

EARLY CHILDHOOD UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM
EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, (NAEYC, 1994) has identified seven common elements that define what early childhood educators must know and be able to do. These are:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of child development and apply this knowledge in practice;
2. Observe and assess children's behavior in planning and individualizing teaching practices and curriculum;
3. Establish and maintain a safe and healthy environment for children;
4. Plan and implement developmentally appropriate curriculum that advances all areas of children's learning and development, including social, emotional, intellectual, and physical competence;
5. Establish supportive relationships with children and implement developmentally appropriate techniques of guidance and group management;
6. Support the development and learning of individual children, recognizing that children are best understood in the context of family, culture, and society; and
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the early childhood profession and make a commitment to professionalism.

The early childhood program at Southern is designed to prepare students to attain the preceding knowledge and abilities. The program utilizes the current research findings in child development, pedagogy, and teacher preparation. The expected outcomes of the program are as follows:

- Courses in introductory psychology and developmental psychology will facilitate students' understanding of childhood development, both typical and atypical, and inform students of methods of studying children. Courses in educational psychology help students learn about behavioral and cognitive views of learning, motivation, conceptual development, strategies for assessing children, and techniques for meeting the needs of exceptional children. In addition, throughout the program, the education and special education courses relate developmental theory, learning theory, and assessment to classroom practice.
- The program will prepare students to understand and implement developmentally appropriate practice, which identifies child development as the foundation of sound early childhood programming. It will emphasize adapting instruction to promote learning for all and acknowledges individual children's varying levels of skills and knowledge. It will stress observation and recording the behavior of children to determine their needs and interests. Strategies to create a positive and safe learning environment and methods for positive guidance of young children's behavior are taught. Developmentally appropriate practice is emphasized throughout the curriculum and methods courses.

- Through this program, students will learn to provide active, experiential, problem-based learning experiences for children. Play is the foundation of learning for young children. They learn best through active interaction with materials, teachers, and other children. Since young children do not learn best through narrowly defined subject areas, the program emphasizes an integrated curriculum. At the same time, as the national standards suggest, children gain from opportunities to investigate key concepts within disciplines in a manner appropriate to their abilities. Thus the program provides content specifically focused on language arts, reading, mathematics, science, social studies and arts experiences for young children. The program also integrates technology for teaching young children and strategies for helping children to become technologically proficient themselves.
- The program stresses an appreciation and understanding of diversity, acknowledging the changing demographics in classrooms across the country and the contributions that varying groups bring to our society. An anti-bias, multicultural approach is infused throughout the curriculum and methods courses. The program includes special education courses specifically geared to early childhood education and the teaching of special education students in elementary classrooms. These offer knowledge and strategies to develop our students' understanding and their ability to assess and provide appropriate instruction to children with special needs.
- To promote reflective practice, field experiences in developmentally appropriate programs are an important component of this program. Students apprentice with master teachers throughout a semester during the sophomore, junior, and senior years. These three substantive field experiences (a total of 120 hours of field work) are linked directly to courses and inter-relate theory and practice for students. They provide a context to analyze learning. The field work takes place in settings which are culturally diverse and inclusive.