYC has seven Professional Teacher Standards that all accredited programs must meet. The standards are the same for all levels of the program, yet the depth of knowledge expected is different depending if it is an AAS or an advanced program. To earn the NAEYC excellence distinction and accreditation for the AAS, programs must meet rigorous indicators for course quality, faculty expertise in content areas, and partnerships with the community. **The AAS in EC is accredited through Spring 2025.**

The process for review of a program includes three parts: self-study (review of courses, assessments, continuous improvement model, review of partnerships, and review of teaching excellence), a national peer review visit (3-5 experts come to the site to interview faculty, students and partners), and NAEYC board review of all reports and documents. One faculty member in the EC program (Dr. Hilary Seitz) is an evaluator for NAEYC reviews for other institutions (online reviews) and has been reviewing other EC programs for high quality for 10 years.

Currency of Curriculum

All courses are current and promote best practices in the field of EC as well as culturally responsive, and 21st Century Teaching pedagogies. Five courses and the catalog have gone through their five year review this year including the university curriculum process.

Innovative Practices - High Impact Practices

The EC program believes strongly in supporting students with high impact practices. The high impact practices that every EC student participates in and we are most proud of include: collaborative projects, ePortfolios, service learning and community engagement experiences and practicum (internships). Opportunities for undergraduate research, global and diverse experiences and intensive writing are also taken advantage of by many students. Many of the EC students graduate with honors. See Figure 1. High Impact Practices for a deeper explanation.

High Impact Practices in Early Childhood Programs		
1	Collaborative Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDEC A106 – Create a Public Service Announcement EDEC A242 – Facilitate a family event for community
2	ePortfolios	Students use ePortfolios (Digication) in ALL courses to document and reflect on their learning and to create a depository for artifacts that make learning visible See the trail guide in the Academic Innovation and eLearning. Dr. Seitz was interviewed about best teaching practices using the eWolf.
3	Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Activities Fair Family Engagement events Field experiences in most courses (in infant and toddler classrooms, preschool, Head Start, Agencies and Public schools)
4	Practicum (Internships)	All students participate in a final capstone practicum experience for a minimum of 150 hours in the community
5	Capstone Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards-based assessment ePortfolio

Figure 1. High Impact Practices

Distance Offerings

The EC program provides opportunities for students to complete the program via distance delivery. Not every course is offered via distance every semester. Faculty work closely with students to keep them informed about course rotation.

Four EDEC courses offered through KOC have gone through a rigorous national review for quality. EDEC A105, 106, 303 and 241 meet Quality Matters Program peer review and standards. Additionally, EDEC A242 went through a UAA CIDER review for best practices in eLearning, meeting all standards. 60% of Early Childhood faculty have participated in Quality Matters Program training, one faculty is a Quality Matters Master Reviewer. We encourage all students (if possible) to take some courses face-to-face as research for early childhood students have found hybrid delivery to have the best results for early childhood educators. In some cases, we have had students who live in remote villages “zoom” into our face-to-face classes through video or facetime so we can all work together.

Program Student Learning Outcomes

Student outcomes for the AAS EC programs are based on the professional preparation standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) found at www.naeyc.org. Students will demonstrate the following outcomes: See figure. 2. Student Learning Outcomes.

	Program Student Learning Outcome (PSLO)	Methods used to assess the outcome	Key findings	Major actions taken to improve student learning and evidence of their impact
1	Create a healthy, respectful, supportive and challenging learning environment based on knowledge of child development.	Key Assessment (KA) 4: Developmental Case Studies KA 5: Unit of Study	Students demonstrated they have strong child development knowledge.	The Case Study Rubric was revised to better reflect the child development knowledge expected.
2	Create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families, and involve all families in their children’s development and learning.	KA 2: School Community Study KA 4: Developmental Case Study	Students demonstrated they have strong relationships with families and the learning communities they work in.	The School Community Study provides strong evidence of how students work with families. Instructors worked with students on ways to better document these relationships.
3	Use systematic observations, documentation and other	KA 3: Curriculum Based Assessment Study	Students were able to provide strong evidence of understanding and using	The curriculum unit is a strong instrument, but some

	effective assessment strategies in a responsible way, in partnership with families and other professionals, to positively influence children's development and learning.	KA 4: Developmental Case Studies	systematic curriculum and assessment strategies.	schools/programs do not use these. The case study rubric was revised.
4	Design effective approaches to teaching and learning, implement and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning for all children.	KA 4: Developmental Case Studies KA 5: Unit of Study KA 6: Summative Assessment	Students demonstrated their ability to teach and evaluate their children using positive teaching strategies.	The Summative Assessment (practicum evaluation) was revised with community partners to better reflect expectations.
5	Incorporate knowledge of content areas to create appropriate experiences for young children.	KA 4: Developmental Case Studies KA 5: Unit of Study KA 6: Summative Assessment (practicum evaluation)	Students provided evidence they could use developmentally appropriate strategies in their classrooms	The Summative Assessment (practicum evaluation) was revised with community partners to better reflect expectations.
6	Use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to early childhood practice.	KA 1: Professional Action Plan KA 2: School Community Study KA 6: Summative Assessment (practicum evaluation)	The Professional Action Plan provided strong evidence that students are addressing the ethical guidelines. The other two KA provide evidence of how they practice in their classrooms	The Summative Assessment (practicum evaluation) was revised with community partners to better reflect expectations.
7	Demonstrate knowledgeable, reflective and critical perspectives on professional practice, making informed decisions that integrate knowledge from a variety of sources.	KA 1: Professional Action Plan KA 2: School Community Study KA 6: Summative Assessment (practicum evaluation)	Students provided strong evidence that they are making informed professional decisions and can integrate their knowledge from many sources	none

Figure 2. Student Learning Outcomes

Student Success

The program values opportunities to promote student success with a diverse student body. Many students are first generation college students while others are working and have their own families and special situations. We strive to provide supports, opportunities, and commitments to each student, so they can reach their full potential. In addition, we provide field experiences in various community agencies, such as Cook Inlet Native Head Start and Title I schools, that support diverse populations. Our students learn about and work with the diverse families of Alaska, learning to apply best practices in culturally relevant teaching. View the youtube video titled [*EC Educators Alaska*](#) to **see our students** (video was student created and all permissions are on file in the EC office). We are proud that our student population is nearly representative of the children and families they serve in Alaska. This past year (IR data for 2019), with 23 graduates that are 57% non-white, we are making great strides in serving our state's youngest citizens with educators who are reflective of similar ethnicities. According to AK Kids Count data (2018), 51% of children ages birth-4 are classified as non-white.

EC students are supported in many ways to help them be successful on their learning journey. Students meet with both first-year advisors and a faculty advisor regularly. Some students visit with faculty on a weekly basis, while others wait until the end of class. Students develop relationships with faculty and every graduate has a

strong relationship with a faculty member by the end of their journey. Students at the community campuses meet regularly with their faculty advisor (Professors Kitty Deal or Robin Dahlman).

4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness (300 words or less)

An AAS in Early Childhood Education is offered at University of Fairbanks through the Community and Technical College. This program is not the same as the AAS in Early Childhood program at UAA. The UAF AAS program is aligned with a BA in Child and Family Studies program through the College of Rural and Community Development. The AAS in EC program at UAA was aligned with other education and licensure (PreK-3rd grade) programs in the School of Education. Therefore, the programs have different foundations and directions.

5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)

Summary Analysis		
1	Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong commitment to serving students ● Expertise of Faculty in 21st Century Teaching pedagogies ● Longevity and qualifications of EC faculty (Drs. Seitz 17 years, Hsiao 8 years, Deal 10 years, and Dahlman 2 years) ● Relationships with community partners, agencies and schools ● Teaching experience with young children and their families ● Diversity of student population ● Multiple career pathways with Degrees ● Addressing workforce shortage and high demand areas ● Grant production
2	Areas of Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Under-resourced (student support: advisors, field placement coordinator and background-check officer) ● Loss of the Baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood and subsequent loss of the power of the 2+2 design.
3	Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Professional development requirements have been raised in the state ● Workforce shortage ● Faculty have strong connections to state boards, agencies, programs and schools ● Connections with other UAA programs ● Room for growth ● Increasing recognition of the critical importance of the education for young children ● New governor's bill "Alaska Reads Act" focuses on young children including Universal Pre-K in Alaska Schools
4	Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overall cuts to the UA ● Loss of Baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood

Figure 6. summary analysis

Moving Forward

The AAS in Early Childhood is a strong program as noted by Interim Dean Petraitis in his review of the 2018-2019 program review.

Appraisal:

As a reader of an expedited program review, it is reasonable to ask: "Does the review give me enough confidence in a program that I'd recommend it to a neighbor or family member?" In this case, the answer is "yes." The Early Childhood programs seem well-designed, adequately-resourced, and focused on clear gaps in teacher-training in Alaska. It seems likely that these programs could succeed at regaining CAEP accreditation, perhaps without additional resources and just the faculty they already have.

The AAS in EC program continues to grow in enrollment. The program is highly supported, recognized and needed by the community due to the quality reputation and the workforce shortage in the field of Early Childhood. The EC program has room to grow. We have highly qualified faculty, connections and partnerships to statewide boards, organizations and programs, and interest from students.

The Governor and other statewide politicians plan to address the needs in early childhood. Senator Tom Begich said on Jan. 15, 2020, *“The Governor and I have been working together to craft legislation that will provide our youngest Alaskans with an opportunity to succeed. We are still working on some provisions of the bill, but I believe that together we can develop a comprehensive early learning and reading policy that supports kids, and moves Alaska forward. Strong, quality, voluntary, universal pre-K with support through effective reading instruction in later grades is critical for Alaska’s youth.”*

With this new bill in place, we will **NEED** more highly-qualified early childhood teachers. The AAS in Early Childhood Education, as a nationally accredited program served by committed, passionate and experienced faculty, is well positioned to meet that need.