

# Program Review Executive Summary

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**Early Childhood Education, A.A.S.**

2015



The Early Childhood Education associate degree major (EC) began in 1988 in response to a community need for trained child care educators as an increasing number of families opted for preschool and child care centers for their young children. Throughout the years, the program has been recognized as a resource for training, education, and related professional activities for providers in a seven-county region. The program is firmly rooted in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) principles of developmentally appropriate practice and those principles continue to guide pedagogy.

In 2010, EC was one of the first five early childhood programs in Pennsylvania to attain accreditation by the NAEYC. As part of the NAEYC accreditation, faculty and the program specialist developed five key assessments that address the NAEYC Accreditation Standards. Faculty are required to collect data on student achievement, analyze the information, and use the data to inform instruction. To maintain accreditation, the program is required to submit an annual report that highlights one of the key assessments and student achievement.

The experienced faculty and staff intentionally implement courses that develop the program goals. The small class sizes combined with the state-of-the-art teaching facilities support student achievement. The Early Childhood Laboratory and Resource Room is supervised by a lab assistant who is a resource for students and faculty. In addition, the Children's Learning Center, the on-campus child care facility, provides students opportunities for field work in a high quality center that is accredited by three different accrediting bodies. A significant percentage of the students are involved in Early Educators Student Organization that encourages engagement in the community and development of leadership skills.

The employers of EC graduates are diverse in nature and have included child care centers, public schools, Head Start programs, private families needing in-home nannies, family and group child care homes, private academic preschools, Pennsylvania Pre-K programs, and other child service agencies. In a recent survey, employers reported that EC graduates are often more competent in applying developmentally appropriate practice with young children than those from other institutions and programs, including graduates of four-year programs. According to projections from the National Employment Matrix, employment of child care workers is projected to increase by 11% between 2008 and 2018, which is about as fast as the average for all occupations. An increasing emphasis on early childhood education programs will increase demand for these professionals.

In recent years, Pennsylvania has placed an increased emphasis on improving the educational level of child care professionals. Currently, the state is promoting the development of bachelor degrees in early childhood that do not include teacher certification. Also, there is a state initiative to develop college level certificates and degrees with an emphasis on infant and toddler development and care.

**Recommendations:**

- Realign the Early Childhood Education curriculum to reflect the current Pennsylvania Core Knowledge Competencies.
- Maintain NAEYC reaccreditation. Specifically, revise rubrics and directions and add/change key assessments in some courses to incorporate the new NAEYC EC A.A.S Program accreditation standards.
- Continue to advocate for quality infant experiences to meet accreditation standards and appropriately prepare students.
- Review family course with faculty before implementation and align it with the current Pennsylvania Core Knowledge Competencies.
- Implement steps to meet professional preparation trends by revising the curriculum to articulate to four-year institutions; continue to explore implementation of the Early Intervention and Child Life degree.
- Explore the development of a four-year degree that meets the need of the Early Childhood field, but does not offer teacher certification.
- Continue to take an active role in the design of Pennsylvania's Office of Child Development and Early Learning Infant/Toddler initiatives.