



Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges

Meeting Date: **June 11, 2026**

Agenda Item: **2.17**

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ACTION:

Committee: **Academic & Personnel Committee**

Action Item: **Addition of BS Applied Elementary Education K-6 - WSC**

This reduced-credit hour bachelor's degree program in Elementary Education is designed for students to complete the 30-hour general education requirements prior to or alongside the 60-hour program, which spans four semesters of integrated coursework and one semester of student teaching, utilizing a cohort model of prescribed coursework. The structure ensures students meet NDE requirements and follows the InTASC standards while providing a streamlined, literacy-threaded, and interdisciplinary route to degree completion. Forward-facing, these three classes will appear as one class due to the integration of content. This new program follows the Community of Learning model graduate program offered by WSC.

The System Office recommends approval of the addition of the BS Applied Elementary Education K-6 at Wayne State College.

ATTACHMENTS:

- NSCS Proposal to Add Bachelor of Science in Applied Elementary Education

Wayne State College

Proposal to Add Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts in Applied Elementary Education (K-6) Reduced Credit Bachelor's Degree

1. Descriptive Information

- A. Name of Institution: Wayne State College
- B. Name of Program: Bachelor of Science in Applied Elementary Education(K-6)
- C. Degrees/credentials to be awarded graduates of the program: Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts, Applied Elementary Education(K-6)
- D. Other programs offered in this field by the institution: Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts, Elementary Education (K-6)
- E. CIP code: 13.0101
- F. Administrative units for the program: School of Education and Behavioral Science, EDFL
- G. Proposed delivery site(s) and type(s) of delivery, if applicable: Delivered via distance modality through the Canvas LMS
- H. Proposed date (term/year) the program will be initiated: Assuming HLC approval, the program will be ready for marketing in January 2027 and delivery in August 2027
- I. Description of Program:

Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts in Applied Elementary Education (K-6)

Educational Foundations and Leadership Department

School of Education and Behavioral Sciences

Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts in Applied Elementary Education Field Endorsement

The Applied K-6 Elementary Education Field Endorsement is a reduced-credit hour education preparation program within the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences (EBS) and is governed by all requirements established and set forth by the School. This field endorsement serves to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, and competencies for teaching children in grades K-6 (or K-8 self-contained classrooms), and meets all licensure requirements set forth by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE).

This applied, workforce-oriented reduced-credit hour baccalaureate program is designed for adult learners, working professionals, and students with a clear understanding of their career pathway in the high demand of Elementary Education. This field endorsement prepares future educators to meet the needs of learners in inclusive K-8 settings.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **SLO 1:** Create supportive learning environments
 - Lesson Planning
 - Relationship Building
 - Respecting Diversity
 - Communicating Effectively
- **SLO 2:** Plan instruction with appropriate teaching and learning strategies
 - Lesson Planning
 - Assessing Learning
 - Curriculum Mapping
 - Content Knowledge
- **SLO 3:** Engage in professional learning for continuous improvement
 - Ongoing Professional Learning
 - Data Literacy
 - Reflective Practice
 - Continuous Improvement
 - Ethical Practice
- **SLO 4:** Cultivate professional relationships with all stakeholders
 - Leadership
 - Collaboration
 - Professionalism

Alignment

Please see the attached excel document. It is supportive information and shows alignment of the courses to NDE standards for the Elementary Education field endorsement, which is the endorsement linked to the ELED reduced credit baccalaureate program. In addition, the NDE standards are likewise tied to the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (*InTASC*) standards which are as follows and align with program standards for Teacher Education at Wayne State College.

Goals and Standards

Based on our beliefs and congruent practices, the following outcomes can be expected and assessed. The achievement of each outcome will require that teacher candidates develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

We believe knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be critical to the success of teacher candidates, and we believe they are inseparably integrated. Candidates need the dispositions to effectively acquire the knowledge that is subsequently used skillfully to facilitate learning and development in all students. Therefore, all three are integrated in the following outcome statements, which are based on the standards developed by the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC).

Standard 1: Student Development

1.1 The teacher candidate understands how students grow and develop.

1.2 The teacher candidate recognizes that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas.

1.3 The teacher candidate implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experience.

Standard 2: Learning Differences

2.1 The teacher candidate understands individual differences and diverse cultures and communities.

2.2 The teacher candidate ensures inclusive learning environments that enable each student to meet high standards.

Standard 3: Learning Environments

3.1 The teacher candidate works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning.

3.2 The teacher candidate creates environments that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

3.3 The teacher candidate manages student behavior to promote a positive learning environment.

Standard 4: Content Knowledge

4.1 The teacher candidate understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches.

4.2 The teacher candidate creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for students to assure mastery of the content.

4.3 The teacher candidate integrates Nebraska Content Standards and/or professional standards within instruction.

Standard 5: Application of Content

5.1 The teacher candidate understands how to connect concepts across disciplines.

5.2 The teacher candidate uses differing perspectives to engage students in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

Standard 6: Assessment

6.1 The teacher candidate understands multiple methods of assessment.

6.2 The teacher candidate uses multiple methods of assessment to engage students in their own growth, to monitor student progress, and to guide the teacher candidate's and student's decision making.

Standard 7: Planning for Instruction

7.1 The teacher candidate plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals.

7.2 The teacher candidate draws upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, technology, and pedagogy.

7.3 The teacher candidate draws upon knowledge of students and the community context.

Standard 8: Instructional Strategies

8.1 The teacher candidate understands a variety of instructional strategies.

8.2 The teacher candidate uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connection, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

8.3 The teacher candidate utilizes available technology for instruction and assessment.

Standard 9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

9.1 The teacher candidate engages in ongoing professional learning.

9.2 The teacher candidate models ethical professional practice.

9.3 The teacher candidate uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, families, other professionals, and the community) and adapts practice to meet the needs of each student.

9.4 The teacher candidate models professional dispositions for teaching.

Standard 10: Leadership and Collaboration

10.1 The teacher candidate seeks opportunities to take responsibility for student learning.

10.2 The teacher candidate seeks opportunities, including appropriate technology, to collaborate with students, families, colleagues and other school professionals, and community members to ensure student growth.

Standard 11: Impact on Student Learning and Development

11.1 The teacher candidate works to positively impact the learning and development of all students.

Standard 12: Professional Dispositions

12.1 The teacher candidate demonstrates passion, self-awareness, initiative, and enthusiasm.

12.2 The teacher candidate demonstrates skill in interpersonal relationships, reflective response to feedback, and displays evidence of appropriate social awareness.

12.3 The teacher candidate practices good judgement, flexibility, problem-solving skills, professional communication, and organization.

12.4 The teacher candidate maintains a professional demeanor and appearance, and displays dependability, punctuality, and perseverance.

Endorsement Requirements, 90 credit hours Certification Information

In addition to accreditation and certification information common to all educator preparation programs, the following information applies specifically to this endorsement.

To meet state certification requirements, 30 hours minimum of coursework must come from the following areas:

- English Language Arts (9 hours of CNA 100, ENG 102, and a literature course)
- Mathematics (6 hours)
- Science (6 hours)
- Social Studies (6 hours)

In addition to the 30 credits above, must have coursework in:

- Fine Arts
- Health and Wellness

General Studies Requirement

ENG 102 Composition Skills for CAT 1.

CNA 100 Principles of Human Communication for CAT 2.

MAT 210 Mathematics for Elementary School Teachers I for CAT 3.

Content and Professional Education Requirements, 60 credit hours

- EDU 128 Literacy I: Introduction to the Science of Reading (4)
- EDU 134 Elementary Content and Methods I: Building Curiosity (4)
- EDU 142 Pedagogy and Practice I: Understanding Learners and the Learning Environment (4)
- EDU 228 Literacy II: Application of the Science of Reading (4)
- EDU 234 Elementary Content and Methods II: Building Conceptual Understanding (4)
- EDU 242 Pedagogy and Practice II: Instructional Design and Formative Assessment (4)
- EDU 328 Literacy III: Content Literacy and Assessment (4)
- EDU 334 Elementary Content and Methods III: Building Connections (4)
- EDU 342 Pedagogy and Practice III: Intentional Lesson Design and Summative Assessment (4)
- EDU 428 Literacy IV: Literacy Leadership and Embedded Interventions (4)
- EDU 434 Elementary Content and Methods IV: Demonstrating Integration (4)
- EDU 442 Pedagogy and Practice IV: Professional Practice & Reflective Teaching (4)
- EDU 245 Preparing for Level II: Teacher Candidacy (0)
- EDU 445 Preparing for Level 3: Clinical Experience (0)
- EDU 452 Clinical Practice and Seminar for Elementary School..... 12

Course Descriptions:

EDU 128 Literacy I: Introduction to the Science of Reading 4 Credit Hours

This course introduces the foundational principles of the science of reading, including language development, phonological awareness, decoding, and vocabulary acquisition. The education student will examine research-based reading strategies and their connections to effective pedagogy and practice in content areas. Foundational concepts of oral language development and its relationship to reading acquisition are examined, with attention to how language differences, including those of English language learners, shape literacy development. Students are also introduced to the science of writing, including the connection between phonological awareness, spelling development, and early composition.

EDU 134 Elementary Content and Methods 1: Building Curiosity 4 Credit Hours

This course blends content knowledge with instructional methodology in the areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies at the K-2 level. Foundational concepts of art, music, and P.E. at the K-2 level, with intentional integration to enhance and enrich student learning in the core content areas. There will be an emphasis on developmentally appropriate pedagogy, content-specific instructional strategies, and standards-based instruction, while fostering student curiosity, inquiry, and active engagement. Age-appropriate technology tools are explored as resources for student engagement and inquiry.

EDU 142 Pedagogy and Practice I: Understanding Learners and the Learning Environment 4 Credit Hours

This course introduces the history and philosophy of teaching, how children develop and learn, and how a teacher creates an inclusive, learner-centered environment. Education students examine foundational principles of classroom environment design, including proactive behavior management, predictable routines, and physically and emotionally safe spaces. An introduction to how adverse childhood experiences affect development, behavior, and learning. Education students are introduced to the continuum of learner diversity, including students with disabilities and the role of multi-tiered systems of support, and examine the impact of families on student development. The education students engage in analysis activities of course experiences and practicum observations. In the practicum experience, the education students will engage only in non-teaching, supportive roles; additionally, they will observe the foundational components of the classroom environment. This course will include 25 hours of field experience.

Corequisite: EDU 245

EDU 228 Literacy II: Application of the Science of Reading 4 Credit Hours

This course extends the foundational knowledge of the science of reading and prepares the teacher candidate to implement evidence-based reading strategies in instructional contexts. Emphasis is placed on explicit instruction, flexible grouping, and integrating literacy skills into pedagogy and practice. Teacher candidates examine evidence-based writing instruction, including spelling, sentence-level composition, and the writing process, as an integrated component of literacy development. Strategies for supporting English language learners and multilingual learners through sheltered instruction, linguistic scaffolding, and culturally responsive literacy practices are emphasized. Candidates are introduced to systems of tiered supports as a framework for understanding how literacy intervention is organized and delivered. Digital tools that support literacy instruction and assessment are introduced.

EDU 234 Elementary Content and Methods II: Building Conceptual Understanding 4 Credit Hours

This course blends content knowledge with instructional methodology in the areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies at the 3-5 level. Foundational concepts of art, music, and P.E. at the 3-5 level, with intentional integration to enhance and enrich student learning in the core content areas. There will be an emphasis on developmentally appropriate pedagogy, content-specific instructional strategies, and standards-based instruction, while fostering student curiosity, inquiry, and active engagement as it leads to conceptual understanding. Technology tools that support content learning, research, and academic discourse are examined.

EDU 242 Pedagogy and Practice II: Instructional Design and Formative Assessment 4 Credit Hours

This course examines inductive and deductive approaches to learning and their application of lesson design through various teaching models, with a focus on K-8 student thinking and formative assessment. Evidence-based strategies for supporting all K-8 students using universal instructional design principles. Digital and technology-based tools for lesson design, formative data collection, and student feedback are examined alongside traditional approaches. Teacher candidates engage in reflection through analysis of course experiences and practicum

observations. In the practicum experience, teacher candidates will engage only in non-teaching, supportive roles; additionally, they will observe and analyze instructional design, evaluate how lessons support learning, and interpret evidence of K-8 student understanding. This course will include 25 hours of field experience.

EDU 328 Literacy III: Content Literacy and Assessment 4 Credit Hours

This course focuses on literacy development across disciplines, teaching candidates to integrate reading and writing strategies. Teacher candidates develop skills in data analysis and action planning. Teacher candidates apply literacy screeners, diagnostic surveys, informal reading inventories, and other assessment practices with attention to the diverse literacy profiles of learners, and examine how technology-based tools support data collection, progress monitoring, and differentiated literacy delivery. Disciplinary writing and academic oral language development are emphasized as essential tools at this level. Candidates examine culturally responsive approaches and language scaffolds for supporting learners in engaging with complex content-area texts and tasks. In the practicum experience, the teacher candidate will design and deliver literacy lessons utilizing strategies and practices that align with the science of reading.

EDU 334 Elementary Content and Methods III: Building Connections 4 Credit Hours

This course blends content knowledge with instructional methodology in the areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies at the 6-8 level. Foundational concepts of art, music, and P.E. at the 6-8 level, with intentional integration to enhance and enrich student learning in the core content areas. There will be an emphasis on developmentally appropriate pedagogy, content-specific instructional strategies, and standards-based instruction, while fostering student curiosity, inquiry, active engagement, conceptual understanding, student questioning and the seeking of multiple viewpoints, which leads to the building of connections. Technology integration at the 6-8 level, including digital research, media literacy, and tools for collaborative learning, is addressed within each content area.

EDU 342 Pedagogy and Practice III: Intentional Lesson Design and Summative Assessment 4 Credit Hours

This course prepares teacher candidates to implement flexible, responsive teaching strategies that apply content knowledge to support K-8 student understanding, with attention to engagement, collaboration, and differentiated instruction. Teacher candidates develop and practice proactive classroom management skills as an integral dimension of responsive pedagogy. The intentional use of technology to support differentiated delivery, student agency, and assessment is integrated throughout. Teacher candidates engage in reflection through analysis of course experiences, practicum observations, and practicum applications. In the practicum experience, teacher candidates will design and teach lessons utilizing strategies aligned with evidence-based practices for the specific content area; additionally, they will observe the use of data-informed instruction and differentiation for K-8 student learning. This course will include 25 hours of field experience.

EDU 428 Literacy IV: Literacy Leadership and Embedded Interventions 4 Credit Hours

This capstone course synthesizes literacy knowledge and practice, preparing teacher candidates to lead literacy instruction and implement embedded interventions, including proactive behavior management and predictable routines. Teacher candidates explore data-driven decision making, collaborative coaching, and strategies for supporting struggling readers, while connecting literacy to integrated studies, pedagogy and practice. Teacher candidates design and teach integrated lessons across the curriculum, applying evidence-based strategies, delivering targeted interventions, observing instructional impact, and reflecting on leadership and ethical responsibilities in literacy instruction.

EDU 434 Elementary Content and Methods IV: Demonstrating Integration 4 Credit Hours

This capstone course synthesizes teacher candidates' content knowledge and instructional methodology in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Teacher candidates intentionally integrate art, music, and physical education to enhance and enrich core academic instruction and support whole-child learning. Teacher candidates design, implement, and assess standards-based sequences of lessons that promote conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and transfer of learning across content areas (K-8), with emphasis on the intentional integration of disciplinary knowledge, academic discourse, and assessment practices to inform instruction. Teacher candidates demonstrate purposeful technology integration that supports student learning, engagement, and assessment across disciplines. Teacher candidates also address how to communicate learning goals and student progress with families as partners in the educational process.

EDU 442 Pedagogy and Practice IV: Professional Practice & Reflective Teaching 4 Credit Hours

This capstone course synthesizes knowledge and skills, preparing teacher candidates to apply effective teaching strategies and to reflect on how their decisions intentionally impact student learning. Emphasis is placed on designing and implementing sequences of lessons focused on intervention strategies, analysis of data to inform instruction, and organization and management of the inclusive classroom environment, including proactive classroom management systems, behavior intervention supports, trauma-sensitive practice, and their professional role within multi-tiered systems of support. Teacher candidates also explore professional responsibilities, including ethical practice, technology-integrated professional communication, and meaningful collaboration with families, caregivers, special educators, and the broader learning community. In the practicum experience, teacher candidates design and teach a sequence of integrated lessons across the curriculum, applying evidence-based strategies, interventions, and classroom management techniques to support diverse learners. This course will include 25 hours of field experience.

Corequisite: EDU 445

2. Centrality to Role and Mission

The Wayne State College (WSC) mission is to “inspire students through access to affordable, high-quality academic programs, personalized support services, and a culture committed to diversity, sustainability, and creativity. The college also strengthens communities by engaging students in experiential learning and leadership opportunities and serves the region through cultural opportunities, strategic partnerships, and innovative economic development programs. WSC has been a hub for teaching and learning for over 130 years and takes its role to foster intellectual and business to heart through offering over 130 programs of study, along with professional development opportunities and community enhancement events in the fine and performing arts.

With our signature education programs, honoring a tradition that dates back to the college’s creation as a “Normal School” for teacher education, WSC continues to train the next generation of classroom teachers and support personnel. The Bachelor of Science/Arts in Applied Elementary Education (K-6) reduced credit Baccalaureate program was presented to stakeholders and advisory groups prior to becoming a proposal for a new program of study, and we fully expect a high level of professional engagement from our educational partners as the program evolves and meets the unmet needs for special education teaching professionals.

WSC has consulted with the WSC Advisory Council to Educator Preparation (ACEP) regarding how the reduced-credit degree would impact teachers' ability to be hired in K-12 schools and any impact on how they would move on the salary scale. The ACEP partners indicated that as long as they had a bachelor's degree and the teaching certification, it would not impact our graduate's ability to be hired or their progression on the salary schedule. WSC has consulted with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to determine whether a reduced-credit

bachelor's degree would impact a completers ability to be certified as a teacher in Nebraska. NDE has indicated that as long as they meet the competencies outlined in NDE rule, it will have no impact. While it may be premature to have definitive data on how a reduced-credit bachelor's degree would impact completer's ability to be admitted to a master's program, a recent study published of 10 institutions indicated that the reduced-credit bachelor's degree would not be a limiting factor as long as the applicant met the other admissions criteria.

3. Evidence of Need and Demand

Regional Need for the Program

Elementary education shortages persist across the Midwest and have intensified in recent years, particularly in rural and high-need communities. States throughout the region, including Nebraska and its neighboring states, have consistently reported difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified K–6 classroom teachers. These shortages are not episodic but represent a long-standing workforce challenge driven by multiple interrelated factors, including teacher retirements, declining educator preparation program completions, increased instructional demands, and geographic recruitment barriers in rural areas.

National and regional workforce analyses continue to identify elementary education as a critical staffing area, especially in rural and small districts where hiring pools are limited and turnover is higher. Districts report increasing reliance on long-term substitutes, provisional hires, and emergency certifications to staff elementary classrooms, resulting in instructional instability for students in foundational grades. The persistence of elementary teacher shortages across multiple Midwestern states suggests a sustained regional demand for innovative degree pathways that expand access, accelerate completion, and support workforce re-entry for adult learners and place-bound students.

The proposed Bachelor of Science in Applied Elementary Education (K–6) directly addresses this regional need by offering a streamlined, reduced-credit pathway for individuals seeking initial teacher certification in elementary education. By lowering structural barriers to degree completion while maintaining licensure and competency requirements, the program is positioned to increase the supply of certified elementary teachers across Nebraska and the surrounding region.

Demand for the Program in Nebraska

Current Need for Elementary Teachers in Nebraska

Nebraska continues to experience widespread shortages of certified elementary educators, with particularly acute need in rural districts and high-poverty school systems. Elementary education is consistently identified as a statewide shortage endorsement area, with districts reporting unfilled positions at the beginning of each academic year and ongoing vacancies throughout the school year. The demand spans grades K–6 and includes general elementary classroom teachers, teachers with strong literacy and mathematics preparation, and educators able to serve diverse and inclusive classrooms.

Data from state reporting and district vacancy surveys indicate that elementary education vacancies remain among the most numerous and difficult to fill endorsements statewide. Nebraska school districts increasingly report challenges attracting qualified applicants, resulting in extended hiring timelines, reduced applicant pools,

and increased use of alternative or provisional credentials. These trends confirm both immediate hiring needs and a longer-term structural imbalance between educator supply and demand.

Persistent and Systemic Nature of the Shortage

The shortage of elementary educators in Nebraska reflects systemic workforce dynamics rather than temporary fluctuations. Declines in traditional teacher preparation enrollments, increased attrition during the early years of teaching, and demographic shifts across the state have converged to reduce the number of newly licensed elementary teachers entering the workforce each year. Rural districts face compounded challenges related to geographic isolation, limited housing options, and smaller labor markets, making recruitment and retention particularly difficult.

In addition, the instructional demands placed on elementary educators—especially in early literacy, mathematics preparedness, differentiated instruction, and classroom management—have increased over time, contributing to burnout and turnover. Together, these factors underscore the need for alternative, applied degree pathways that support workforce entry, reentry, and retention while maintaining high standards for teacher effectiveness and licensure compliance.

Enrollment and Workforce Pipeline Considerations

While traditional elementary education programs continue to prepare a significant number of candidates, enrollment trends demonstrate volatility and limited growth in recent years. Similar to national patterns, Nebraska institutions are experiencing challenges sustaining and expanding educator preparation pipelines through conventional four-year pathways alone. These challenges are expected to intensify as the state faces a projected decline in the number of high-school graduates over the coming decade.

The Bachelor of Science in Applied Elementary Education (K–6) is designed to address these pipeline constraints by targeting adult learners, paraprofessionals, and career-changers who already have college credit or workforce experience. By offering a reduced-credit, applied pathway aligned with Nebraska Department of Education licensure requirements, the program provides a viable route to certification for students who may not otherwise complete a traditional program.

This approach accelerates time to degree completion and responds directly to district workforce needs—particularly for candidates who are place-bound or currently employed in educational settings. As a result, the program is expected to contribute positively to both undergraduate enrollment stability and the statewide supply of elementary educators.

Summary of Need and Demand

The evidence clearly demonstrates strong and sustained demand for additional elementary education degree pathways in Nebraska and the broader Midwest region. Persistent K–6 teacher shortages, long-standing rural recruitment challenges, enrollment constraints in traditional preparation programs, and projected demographic shifts all support the need for innovative, workforce-focused solutions.

The proposed Bachelor of Science in Applied Elementary Education (K–6) responds directly to these challenges by expanding access to teacher preparation, strengthening Nebraska’s educator workforce pipeline, and aligning

institutional capacity with statewide workforce priorities. The program is positioned to meet immediate and long-term demand for qualified elementary teachers while supporting educational stability and student success across Nebraska’s communities.

Enrollment Metrics:

When creating a historical portrait of enrollment over the past five (5) years, it became evident that we could not use QAR data because it duplicates counts within a term (for example, a student majoring in both Special Education and Elementary Education would be counted twice in that term). For this request, we felt a headcount approach was more appropriate. However, we did include second or third majors in the totals, provided the student’s first or second major was not already represented in the counts.

Based on this data premise we were able to determine, from a “highwater mark” in 2020-2021, that average enrollment in the elementary education program has had small increases and decreases of four (4) years thereafter. The fluctuation in enrollment from year to year in elementary education makes it almost impossible to project future enrollment over the next five years for the program, and it is even more difficult to disaggregate enrollment for incoming freshmen students for a reduced credit baccalaureate program. However, the expectation is that opening a new pathway for non-traditional students who may have been unable to access the traditional program due to the face-to-face model, will lead to growth from a previously untapped potential student population.

With enrollment data taken at face value, the overall institutional growth over the past five years has averaged slightly over 1%, with a 2.8% increase in credit hour production over that same time, so a conservative estimate for future enrollment to at least match this growth figure is prudent.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Degree-Seeking

Undergraduates

Enrollment Trends by Total

Headcount

Academic Year	Fall	Spring	Summer	Total	% Difference Prior year
2020-2021	316	279	112	707	-
2021-2022	309	288	106	703	-0.57%
2022-2023	292	263	107	662	-5.83%
2023-2024	289	276	115	680	2.72%
2024-2025	307	267	89	663	-2.50%

2025-2026**	290	263		553	
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**Counts are unduplicated within each term*

****End of term data for all terms. Spring 2026 data is as of 4-29-26 and Summer 2026 data is not available at this time**

Enrollment Trends by Student Credit Hours

Academic Year	Total Student Credit Hours	Total Annual Headcount	Average SCH Per Student
2020-2021	9187	707	13.0
2021-2022	9063.5	703	12.9
2022-2023	8799	662	13.3
2023-2024	8931	680	13.1
2024-2025	9122.5	663	13.8

A. Faculty and Staff Resources:

Initial implementation of the program is anticipated for the Fall of 2027 calendar year (pending HLC approval), with direct marketing focused on students entering the program in the fall of 2027. This program of study will require additional administrative work for the Registrar’s office to evaluate transcripts, make necessary updates to the institution’s data systems and catalog and identify eligible students. In addition to efforts in the Registrar’s office, it will be necessary and prudent to provide additional advising training for EBS faculty and staff participating in new student registration, as well as faculty assigned to advise transfer students. With present projections, current faculty and student resources are sufficient to support the program’s launch.

B. Physical Facilities:

This program is designed to be an online program with a small synchronous component, and practicum hours and clinical practice completed in schools. The physical facilities needed to support the program include workspaces for faculty with accompany technology including computers with cameras, the learning management system, and other supporting software as appropriate. All of these items are currently available and within use by faculty and adjuncts teaching in face-to-face and online programs that currently exist at the undergraduate and graduate level.

C. Instructional Equipment and Informational Resources:

No additional instructional equipment or library/media resources will be needed to support the program as envisioned in its initial 3 years.

D. Budget Projections for the first five years of program:

Because this proposal is based on the use of existing buildings, equipment, support, and faculty resources, a projected budget pro forma is not included.

Former student re-engagement is a central objective of the reduced credit bachelor's degree. By awarding the reduced credit baccalaureate degree we have an opportunity to increase income potential and expand career opportunities for these former students and or new students by creating a pathway for them to reengage in higher education and continue their journey to a bachelor's degree without significant cost and or roadblocks allowing them to enter the workforce with a shorter launch pad. With the number of high school graduates projected to decline significantly in Nebraska starting in the next few years, we view the reduced credit baccalaureate degree initiative as an important tool to promote re-engagement and re-enrollment of adult learners and open avenues for workforce development in our state.

The program does therefore have the potential to marginally increase undergraduate enrollment. After the program is implemented, the nominal annual costs to sustain the program will be assumed by Wayne State College as part of the operational budget for EBS.

4. Avoidance of Unnecessary Duplication

While the reduced credit baccalaureate program in elementary education is similar to the 120-credit version of the program, specific areas of expertise have been removed from the more traditional program to allow for a leaner pathway to completion. In addition, the vast majority of regional institutions who house a School of Education offer a degree option in Elementary Education, so the major difference lies in the reduced credit feature of this program, which sets it apart from other regional institutions (not included NSCS sister institutions) and really excludes program duplication.

To be specific, Colleges & Universities That Accept Reduced-Credit or Three-Year Bachelor's Degrees for Graduate Admission are not in the norm in higher education.

Because "reduced-credit baccalaureate programs" (often 90–100 credits or European 180 ECTS degrees) are still emerging in the U.S., acceptance varies by institution. Acceptance generally hinges on regional accreditor policy and institution-specific policies and priorities.

Given there is no universal acceptance at this time for reduced credit baccalaureate programs, it is essential that institutions that grant reduced credit baccalaureate degree programs have focused advising for students engaged in reduced credit programs, so students are aware of possible delimitations that might affect employability and/or acceptance into graduate school. This additional advising overlay in itself makes reduced credit baccalaureate programs unique and not subject to duplication.

5. Program Differentiation (to be completed if a traditional pathway for the major already exists)

The previously stated program learning outcomes are the same for the reduced-credit elementary education program as for the traditional elementary education program. While the program learning outcomes are the same, the program is designed differently to meet non-traditional student needs. Courses are divided into three strands: Literacy, Pedagogy and Clinical Practice, and Integrated Studies. Students will take one 4-credit hour course in each strand each semester. The three courses will be co-taught by two instructors. These courses are aligned so that projects, fieldwork, and assessments are shared through an integrated approach. As mentioned above, this applied, workforce-oriented reduced-credit hour baccalaureate program is designed for adult learners, working professionals, and students with a clear understanding of their career pathway in the high demand of elementary education. This field endorsement prepares future educators to meet the needs of learners in inclusive K-12 settings.

6. Accreditation, Quality Assurance, and Regulatory Considerations

The program as planned meets all applicable certification standards currently established for teacher certification through the Nebraska Department of Education. The previously stated program learning outcomes are the same for the reduced-credit Elementary Education program as for the traditional Elementary Education program. While the program learning outcomes are the same, the number of areas of expertise are reduced as the degree will only include the elementary education endorsement and not a second area of expertise (endorsement). Overall accreditation is a function of general accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and the HLC specifically provides for additional vetting and review for proposed programs through their substantive change application process.

7. Consistency with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education

The proposed reduced-credit degree program aligns with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education. It is designed to meet the needs of students through open access admissions, affordability both in the cost per credit hour and the reduced number of credit hours required to complete the program and plans to partner with early credit hour and community college pathways. The program is designed to meet the specialized workforce needs of our K-12 educational partners, in alignment with certification standards as stated by the Nebraska Department of Education.