

Dear Student:

Welcome from the faculty of the College of Education! We are excited about your decision to become a teacher and look forward to the opportunity to help you achieve that goal over the next three years. The purpose of this letter is to provide additional information regarding the two Unified ProTeach programs. The following information should provide answers to questions you may have about the two different teacher preparation programs.

Q: I know I have to choose between the ProTeach Unified Elementary Education program and the ProTeach Unified Early Childhood Program. What is the difference between these programs?

A: The elementary program prepares students for certification in Elementary Education (K – 6) with endorsements in ESOL and Reading, and culminates in award of the degree Master of Education (M.Ed.). During the master's year, students may choose from a specialization in elementary or special education. Those electing special education will be eligible for additional certification in Exceptional Student Education (K-12). The elementary program focuses on preparing students to teach in public schools with diverse student populations in inclusive classroom settings. It is a goal of the program to prepare teachers who can develop ways of educating all children, including those who have traditionally been labeled *hard-to-teach* and *hard-to-manage* students. Fieldwork in the program begins early and extends throughout the program including a year-long full-time internship during the master's year. As this is a campus-based program, field placements take place in local public elementary schools serving diverse student populations, including students who present unique instructional and/or behavioral challenges. Being fully prepared for a career in education, and eligible for professional teacher certification with the ESOL and Reading endorsements, requires completion of the master's program. Admission is available in both Fall and Spring semesters.

The early childhood program prepares students to teach at any preschool level (birth through age four) as well as kindergarten through 3rd grade. The program unifies early childhood education and early childhood special education, to prepare teachers for the "real world" classroom, which includes children of varying abilities and diverse background experiences. This program is designed to give students the tools to identify and accommodate a child with special needs as early as possible. It prepares students for two certifications: Preschool (birth to age 4) and Pre-Kindergarten/Primary (age 3 to grade three). It also provides endorsements in Pre-Kindergarten Disabilities and in ESOL. Fieldwork begins early and extends throughout the program including a semester of full-time internship during the master's year. The program culminates in award of the degree Master of Education (M.Ed.). Being fully prepared for a career in education, and eligible for professional teacher certification with the ESOL and Pre-Kindergarten Disabilities endorsements, requires completion of the master's program. Admission is limited to Fall semesters only.

Q: Why are there two teacher preparation programs leading to certification to teach kindergarten through third grade?

A: Although both programs overlap in the certification areas of kindergarten through third grade, the early childhood program offers the best teacher preparation for the early grades (pre-kindergarten - grade 2), and the elementary program offers the best teacher preparation for the higher grades (grades 2 – 6).

Q: Why would I choose the early childhood program with certification in preschool and K-3rd grade when I can choose the elementary program and get certification in K- 6th grade?

A: The early childhood program focuses on the young child (preschool, kindergarten, first, and second grade). The elementary program focuses on the older child (third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade). You should choose the program that will best prepare you to meet your professional goals.

Q: How do I know which program is right for me?

A: We encourage you to consider the grade level (early/upper) you want to teach at the **beginning** of your teaching career, and choose the program that would best prepare you for that grade level. If you aspire to be a preschool, kindergarten, or first grade teacher, the early childhood program would be the better choice. If you aspire to be an elementary teacher working in public schools with diverse and challenging student populations, or a certified K-12 special education teacher, the elementary program is most appropriate.

Q: What do I do if I choose early childhood and later in my career I decide I want to teach upper elementary? Or, if I choose elementary and later decide I want to teach preschool?

A: When you complete your ProTeach program you'll be eligible for professional certification in Florida. To add most other subject certifications in Florida you would simply prepare for then sit for (and pass) an additional FTCE subject area exam to demonstrate competence. In this case, the early childhood graduate would sit for the FTCE Elementary K-6 exam and the elementary graduate would sit for the FTCE Preschool exam. With a passing score, you are eligible for professional certification in that subject. The same is true of foreign languages, middle grades subjects, and high school subjects. There are a few exceptions (e.g. certification in Reading requires additional graduate-level coursework and the exam) but for the most part you can continue to explore your personal and professional interest throughout your teaching career. The certification specialist at your hiring school can assist you with good choices.

To make certain that you select the best program to meet your career goals, both the early childhood faculty and elementary faculty would be more than happy to meet with you and discuss this important career decision. If you would like to meet with a faculty member, please contact Ms. Robin Rossie at rrossie@coe.ufl.edu.

Sincerely,

The Unified Early Childhood ProTeach Faculty
The Unified Elementary ProTeach Faculty