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GWU School of Education Plans for a New Birth to Kindergarten (BK) Education Degree

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BK Program Options to Emphasize Child Development and Professional Education

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University is finalizing plans to provide education majors with a new

photo of two young children

degree option. The School of Education recently developed a Bachelor of Science in Birth to Kindergarten (BK) Education degree program, pending accreditation approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

“Research has proven that strong early childhood programs can have a positive lifelong impact on a child’s academic, social, cognitive, and communication abilities,” said Dr. Jason Parker, GWU Associate Dean for the School of Education. “Children who participate in early childhood programs have the ability to create a strong foundation that can be built upon throughout childhood. This program will equip candidates with the knowledge and skills needed to help young children reduce or eliminate learning gaps so they can enter school ready to excel.”

Built on the foundation of other undergraduate programs within the GWU School of Education, the progression of coursework will allow candidates to undergird their learning in a cohesive manner. “We have intentionally embedded tiered, clinical experiences to allow all candidates ample opportunities to apply theory to practice,” Parker shared.

The 128-credit-hour program will be offered on the Boiling Springs campus as well as in distance and online formats. The cohort model will include a track for licensure, which will allow candidates to teach in pre-kindergarten (Pre-K), Head Start, and kindergarten classrooms. A non-licensure, administrative track will also be available to offer individuals an opportunity to learn management and supervisory techniques in preparation for service as an early-childhood program administrator. Students will complete a minor in professional education and a semester of student teaching (for licensure candidates) or an administrative seminar (for non-licensure candidates) to expand their existing knowledge of teaching by participating in varied clinical experiences in which theory is integrated with practice.

“The importance of quality early-childcare programs is being recognized at a range of governmental levels,” Parker acknowledged. “Funding sources are being directed at various early childhood initiatives. Recently, the state of North Carolina took steps that will result in a significant reduction in the N.C. Pre-K waitlist. Because of this change, the School of Education wanted to expand our program offerings in order to help prepare teacher candidates who can make a positive impact in the early childhood sector.”

In addition to clinical experiences in local schools and early childhood education classrooms, the School of Education has received funds from the Cleveland County Partnership for Children (Shelby, N.C.). The agency provided a \$12,000 grant to establish a model pre-K classroom on the Gardner-Webb campus.

*GWU's Birth to Kindergarten Model
Classroom*

“The addition of the Birth-Kindergarten curriculum has expanded partnerships with community supporters. The Cleveland County Partnership for Children has been an instrumental stakeholder throughout the development of the program,” explained Parker. “Tuition remittance will also be offered to select candidates in the program through Child Care Services Association’s Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood® Scholarship Program.”

Child Care Services Association created the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship to address the issues of under-education, poor compensation and high turnover within the early childhood workforce. T.E.A.C.H. provides educational scholarships to early-care professionals and those who perform specialized functions in the early-care system.

For more information about the new BK program, contact Dr. Jason Parker, GWU Associate Dean for the School of Education, at 704-406-3890 or jlparker@gardner-webb.edu or visit Gardner-Webb.edu/BKprogram. ***This program is pending approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).***

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.