

Integrated Early Childhood Education Specialty Area Program (SAP) Proposal Guidance, Resources, and Requirements

Introduction

This document provides guidance, resources and requirements for proposing Integrated Early Childhood Education Birth-K and/or the Integrated Early Childhood Education pre-K-3 endorsement programs.

Beginning in 2025¹, all prospective educators entering a preparation program for early childhood education will complete an approved integrated early childhood and special education program offered by a Tennessee educator preparation provider (EPP). As approved by the State Board of Education (SBE), currently offered early childhood endorsements will be phased out at that point in time.

The proposal requirements were collaboratively created by multiple early childhood and special education stakeholders, including EPP staff, district staff, and the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE).

The integrated endorsements were created to ensure that candidates are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to serve **all** learners in today's schools and learning environments. When designing programs, EPPs should consider the following:

- **Integration** - the intentional blending of early childhood and special education instruction and practice within a preponderance of courses throughout preparation.
- **Embedded Instruction** - an approach used to promote child engagement, learning, and independence in everyday activities, routines, and transitions. This is accomplished by identifying times and activities when instructional procedures designed for teaching a child's priority learning targets are implemented in the context of ongoing and naturally occurring activities, routines, and transitions in the classroom.
- **Clinical Experiences** – EPPs should strive for experiences with racially, linguistically, culturally, economically, and developmentally diverse populations.

Resources

EPPs should review the following resources when completing the proposal:

- [Tennessee Educator Preparation Policy \(5.504\)](#)
- [Literacy and Specialty Area Standards for Educator Preparation Policy \(5.505\)](#)
- [Tennessee Professional Assessments Policy \(5.105\)](#)
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\) Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs](#)
- [Division for Early Childhood \(DEC\) Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators](#)

EPPs are encouraged to reference the following resources when completing the proposal:

- [Crosswalk of DEC EI/ECSE standards with the NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#)

¹ The department anticipates bringing a recommendation to the SBE in May to extend the phase-out timeline from 2025 to 2026.

- [Early Childhood Personnel Center \(ECPC\): Course Development and Curriculum Resources](#) (includes sample syllabi)
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\) Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#)
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\) Developmentally Appropriate Practices](#)
- [Division for Early Childhood \(DEC\) Recommended Practices](#)
- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA): [Embedded Instruction Practices](#) and [Embedded Instructional Practices Checklist](#)

Proposal Requirements

To apply for conditional approval of either or both endorsement programs, EPPs must submit a proposal to TDOE, in TNAtlas, using the following guidelines:

Cover Page

Using the TDOE-generated cover page, provide the proposal contact person, contact information, and signature of EPP head administrator or designee.

Section 1: Program Synopsis

- Provide a high-level overview of the design and structure of the proposed SAP. In this narrative, please include:
 - major(s);
 - program levels (undergraduate, post-baccalaureate);
 - clinical practice types (student teaching, internship, job-embedded);
 - justification for proposed program (e.g., regional need, communication with primary LEA partner); and
 - goals and/or objectives related to the specific proposed program.
- Provide a detailed description of the overall approach that was taken to design the integrated endorsement program(s). Include responses to the following:
 - What factors were considered when working with early childhood and special education faculty to create this program (discussion topics, changes made within and across the institution, etc.)?
 - How was the idea of integration conceptualized and articulated among stakeholders involved in this process?
 - What conversations are occurring between the EPP and district partners regarding clinical experiences?
 - What additional details regarding the overall approach were taken into consideration?

Section 2: Program Curriculum

- Provide a clear and organized program of study (i.e., information presented to candidates during advising) which outlines the scope and sequence of the entire program from program admission to completion, including the specialty area/content major, professional education courses, clinical experiences, etc. If proposing more than one program pathway, include a program of study for each.
- Provide descriptions of candidate admission requirements (see [Educator Preparation Policy 5.504](#)).

- Candidates for admission to post-baccalaureate initial licensure programs must present evidence of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited IHE. Candidates for admission to post-baccalaureate initial licensure programs that include job-embedded clinical practice must hold an undergraduate major in the endorsement content area or demonstrate content proficiency by submitting qualifying scores on the required content assessment(s).

Section 3: Program Alignment to Standards

- Using the TDOE-generated spreadsheet:
 - In the **Transition Point** worksheet, name the transition points (or gateways) and applicable benchmarks required for candidates to progress from program admission to completion. At a minimum, transition points should include admission to the program, program completion, and two additional transition points.
 - In the **InTASC, SPA, and EPP literacy** worksheets, clearly align all courses and clinical experiences provided in the program of study (section 2) to each set of standards. Alignments are needed at the main standard level only; component or sub-standard level is not required.
 - In column B, provide the course name(s) and hyperlink the course description(s) to each applicable course name (a separate document with is allowable if online descriptions are unavailable).
 - In column C, provide the names of key course assignments and/or assessments used to demonstrate candidates' understanding and application of the standard expectations.
 - In column D, provide the clinical experiences and associated key assessments used to demonstrate candidates understanding and application of the standard expectations.
 - If multiple pathways are proposed in a single proposal, please ensure to differentiate by pathway (e.g. undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, job-embedded).

Section 4: Program Components

- Using the [Literacy and Specialty Area Standards for Educator Preparation Policy](#) (5.505), clearly address the applicable program component for each proposed endorsement area by providing a narrative or including additional documentation. If the program components are addressed in other sections of the proposal, please indicate which section(s).
- Provide evidence (e.g., syllabus, example assessment, field experience handbook) demonstrating how early childhood and special education instruction and assessment content are taught together in a preponderance of courses rather than taught in isolated programming.
- Provide 2-3 detailed examples of how the program applies the principles/expectations of the DEC recommended practices, NAEYC professional competencies, and the NAEYC developmentally appropriate practices. Examples should include how these practices and competencies are delivered in an integrated manner.

Section 5: Design of Clinical Experiences

- Provide a spreadsheet or chart that demonstrates a clear sequence of clinical experiences, with corresponding course number (e.g., EDUC 420), which includes field experience and clinical practice.
 - For birth-K programs, clinical experiences must include a birth through age 3 and an age 3 through 5 setting (could be preschool and/or Kindergarten).

- For pre-K-3 programs, clinical experiences must include an age 3 through 5 preschool and a Kindergarten through third grade setting.
 - EPPs must provide verification that preschool clinical experiences take place in licensed or certified programs.
- Using the [Educator Preparation Policy](#) (5.504), provide a narrative that clearly describes the design of the clinical experiences and support for candidates during these clinical experiences. Please include:
 - how the program provides opportunities for candidates to progress through clinical experiences involving a variety of collaborative and inclusive settings appropriate to their endorsement and role (e.g., home-based, clinical or center-based, public school-based setting); and
 - how the EPP will ensure the clinical experiences include children with and without disabilities educated together in inclusive settings to the greatest extent possible; and
 - how candidates will be supervised and evaluated during clinical experiences.

Section 6: Candidate Assessment

- Submit 1-3 candidate assessments (and any scoring mechanisms such as a rubric) **and** describe how these assessments provide opportunities for candidates to apply knowledge of:
 - child development across the full range of the endorsement,
 - embedded instruction,
 - responsive learning environment,
 - grade level academic standards,
 - instructional access points for all learners (EL, gifted, SWD, at-risk learners), and
 - quality Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEPs) and functional goals for Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- If the assessments are not proprietary, provide plans for ensuring that the key assessments are valid and reliable.

Section 7: Optional Information

Include in this section any additional information the EPP would like to provide to program reviewers.

All integrated early childhood proposals will be uploaded into TNAtlas. A support webinar will be provided to all EPPs later this spring, which will include submission guidance. A recording of the webinar will be made available. Please contact Annie.Insana@tn.gov with any questions.