



Early Care and Education for a Mobile Society Student Handbook

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Mission

The mission of the Early Care and Education for a Mobile Society (ECEMS) program is to prepare graduates to work with diverse groups of young children, families, and communities in a global society. Graduates are prepared to engage in sensitive and responsive interactions, implement inquiry-focused curriculum, and support children’s development and learning. The curriculum is designed to ensure that students will meet the professional preparation standards endorsed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2020).

Partner Universities and Degree Titles

ECEMS is an online undergraduate program provided by four universities working in collaboration. Degree titles vary by institution.

University	Degree Title	Program Coordinator
Iowa State University	Bachelor of Science in Early Childcare, Education, and Programming	Celia Priebe Shedd
Oklahoma State University	Bachelor of Science in Early Child Care and Development	Jennifer Stepp
University of Missouri	Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education in a Mobile Society	Michelle Mathews
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	Bachelor of Science in Child, Youth, and Family Studies with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education in a Mobile Society	Chris Kiewra
South Dakota State University*	Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education in a Mobile Society	

***South Dakota State University is no longer accepting new students into their program.**

This bachelor's degree program is designed to go wherever students go. When students complete the program, students will be qualified to work in a variety of programs that offer early care and education in the community and on military installations. Some of these programs are

- childcare centers and homes,
- infant/toddler and preschool programs,
- Head Start programs, and
- before and after-school programs for children ages birth to eight.

Admission to the Program

To become part of the ECEMS program, students must apply for admission as an undergraduate student at one of the universities partnering in the delivery of this program through IDEA. This will be the “home” university. The home university is where students receive academic advising, apply for financial aid, pay tuition, and meet graduation requirements. Although students will take classes online at each of the participating universities, the home university will confer the degrees upon successful completion of the baccalaureate program.

Regardless of the home university, admission to the ECEMS program is a two-step process:

- First, students must be admitted to the university.
- Second, students must be admitted to the degree program.



To be admitted to the program, students must complete a Human Lifespan Development course. Depending on the home institution, students may need to complete at least 30 credits (applicable to graduation requirements) and have a minimum GPA.

Following admission to the ECEMS program, students will complete 51 credit hours in 13 core courses with two practicum experiences, plus any remaining credit hours required by the home institution for completion of a bachelor's degree.

Students may transfer up to 12 credit hours of core course equivalents. Students may not transfer equivalents for the Professional Development course or either practicum course. The home university will determine the number of credit hours from previous study that may be transferred in to meet degree requirements.

Students enrolled in IDEA courses are required to sign and submit a [Student Acknowledgment Form \(PDF\)](#) to be kept on file at the home university throughout the program. This form allows the exchange of information between the partnering universities. The campus coordinator will send students the form to sign.

Maintaining Eligibility in the Program

Refer to the home institution for GPA requirement and policies regarding maintaining GPA.

ECEMS Curriculum

This is a 120-credit hour baccalaureate program of study that includes completion of 48-51 credit hours of required coursework and other requirements unique to the university where students are enrolled. The required coursework also includes two practicum experiences that span nine credit hours and can be completed while taking other courses.

Beginning in the fall 2023, the degree program began offering an updated curriculum to better meet the needs of working professionals. The degree program now requires two hands-on, in-person practicum experiences coinciding with course work. These placements need to be in at least two different settings, with two different age groups, and two different Cooperating Teacher/Professionals. Each institution is updating their catalog to reflect these changes so please contact advisors with any questions students may have.

Pre-Practicum Courses

Prior to enrolling in *Practicum Experiences with Young Children* students must take six credit hours including *Introduction to Early Care and Education in a Mobile Society* (Professional Development) and either (a) *Child Development—Birth to 3* (Infant/Toddler) or (b) *Child Development—4 to 8* (Early Childhood). The Child Development course not previously taken must be taken concurrently with Practicum.

- Introduction to ECEMS (Professional Development)
- Child Development—Birth to 3 (Infant/Toddler)
- Child Development—4 to 8 (Early Childhood)



Practicum Experiences with Young Children (Formerly Practicum II)

This practicum experience is a three-credit course and includes 36 hours of in-person field experience in the student's local community.

Prior to enrolling in *Practicum Experiences with Young Children* students must take six credit hours including *Introduction to Early Care and Education in a Mobile Society* (Professional Development) and either (a) *Child Development—Birth to 3* (Infant/Toddler) or (b) *Child Development—4 to 8* (Early Childhood). The Child Development course not previously taken must be taken concurrently with Practicum.

Core Courses

- Administration and Supervision in Early Childhood Settings
- Assessing Young Children and Their Environments to Enhance Development
- Child Development: Birth to Three
- Child Development: Four to Eight
- Child Guidance and Classroom Environments
- Development of Curriculum for Children Ages Birth to 3
- Development of Curriculum for Children Ages 4 to 8
- Diversity in the Lives of Young Children and Families
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Professional Development
- Technology and Young Children
- Understanding and Adapting for Developmental Differences
- Working with Families

Senior Capstone Experience (Formerly Practicum III)

This practicum experience is a six-credit course with 108 hours of either in-person field experience or action research.

This course must be completed after the successful completion of all other ECEMS courses. Prior to enrolling in the Senior Capstone students must have Senior Standing and instructor permission to enroll. Check with the student's faculty advisor for more information.

View a [list of all course titles and descriptions](#) on the IDEA website. Or, checkout [the course planner](#) to find out when each course is offered and plan out a prospective course sequence.

Online Platforms

Each home university uses the Canvas learning management system for coursework. It is recommended that students become familiar with this platform prior to starting courses.

Civility in the Online Classroom

Students are expected to maintain an online environment conducive to learning. Therefore, the following are prohibited: making offensive remarks in email or the discussion board, using inappropriate language or discussing inappropriate topics online, spamming, hacking, using email or discussion board for commercial purposes, using all caps (considered shouting in online communications), cyberbullying, or online harassment of any type. Inappropriate



behavior shall result in consequences ranging from a request to correct the problem to removal from the course or even removal from the university depending on the severity of the behavior. The structure of courses in the ECEMS program is based upon the freedom of each student to express her or his personal views in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance. Some topics can be personal, sensitive, and sometimes emotionally laden. In the case of online classroom discussions, students may hear viewpoints that differ from their own value system, and this can often feel disconcerting and threatening.

It is essential that students weigh the appropriateness of how they participate in coursework for this degree. Although students' participation and opinions are greatly valued, disrespect of other students or to the instructor will not be tolerated, and continual violations to the above policies will result in students being removed from the course and/or the university depending on the severity of the behavior. If students find themselves having difficulty with any aspect, please discuss the problem with the instructor immediately via email or telephone in order to arrive at some solutions. Most difficulties can be resolved easily once the door for discussion has been opened. This approach will assist faculty in responding to student needs and in improving the course now rather than at the end of the semester during final course evaluation.

Late Assignment Policy

The general policy for the ECEMS program classes online is that assignments will be considered late if they are submitted after the deadline for which they were assigned. Please check the course syllabi for course and instructor specific guidelines regarding the late assignment policy. It is always wise to contact the course instructor if students need to submit an assignment late or miss an assignment.

Background Check

All university students must have a background check prior to practicum courses. There may be additional required background checks at the practicum locations, and students will be responsible for adhering to these background checks as required by the practicum sites. Also, there may be additional background checks required by the student's home institution. It is important that students work with their home institution to be sure all requirements are met. These requirements vary from state to state.

Health Related Trainings

Some practicum sites may require additional health-related trainings, check with the cooperating practicum site. Training may include CPR, First Aid, and Bloodborne pathogens.

Where to Get CPR Trainings?

Many organizations provide training throughout year including local YMCAs, county extension offices, vocational trade schools, etc.

Here are a few examples of on-line options available:

- [American Red Cross](#)
- [American Academy of CPR and First Aid, Inc.](#)
- [American Health Care Academy](#)
- [ProCPR.org](#)



Attendance

Demonstrate professional commitment by being punctual throughout the practicum experience. University students are expected to arrive before the start of assigned experience and stay through the duration of the placement. Taking breaks during practicum experiences is only permitted during times when the Cooperating Teacher/Professional is taking a break (unless medically documented as necessary). If the student is going to be late to the scheduled practicum experience, contact the practicum site prior to the scheduled arrival time and advise them of the late arrival. If the student is ill and needs to be absent for a scheduled visit, contact the practicum site and advise them of this. Communicate any extended absences or other concerns with the course instructor.

All absences must be made up. Please remember, the absence is the student's responsibility and should not cause inconvenience or hardship for the Cooperating Teacher/Professional. Please be patient and flexible in planning to make-up missed hours. It is the student's responsibility to obtain any required documentation of attendance at the practicum experience when the student is there.

Professional Conduct and Attitude

Be sure the impression students leave is a positive one in which students are seen as a dedicated, responsible, and caring early childhood professional. This degree program was designed to align with NAEYC's [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators \(2020\)](#) and [NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards, in adherence with NAEYC's Code of Ethics](#).

Professional Dress

These are requirements for students enrolled in the ECEMS program courses. Individual practicum sites may have additional requirements. While in their program students will adhere to those requirements.

University students should dress for active play and for the weather. Washable, appropriate clothing that allows a person to bend over and get up and down off the floor discreetly is acceptable. Clothing should cover all the following areas: bust, stomach, back, and posterior. All body areas should be covered while stretching, bending, or squatting. Halter or tank tops, cut-offs, short shorts or skirts are not acceptable. Check the home institution's policy on printed t-shirts.

Dress appropriately for the climate of the setting. Wear shoes that are securely fastened to the feet to allow quick movement without slipping. Check each site's policy on footwear. Dangling earrings and other jewelry should be avoided. (Infants and toddlers pull jewelry and it interferes with active participation with children.)

Children are sensitive to strong odors. Avoid use of perfume and keep body odors under control through use of deodorants, daily bathing, and freshly washed clothing. Avoid tobacco use and use mouthwash or breath sweetener if tobacco is used. Consumption of alcoholic beverages or illegal substance or being under the influence of these substances are forbidden.



Refrain from bringing unnecessary personal items to the practicum experience. Ensure that all personal items are securely enclosed and out of reach of young children. Check with each practicum site to determine where personal items can be safely stored.

Professionalism in the Placement Site

While in the field placement site please remember **practicum students are guests**. Students are expected to make every effort to ensure that participation in the field experience enhances the learning environment for everyone involved.

If the Cooperating Teacher/Professional communicates that it is not possible for practicum students to complete the tasks assigned by the Practicum Instructor, please contact the Practicum Instructor.

Each program has specific rules and availability regarding food. Depending on the practicum experience, food and drinks may be served to the children at snack time. Please look to the Cooperating Teacher/Professional for guidance on how the practicum student should participate. Be mindful of food handling preparation and any food allergies present at the site.

If the practicum students sees something that is concerning or unsafe during the field experience, gain a staff member's attention immediately. If time does not allow for that, directly intervene and ensure safety until a staff member arrives.

Use of Electronic Devices

While in the practicum site, be present in the moment. Cell phone use is not allowed. Provide a family member the site's phone number in case of emergency.

Sometimes it will be necessary to use an electronic device for documentation purposes; therefore, use the technology responsibly. The practicum student will need to check for photo permission with the Cooperating Teacher/Professional and follow that policy along with course requirements. Never post pictures of children, teachers, staff, and families on any social media site to maintain confidentiality. Students will use the secure video sharing platform for Canvas courses.

Confidentiality

Information about children, their families, and the staff practicum students are working with is **always confidential!** Refrain from discussing children and families in front of other children and/or families or outside of course discussions. Always remain professional. Talking negatively about the Cooperating Teacher/Professional, mentor, or any other faculty or staff member is unacceptable.

In completing assignments for the practicum experience, ensure the confidentiality of all children, families, teachers, and individuals the practicum student interacts with. All documentation and reporting of events should maintain anonymity. Discussion of children, families, teachers, etc. should only occur with the staff of the program or in assignments and course discussions. If the course requires that practicum students obtain artifacts (pictures, video, work samples, or access to the child's enrollment file) from the practicum site, be sure



to have written permission from the individuals involved to do so. Remember it is **unlawful** to post pictures/videos to YouTube, Facebook, and the Internet in general without written permission from the child's parent/guardian.

Emergency Procedures

Practicum students need to be familiar with posted emergency procedures and other evacuation policies established by the placement site. Discuss with the Cooperating Teacher/Professional what the practicum student's expected role is in case of an emergency.

Working With a Cooperating Teacher/Professional

Cooperating Teacher/Professional can help make the most of the practicum experience. Students want to build a good relationship that will eventually lead to a positive recommendation for employment.

Arrange to meet the Cooperating Teacher/Professional before reporting to the site. During this first meeting, discuss expectations the Cooperating Teacher/Professional has for participation in the program:

- Discuss the information in this handbook with the Cooperating Teacher/Professional.
- Discuss specific responsibilities as it pertains to the practicum course.
- Discuss priorities with the Cooperating Teacher/Professional that are pertinent to work within the program. These tasks may include information concerning curriculum, equipment, procedure, and other program policies.

Once the practicum student has met the Cooperating Teacher/Professional and discussed the items above, a working relationship has been established. Students are expected to seek and receive assistance and feedback from the Cooperating Teacher/Professional on a regular basis as students develop teaching and caregiving skills.

Plan virtual meetings with the Cooperating Teacher/Professional and Practicum Instructor during the practicum experience. The focal point of these meetings should be a three-sided reflective discussion on the practicum student's professional development including teaching and caregiving practices.

Practicum students are never to be left alone (out of sight of a staff member) with children. This includes taking children back and forth from the playground into a classroom where no teacher is present, taking children to the bathroom, etc. If a teacher asks practicum students to be in a situation where they would be alone with a child, inform her/him that practicum students are not permitted to be alone with children. This rule exists for the safety of the practicum student.

Code of Ethics

All students are expected to read, understand, and abide by the Code of Ethical Conduct for those who work with young children adopted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). All early childhood professionals are expected to demonstrate ethical practice consistent with this code.



Core Values of the Code of Ethical Conduct

Standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education are based on commitment to the following core values that are deeply rooted in the history of the field of early childhood care and education. We have made a commitment to

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of everyone (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

Student Privacy

"FERPA" is the acronym for the "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act" of 1974. (Sometimes this is called the "Buckley Amendment.") FERPA requires that educational records be treated in a very specific way to ensure the privacy of students and their records.

Notifying students of their grades via email is a violation of FERPA. Confidentiality is not guaranteed by this means of communication. Further, the posting of grades in any public space on the Internet (using the student's name, student number, or social security number) is also prohibited. Please do not ask instructors to send grades via email.

Military Deployment, Military Reassignments that Move Family, and Other Military-Related Hardships

Impetus for developing the ECEMS program was to be sensitive to the needs of the military community and their families. The following options are designed to help ease any transition that might occur during the academic semester:

- A student can receive the grade he or she has earned to date in the enrolled class provided that more than 75 percent of the work has been completed and both the faculty and student agree upon this option. The appropriate credits for the course and grade are assigned in the official grading period at the end of the semester.
- A student can ask for an Incomplete (I grade) at the end of the current semester if both the faculty and student agree upon this option. An incomplete grade is assigned at the prerogative of the teaching faculty member and follows the grading policy of the teaching institution. In addition to completing any forms needed at the teaching university regarding incomplete grades, the student works with the instructor to complete the IDEA incomplete grade form. The instructor assigning the grade will stipulate conditions under which the grade may be updated. While time limits of the teaching institution for satisfactory completion of coursework will apply, the academic advisor must verify the proposed timeline also fits within the home university requirements. The incomplete grade form is signed by the student, academic advisor, and instructor prior to providing a copy of the agreement to both the teaching university campus coordinator and the home university campus coordinator.



- If the deployment or reassignment notification occurs within the home university's withdraw time frame, the student may withdraw from the course without penalty.
- If 75 percent of the course work has been completed, the student and instructor may agree upon a date on which all course work and final exam can be finished prior to deployment or reassignment and prior to normal end to the semester. The appropriate credits for the course and grade are assigned in the official grading period at the end of the semester.

Child Abuse and Neglect

If a university student suspects child maltreatment while involved in a practicum experience associated with a course requirement in the ECEMS program, he or she should report such an observation to the supervisor of the setting where this practicum experience is taking place. After informing the practicum student's supervisor of the setting and Practicum Instructor, follow the state law for reporting child maltreatment. In some states the practicum student is considered a Mandated Reporter, which requires students to also report this child maltreatment to the appropriate authorities.

Professional Organizations

Every university student should consider joining a professional organization for the following reasons:

- **Support from Practicing Teachers/Professionals**
Professional organizations have many experienced early childhood professionals who can offer students help. Also, it is nice to have a friendly ear to listen to successes and challenges.
- **Annual Conferences**
Conferences are fun, and usually only members are allowed to attend. Veteran teachers/professionals give workshops that offer new ideas and fun projects to try in the classroom. It is valuable to network with professionals from the community, other cities, and states.

Suggested Professional Organizations

- **[National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#)**
NAEYC is the world's largest early childhood organization, and its focus is on the quality of educational and developmental opportunities for children ranging from birth to eight. Student members can receive either NAEYC's publication of *Young Children* or *TYC (Teaching Young Children)* for one-year, reduced rates at conferences, and numerous other benefits. There are also state and local branches of NAEYC that will provide students with additional developmental opportunities and benefits.
- **[Association for Childhood Education International \(ACEI\)](#)**
ACEI is a global community of educators and advocates who unite knowledge, experience, and perspectives in order to exchange information, explore innovation, and advocate for children. The mission of ACEI is to promote and support in the global community the optimal education and development of children, from birth through early adolescence, and to influence the professional growth of educators and the efforts of others who are committed to the needs of children in a changing society. For more information visit.



- [Council for Exceptional Children \(CEC\)](#)
CEC is the leading voice for special and gifted education. Through the vision and dedication of more than 30,000 members, CEC sets the standard for high quality education for children and youth with exceptionalities. The Council ensures needs of children and youth with exceptionalities are met in educational legislation, establishes professional standards for the field, and develops initiatives to improve special education practice. CEC is known for its information, resources, and professional development for special educators. Division of Exceptional Children (DEC) is the early childhood branch.

Guidelines for Finding a Practicum Site

Finding a placement site takes time, and students are advised to work with their ECEMS Program Coordinator and/or advisor the semester prior to practicum. The practicum site must be approved and secured prior to the start of the semester. This ensures that all the paperwork and background checks are in place and all parties involved are aware of the practicum requirements.

Students are encouraged to vary their experiences by working with different age groups in a variety of settings with two different Cooperating Teachers/Professionals.

Expectations of University Student for Practicum Site Placement

Prior to the start of practicum, the practicum student:

- identifies the site of desired placement following the guidelines given above
- seeks approval for this placement site from the home university
- contacts the potential site supervisor to negotiate the possibility of a placement
- contacts/visits the placement site prior to the first day of placement to confirm arrangements and organize a starting time

During practicum, the practicum student:

- is aware that they will be under the day-to-day direction and supervision of the Cooperating Teacher/Professional
- will show a willingness to take on tasks provided as development opportunities.
- be prepared to adjust expectations
- demonstrate responsibility, be active, and seek ways that the practicum student can involve themselves in a variety of activities
- is aware that all information is confidential
- will contact the Practicum Instructor immediately if arrangements need to be altered
- will contact the Practicum Instructor as soon as possible if they have an accident at the practicum site
- will communicate with Practicum Instructor if there are concerns about the practicum site

To complete practicum, the practicum student:

- will ensure that all assignments are turned in by the designated due dates
- will fulfill assessment components of the practicum placement
- will submit their final, signed practicum log



Appendix A

Program Outcomes

Standard 1. Promoting Child Development and Learning

Standard 2. Building Family and Community Relationships

Standard 3. Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families

Standard 4. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches

Standard 5. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum

Standard 6. Becoming a Professional

