

[Opinion] Creating Pathways for Elementary Education

By Angie Cole, Associate Professor of Education/Early Childhood Education at Central Oregon Community College

Part of the First MTM “Roll-out”

When the first Major Transfer Map (MTM) process rolled out under the guidance of the HECC, partners in elementary education pathways across the state were eager to be included. Leaders in Education have been anticipating a teacher shortage for many years and have worked to create an efficient pathway into the profession. Efforts have also been focused on diversifying the teacher workforce in Oregon. Without structured and sustained efforts to guide this collaboration the work was slow.

For years the higher education institutions throughout Oregon have created degree pathways into teaching that are creative, rigorous, and inspiring for students. However, they have also each been unique, and it has made the transfer process slow and often inefficient. Many students ended up spending much longer than to become licensed teachers in Oregon and many others lost motivation to complete the pathway. We know this inefficiency has particularly impacted diverse, second language and first-generation students.

HECC did ultimately approve the inclusion of the elementary education pathway in the first MTM cohort, and the result has been the creation of the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) Elementary ED degree.

AAOT Elementary ED Degree

The benefits of this new degree are many. First, it utilizes the existing structure of the AAOT degree. This allows for familiarity with requirements and includes many courses already offered at institutions across the state. The structure of the AAOT ensures that students starting at the community college level have a wide variety of general education requirements met when they are ready to transfer—and the identified courses will ultimately help students prepare for the Oregon Educator Licensure Assessments (ORELA) and licensure tests required by (Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC).

Advocates from the community college level are thrilled to have five education courses now identified as a part of the AAOT Elementary ED degree. We know that students need to have the opportunity to confirm their career choice during the first two years of college and by including Education courses in this degree, they will now be ensured of this opportunity.

In the past, students at community colleges may have taken an education course in their first two years, but it was mainly the result of choosing education courses as electives or having a good advisor. Now the pathway is clear and participating universities have all agreed to accept at least three of the five education courses that are a part of the MTM. Over time, the hope is to have agreement on all five courses.

Students can now find the AAOT Elementary ED degree outlined in many community college catalogs. The transfer process for the elementary education pathway is now strategic, efficient, and aligned across the state.

Annual Alignment is Key

The key to the success of this new degree is to ensure that community colleges and universities across the state remain committed to the MTM agreement and maintain alignment. Since the MTM was signed, there have been three alignment meetings. There is still opportunity for those institutions who are not yet participating to join in this MTM. For information about how to participate, contact Co-chairs Angie Cole, Cecelia Monto, or Laurette Scott (emails at the end of the article).

Advice for Current and Future MTM Participants

The Transfer Council’s Elementary Education Major Transfer Map (MTM) Subcommittee did succeed in collaboration on a new degree. However, this process was not without significant challenges and there continues to be work ahead. The only way to create alignment is with a great deal of discussion, compromise, and a



willingness to make changes for the ultimate good of our students in Oregon. Every person who was seated at the Elementary ED MTM table experienced loss in some way. Whether it was the loss of a valued class requirement, a program standard, or an institutional tradition—these losses were real and took time to work through.

In the end, the losses have slowly been replaced with a view of the “big picture” for education in our state and a sense of hope as we continue to work together for programs and degrees that celebrate our emerging educators and support them on their various journeys to their future classrooms. We have a sense of celebration knowing that the education courses taken in the first two years at community colleges can meaningfully transfer to our universities and provide students with a solid foundation to build on as they work to become teachers.

More Work to Do

Signing the MTM and rolling out the new AAOT Elementary Education degree have turned out to be starting points rather than the finish line. The Community College Team that continues to meet each month has now aligned outcomes for three of the five education courses in the MTM. This has been done with the support and sharing of syllabi from our university partners, and we appreciate this collaboration. We look forward to aligning outcomes for another education course this year. We are also working to align our advising efforts, share marketing ideas, offer aligned dual credit courses in high schools and consider supporting alternative pathways to licensure.

These are challenging times, but they are also times that we are finding can offer opportunities for innovation and collaboration at new levels.

For more information, contact Cecelia Monto Cecelia.monto@chemeketa.edu, Laurette Scott laurette@clackamas.edu, or Angie Cole acole@cocc.edu.