

August 15, 2024

Wenjie Wang
Western New Mexico University
1000 W. College Ave.
Silver City, NM 88062

Dear Wenjie Wang:

Congratulations! We are pleased to inform you that the A.A. Early Childhood Education and Family Support program at Western New Mexico University is among the approximately 20 percent of early childhood education associate degree programs nationally to be accredited by the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs, demonstrating commitment on the part of the program and the institution to high quality and continuous improvement, benefiting students, the early childhood education profession, and young children.

We appreciate your patience in awaiting this accreditation decision. Please know that the Commission examined all materials submitted within the Written Response to ensure a thorough review, and to provide detailed suggestions for how the program can continue to build from its strengths.

In response to your program's recent renewal process, we are pleased to inform you that the program has earned **Accreditation with Conditions** from the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs. This positive accreditation decision is based on the Commission's review of the Self-Study Report, the Peer Review Report, and Written Response. The Commission evaluates the patterns of evidence indicating ability to support positive candidate outcomes in relation to the accreditation standards and offers feedback on program strengths and areas for consideration. Special attention is given to the use of candidate assessments and performance data to increase program effectiveness, capacity and innovation. The Commission would like to emphasize the positive nature of this decision, noting that approximately 75 percent of programs receive conditions, and approximately 95 percent are able to meet those conditions successfully within the first two Response-to-Conditions reporting cycles.


Accreditation is maintained through regular submission of reports and an annual fee; your reporting date is on the first page of the Decision Report that follows. Current fees and the report templates are posted at www.naeyc.org and in the [Accreditation Resource Library](#). **To meet continuous improvement expectations, the program must address the conditions listed on the attached Decision Report, in a first (and, if needed, second) Response-to-Conditions Report.** If conditions are addressed and removed, the program will remain accredited for the remainder of a seven-year term. (In particular: the program should plan to submit Response-to-Conditions Reports by **September 30, 2025, and, if needed, by September 30, 2026.** The program would also submit Interim Reports by **September 30, 2026** and (assuming conditions are successfully addressed) by **September 30, 2028**, prior to submitting a renewal Self-Study Report by **November 30, 2030.**) If conditions are not sufficiently addressed in either the first or second Response-to-Conditions Report, accreditation will expire according to the timeline on the enclosed accreditation certificate.

We encourage you to review the enclosed guidance document in considering how to address the conditions. We also host webinars twice a year for faculty preparing reports and have developed additional resources in the Accreditation Resource

Library. As always, we encourage faculty to continue to use the online community website to maintain compliance with the accreditation standards, prepare reports, and sustain a culture of evidence-based quality improvement.

Please contact Pamela Ehrenberg, Director of Accreditation Services (pehrenberg@naeyc.org), if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance as you prepare to respond to the conditions. We are very pleased to include Western New Mexico University in the community of institutions sponsoring programs that have earned NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs.

Sincerely,



Mary Harrill
Senior Director
Higher Education Accreditation & Program Support



Tiffany Hunter
Commission Chair

cc: Joseph Shepard, President

Accreditation Decision Report

This report presents the decision of the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs.

Institution Name: Western New Mexico University **State:** NM
Dates of Site Visit: March 3 – 6, 2024
Degree program(s): A.A. Early Childhood Education and Family Support
Date of Decision: June 2024

Decision: **Accreditation with Conditions**

Conditions:

- *Condition #1 (Standard C6):* Ensure the program is transparent with the public about its effectiveness in preparing early childhood educators.
- *Condition #2 (Standard D1):* Ensure that collectively the program’s learning opportunities and key assessments address the competencies articulated in Professional Standards 1, 3, 5, and 6 for preparing candidates for the ECE II designation.
- *Condition #3 (Standard D2):* Ensure the program’s key assessments accurately evaluate candidate performance related to the Professional Standards and Competencies.
- *Condition #4 (Standard E1):* Ensure the program accurately and consistently administers key assessments and collects candidate performance data from these assessments.
- *Condition #5 (Standard E3):* Ensure candidate performance data from the learning opportunities and key assessments indicate that candidates are proficient in the Professional Standards and Competencies.

Note: For conditions related to key assessment alignment to the standards and/or rubric quality, the Commission has included examples of the concerns that led to the condition(s), but the program should review all relevant key assessments to consider revisions that would address the condition. When submitting its first response to conditions, the Commission encourages the program to submit revisions for all key assessments that are cited in the conditions so that the program can receive comprehensive feedback from the Commission.

The NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs finds that this program demonstrates many strengths related to the accreditation standards. Some of these strengths are noted under the applicable standards below, and others are described in the Peer Review Report that the program received following its site visit. However, the Commission has determined that revisions are needed to address the conditions cited above.

The Commission wants to express particular appreciation for the program’s role in piloting new standards and reporting requirements. The Commission appreciates the pilot programs’ and peer review teams’ valuable role in clarifying requirements under the newly adopted standards.

The Commission offers the following rationale for the conditions:

Condition #1 was cited because:

Evidence of program objectives and program effectiveness data was not clearly listed on the program's website in a format that was accessible to the Commission and peer review team. The Commission noted that the website does list learning outcomes themselves, along with the program goals, mission, purpose, and philosophy (C6b). The program's Written Response to the Peer Review Report affirms that some information is available on the website and indicates that the College of Education is currently working on adding evidence to meet those goals, objectives, and outcomes.

For Condition #1 to be removed by the second report, the program must:

- C6a: Provide evidence the program publishes evidence of meeting program objectives on its website, in a place that is easily accessible to current and prospective candidates and the public; and
- C6b: Provide evidence the program publishes program effectiveness data on its website in a place that is easily accessible to current and prospective candidates and the public. These data include the number of program completers by academic year, the rate of completion within the programs published timeframe, and at least one other institutional designed measure that speaks to program effectiveness.

Condition #2 was cited because:

The learning opportunities provided in the Self-Study Report and reviewed on site, when considered together with the key assessments, did not demonstrate alignment to the full continuum of components within NAEYC Professional Standards 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 (Self-Study Report, pp. 271-318; peer review of courses); in addition, the learning opportunities and key assessments, when considered collectively, did not clearly address the cognitive demands and skill requirements (i.e., the "know", "understand" and "do" aspects) of Standard 6. In particular:

The learning opportunities chart within the Self-Study Report indicated learning opportunities aligned with all key competencies; however, some of the courses were listed incorrectly and some of the learning opportunities were no longer part of the indicated courses by the time of the site visit. The Commission recognizes efforts toward a continuous program improvement model as noted in the program's Written Response to the Peer Review Report: "The learning opportunities chart was created based on Fall 2023 courses. The site visit was conducted in the spring of 2024, and changes were made for course revisions since improvements are an ongoing process."

When learning opportunities and key assessments are considered collectively, alignment challenges were identified with regard to the following Professional Standards:

Standard 1: Across learning opportunities and key assessments, it is not clear that experiences are provided for candidates to plan for atypical development (Key Competency 1b), demonstrate planning for the multiple contexts which influence child development (1c), and make evidence-based decisions that support each child (Key Competency 1d).

Standard 2: Regarding Key Competency 2a. Key Assessment 2 did not include evidence that candidates have opportunities to demonstrate knowledge of theoretical perspectives and core research on diverse families (Self-Study Report, p. #). This component is also not clearly addressed in learning opportunities or other key assessments.

Standard 3:

- Across learning opportunities and key assessments, candidates do not have opportunities to use assessment resources (such as technology) to identify and support children with differing abilities for Key Competency 3c. Additional evidence is needed to support that key assessments and learning opportunities are grounded in the Code of Ethics and are culturally/linguistically appropriate (Self-Study Report, pp. 246-249).
- Across learning opportunities and key assessments, opportunities for candidates to collaborate or build assessment partnerships with families were not evident for Key Competency 3d. Key Assessment 5 provides some evidence of addressing Key Competency 3d (Self-Study Report, p. 253); notably, candidates reflect on their

understanding of assessment partnerships in ECED 1125, but there was no evidence found for opportunities to participate in assessment partnerships with families and professional colleagues.

Standard 5: Across learning opportunities and key assessments, core pedagogical content in math, science, art, social studies, health and physical movement, and music is not clearly identified. For example, Key Assessment 4 does not provide candidates with opportunities to demonstrate the depth of knowledge to meet Key Competency 5a or 5b (Self-Study Report, p. 224): candidates create two lesson plans, but directions are not provided for lesson plans to address each of the content areas. When learning opportunities and key assessments are considered collectively, it is not clear that all content areas are addressed.

Standard 6 (D1a): When learning opportunities and key assessments are considered collectively, the cognitive and skill demands (depth and breadth) of Standard 6 are not fully addressed. Information from learning opportunities and key assessments did not include evidence of opportunities for informed advocacy.

Standard 6 (D1b) When learning opportunities and key assessments are considered collectively, the full continuum of components is not addressed for Key Competencies 6b, 6c, and 6d. For example, in Key Assessment 1, candidates write a two-page reflection paper, with one of the prompts asking candidates what professional guidelines they will follow. The prompt does not reference the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct (Self-Study Report, p. 182). The rubric for meeting the key competency includes language that states that candidates consistently identify professional guidelines they will follow; however, this is difficult to determine with one response within one paper. There was no reference to working with diverse families and supporting communication needs. Related to Key Competency 6d, one of the prompts encouraging candidates to describe their strategies to engage in collaborative learning (Self-Study Report, p. 182). However, no evidence of learning from teaching teams or collaborating with colleagues is included. Candidates complete a reflection about strategies that they may use to grow as an educator, but there is no expectation provided evidence that they have engaged in continuous, collaborative learning (Self-Study Report, p. 185). These components are also not clearly addressed in learning opportunities or in other key assessments that measure these key competencies.

For Condition #2 to be removed by the second report, the program must:

- D1a: Provide evidence that the learning opportunities and key assessments address the cognitive demands and skill requirements (i.e., the “know,” “understand” and “do” aspects) of Standard 6.
- D1b: Provide evidence that the learning opportunities and key assessments address the components that make up the continuum of Standards 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6.

Condition #3 was cited because:

Many of the descriptions of candidate performance expectations for meeting vs. not meeting the Professional Standards and Competencies emphasize language that is subjective and/or quantitative. For example, in Key Assessments 1, 3 and 6: The rubric criteria and qualitative descriptions include the language of the standard and then subjective terms such as “consistently,” “inconsistent.” Rubric descriptions include words such as “consistently demonstrates,” “demonstrates,” “demonstrates half of the domains” to measure a candidate’s reflection paper (Self-Study Report pp. 183-185, 214-220, & 271-273). Language states that “candidates consistently demonstrate understanding of the importance of collaboration and continuous learning” but do not define specifics.

Similarly, in Key Assessment 6, “successfully meets expectations” is distinguished from “meets some [but not all] expectations” through the rubric language below; “partially provided” is vague. This could also be considered an example of quantitative language, in that candidates’ meeting or not meeting the standard is determined by the presence or absence of particular assignment components rather than distinctions based on quality of demonstrating aspects of the standard.

<p>includes structural inequities.</p> <p>NAEYC Id: Use this multidimensional knowledge—that is, knowledge about the developmental period of early childhood, about individual children, and about development and learning in cultural contexts—to make evidence-based decisions that support each child.</p>	<p>Strong evidence, 3 examples, and a rationale with theoretical support are offered. Explanations reflect usage and insights of using multidimensional knowledge.</p>	<p>Evidence, examples, and rationale are aligned with each other. Explanations reflect the usage of multidimensional knowledge.</p>	<p>Evidence is partially provided with no examples and rationale. The usage of multidimensional knowledge is not clear.</p>	<p>Analysis and examples are not DAP framed.</p>
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For Condition #3 to be removed by the second report, the program must:

D2a: Provide evidence that objective, qualitative descriptions of candidate performance expectations for meeting and not meeting the Professional Standards and Competencies are emphasized in the key assessments.

Condition #4 was cited because, as the program has adapted to the 200% increase in program enrollment, including an increase in hiring adjuncts, some data cycles were not captured during the transition (Self-Study Report, p. 45).

In addition, while the statewide articulation agreement is noted as a strength later in this report, the program identified in the Self-Study Report (pp. 180, 187, 198, 222, 244, & 265) and during the site visit that there is not a plan for collecting data on key assessments for transfer students, as candidates who transfer to the A.A. program do not transfer key assessment data. Key assessments are not captured for the students who do not take a course from WNMU.

The Commission recognizes the program’s efforts toward collaboration across New Mexico to collect candidate data for transfer students, and as noted in the program’s Written Response to the Peer Review Report: “Once the key assessment data collection plan is constructed among all universities and colleges in New Mexico, key assessments will be measured for transfer students.” The program also notes in their response, “a collection plan is constructed among all, and that starting in spring 2024, the data collection method has been updated to prevent data loss via adjunct transition.”

The Commission recognizes the program’s Written Response to the Peer Review Report: “Due to the New Mexico State licensure requirements and the New Mexico State articulation of the Early Childhood AA program, WNMU cannot make changes without agreements with other universities and colleges. However, the issues and challenges have been noticed at the state level, and the relevant discussions with possible solutions are undergoing.” The program is encouraged to review pp. 16-17 of the Accreditation Handbook for policies regarding transfer students, key assessments, and documentation of meeting standards.

For Condition #4 to be removed by the second report, the program must:

- E1a: Provide evidence the program ensures that faculty consistently administer key assessments across all sections of courses that include key assessments; and
- E1b: Provide evidence the program ensures that all candidates take all key assessments. If there are institutional/system-wide policies or context that prevent this, the program must describe those and describe how candidates demonstrate proficiency in the standards covered in Key Assessments that are not taken by transfer students. More information regarding key assessment expectations can be found on p. 17 of the Accreditation Handbook.

Condition #5 was cited because fewer than 80% of the candidates are meeting Standards 1, 3, and 6. The Commission recognizes the program’s efforts toward ensuring candidate performance data meets or exceeds each of the Standards; the program has noted plans for improvement in each of the Standards that fall below 80% candidate proficiency requirement.

For Condition #5 to be removed by the second report, the program must:

E3a: Provide evidence that candidate performance data on key assessments demonstrates that at least 80 percent of candidates have met each standard.

First Response-to-Conditions Report Due: September 30, 2025

Accreditation Decision Report: The Accreditation Standards

Nationally accredited programs must substantially meet the Accreditation Standards through evidence provided in the Self-Study Report and Peer Review Team site visit. The accreditation decision is based on evidence that the program meets the Accreditation Standards through four indicators: documented learning opportunities, key assessments, data on candidate performance on key assessments, and use of that data to improve the program in relation to the accreditation standards. (NAEYC Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation Handbook, p. 37, 60).

Notable strengths in relation to Accreditation Standards A, B, C, and/or F:

- Two strengths related to Standard B are the qualifications and diversity of the faculty. Relating to B1a, all full-time faculty teaching in the program have graduate degrees in early childhood education and/or curriculum instruction (Self-Study Report pp. 36-37 and 89-132), and, relating to B2a and B2b, faculty members are diverse and reflect the candidate population (Self-Study Report, pp. 39-41). The program recently recruited a Native American faculty member to support growth for indigenous students.
- Courses were developed using the New Mexico Common Core Content Early Childhood Educators. The classes align with other New Mexico colleges and universities and are used for statewide articulation (Self-Study Report, p. 49). A notable strength of Standard C in the program is a part of a professional development pathway (C2b). Candidates with an earned a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential can waive two courses (Self-Study Report, p. 50). The Early Childhood A.A. feeds into the B.A. program for Early Childhood Education (coordinator interview), and New Mexico has a statewide articulation agreement which simplifies transferring to any college or university (Self-Study Report, p. 49).
- Field experiences are embedded into each core course, starting with observation and progressing to application with evaluation as candidates gain competence (Self-Study Report, p. 77). The Office of Clinical Experiences tracks candidate experiences utilizing TK20 (Self-Study Report, p. 79). Candidates have in excess of 197 hours.
- The 200% enrollment increase from Fall 2021 to Fall 2022 was a great opportunity and challenge for the department. According to the Self-Study Report (p. 34), a field placement coordinator and academic advisor as well as several adjuncts were hired to meet the increased enrollment demands.

Notable strengths in relation to the Professional Standards and Competencies as addressed through Accreditation Standards D and E:

- Candidates have opportunities for hands-on experiences throughout the program and receive regular feedback from faculty members (Self-Study Report, pp. 63 & 70).
- The faculty work to regularly review candidate performance. The available data are reviewed by the full-time faculty (Self-Study Report, p. 65) and course revisions are made accordingly (Self-Study Report, p. 66).

Suggested Areas for Consideration:

The alignment areas noted under Condition #2 were areas where alignment was not clearly identified when learning opportunities and key assessments were considered together. In addition to these, the Commission identified several areas where alignment was found within the learning opportunities and key assessments collectively (and thus was not included in the condition); however, alignment was stronger in some of the indicated places than others. Therefore, when revising key assessments in response to the conditions, the program is encouraged to strengthen alignment with the key competencies in these additional areas as well:

- In Key Assessment 3, several lines in the instructions are linked to Key Competency 1a but were not found to be aligned. This key competency was aligned elsewhere within learning opportunities; candidates plan activities using their knowledge of child development (ECED 2120 and ECED 2130) (and thus was not included within Condition #2), but the program is encouraged to review this area when revising key assessments in response to

the conditions. Similarly, Key Assessment 1 provides limited alignment to Key Competency 1a, as candidates do not have an opportunity to describe brain development, executive functioning, influence of adverse conditions on development, play, or influence of social relationships (Self-Study Report, p. 182). Key Assessment 6 provides limited alignment to Key Competency 1a, candidates are to state what they would like to know more about in a child's development to analyze their behavior. The qualitative rubric description has a clearer alignment to the standard as compared with the instructions.

- In Key Assessment 5 (Self-Study Report, pp. 243-263), while the rubric qualitative descriptions for the child portrait demonstrate alignment to Key Competency 2b, the candidate instructions (i.e., reflection questions) do not include this alignment.
- Similarly, in Key Assessment 4, the rubric descriptions for Key Competency 5c are much more extensive than the instructions to candidates. Candidates will be assessed on expectations that are not clearly articulated in the instructions; however, some of these are also not clearly aligned with the standard: candidates are assessed on grammar and APA style in the rubric score range, which are not aligned to Key Competency 5c (Self-Study Report, p. 241).
- For Key Competency 3a, the program is encouraged to consider additional evidence of support for multilingual and exceptional learners embedded in course descriptions and assignments (Self-Study Report, p. 144).
- Where Key Competency 4c is measured in Key Assessment 6, the qualitative rubric description has a closer alignment to the key competency; however, instructions to candidates for this assignment do not align to the rubric description (Self-Study Report, pp. 264-271).

Some rubrics include numerical ranges [e.g., Key Assessment 3 (Self-Study Report, p. 215)]; it is not clear how the point ranges are calculated. While not an accreditation requirement, when revising the rubrics in response to the conditions, the program is encouraged to consider whether additional clarity with regard to how points are assigned may be helpful to candidates and faculty.

Although the focus of Condition #3 is on distinguishing which candidates at least met the standard vs. which scored below the "Met" level, the program is also encouraged to attend to the distinction between meeting vs. exceeding the standard. In some places, especially KA1, one word (i.e., consistently) is the only difference between the level identified as meeting vs. surpassing the standard. (The program is also encouraged to consider whether consistently using the same rubric headers across key assessments might provide greater clarity to students regarding which performance levels are intended as meeting expectations.)

Some rubric lines include multiple elements for each key competency (for example, in Key Assessment 2 (Self-Study Report, p. 192). Candidates can score in "Does Not Meet" for one portion of NAEYC 2a and "Developing" for another portion of NAEYC 2a, and "Meets Expectations" for another portion of NAEYC 2a. In its data analysis, the program is encouraged to explain the use of the different sources of data, and how they contribute different useful information to the program.

Because of the transition to new standards, data in the Self-Study Report were derived from a combination of current and previous key assessments, and some new key assessments did not yet have data available. The expectation is that the program collects data on all newly revised key assessments moving forward; the program is also encouraged to consider providing evidence of a summative number/percentage by standard (to ensure 80% mastery) and by key competency.

For various reasons, it is challenging for many students, especially nontraditional students, to meet the current practicum requirements, such as 60 hours in a different classroom; challenges have occurred for students in rural areas with limited childcare options, especially for infants and toddlers, as well in cases of not having qualified mentors, and for students working as a full-time teacher in the classroom (Self-Study Report, p. 87). Candidates have experienced placement coordination issues that impact their ability to complete required hours by due dates, and have also experienced difficulty in communicating with the field experience coordinator (candidate interview). The program currently allows students to observe in-person or watch videos to earn their practicum observation hours; the program

is encouraged to consider whether further adjustments to the field placement schedule, process, and/or locations could help to reduce challenges.

The Commission supports the program's plan to work with other universities and colleges in the state to develop agreements to secure funding support to assist mentors' mentorship, lack of travel funds to assist faculty members' in-person observations using digital supplies/tools (Self-Study Report, p. 86), and to secure funding/grant opportunities to create a digital observational library to meet candidates' needs, especially for those candidates who live in rural areas with limited resources (Self-Study Report, p. 87).

In response to the enrollment increase, it was noted in the Self-Study Report (p. 33) and during the site visit that an additional faculty member has been requested for FY 25 but has not yet been approved.

Note:

The Commission recognizes the many strengths highlighted by this accreditation process beyond those specifically listed here. Additional strengths have been noted in the Peer Review Report.

Reporting Expectations:

The following conditions must be addressed in the first Response-to-Conditions Report and must be met by the second Response-to-Conditions Report in order to continue accreditation:

- *Condition #1 (Standard C6):* Ensure the program is transparent with the public about its effectiveness in preparing early childhood educators.
- *Condition #2 (Standard D1):* Ensure that collectively the program's learning opportunities and key assessments address the competencies articulated in Professional Standards 1, 3, 5, and 6 for preparing candidates for the ECE II designation.
- *Condition #3 (Standard D2):* Ensure the program's key assessments accurately evaluate candidate performance related to the Professional Standards and Competencies.
- *Condition #4 (Standard E1):* Ensure the program accurately and consistently administers key assessments and collects candidate performance data from these assessments.
- *Condition #5 (Standard E3):* Ensure candidate performance data from the learning opportunities and key assessments indicate that candidates are proficient in the Professional Standards and Competencies.

Report Due Dates:

Report	Due Date
First Response to Conditions	September 30, 2025
Second Response to Conditions (if needed)	September 30, 2026
Year 2 Interim Report	September 30, 2026
Year 4 Interim Report	September 30, 2028
Renewal Self-Study Report	November 30, 2030