

School of Education Document #1188

Approved by the Department of Teaching and Learning: February 6, 2026

Approved by the School of Education Faculty: February 10, 2026

Request for Authorization to Plan:

Bachelor of Science in Elementary and Middle Education

SUBMISSION TRACK

This request is being submitted for consideration on the NOI standard track.

ABSTRACT

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) proposes to establish a reduced-credit Bachelor of Science in Elementary and Middle Education. The fully online program will help address the ongoing need for teachers in Wisconsin’s kindergarten through ninth grade (K-9) classrooms. Individuals completing this program will be prepared for a license to teach in K-9 classrooms in Wisconsin; UWM will endorse candidates for licensure through the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) upon successful completion.

The program is designed to meet the needs of non-traditional students interested in teaching who are currently employed in school districts as paraprofessionals or emergency licensed teachers, who are career changers, who are currently enrolled in the Foundations of Teacher Education (FoTE) associate’s degree offered by the two-year colleges in the state, or who face economic limitations precluding their participation in four-year university programs. Traditional teacher education programs often struggle to meet the needs of these populations.

PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION

University Name: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Title of Proposed Academic Program: Elementary and Middle Education

Degree Designation: Bachelor of Science

Suggested Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: 13.1202

Mode of Delivery: Single institution, online asynchronous, supervised clinical experiences

The degree will be offered by the Department of Teaching and Learning in the School of Education. Courses will be offered online in an asynchronous format in all semesters – fall, WinterIM, spring, and summer. During the program, students will be in clinical placements in schools near their home communities for three semesters; during those placements they will be supervised by classroom teachers and university supervisors.

Department or Functional Equivalent:

Department of Teaching and Learning

College, School or Functional Equivalent:

School of Education, College of Community Engagement and Professions

Proposed Date of Authorization:

May 2026

Proposed Date of Implementation:

May 2027

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Rationale:

UWM's current four-year BS program for students interested in teaching in K-9 classrooms is designed in a face-to-face format. This is a successful model for the population of traditional undergraduates wanting a traditional college experience. The School of Education intends to maintain this program even though competition for these students is fierce.

There are, however, potential students in Wisconsin who are coming to higher education and particularly the study of teaching with different needs and expectations. To better meet the shared, unique needs of these students, we are proposing an alternative degree program.

We have identified at least four different populations served by this degree:

- 1) Paraprofessionals and teachers on emergency license currently employed in school districts;
- 2) Graduates of the Wisconsin Technical Colleges' Foundation of Teacher Education (FoTE) associate's degree;
- 3) FoTE students who did not complete their associate's degree and want to earn their bachelor's and license; and
- 4) Second career individuals – with or without degrees.

For several of these groups, time and flexibility for learning matters as they decide how and where to earn their degrees and licenses. Paraprofessionals, emergency licensed teachers, second career individuals and, very often, students on technical college campuses are employed and/or have families. The accessibility of the asynchronous EME program will allow them to fit learning into their schedules while earning a high-quality education. We will design clinical experiences that allow students to complete program requirements while retaining their current jobs.

The FoTE is a collaborative effort among Wisconsin technical college campuses to offer coursework in teacher education. However, that program does not lead to the bachelor's degree required by the DPI for teacher licensure. Neither does it meet all the professional requirements for licensure. UWM's current program doesn't offer the FoTE student a smooth transition to earn the BS and a WI teaching license.

Need as Suggested by Market Demand:

Wisconsin faces persistent vacancies of licensed educators in elementary and middle school classrooms. For the 2024-25 academic year, the US Department of Education officially recognized an elementary teacher shortage in Wisconsin. ([dpi.wi](#)) That means Wisconsin is in the highest quartile nationally for relative teacher shortage (vacancies per 10,000 students). Out of approximately 60,000 positions across the state, there are about 2,400 vacancies and roughly 4,500 individuals not certified for the positions they hold ([Learning Policy Institute](#)). While those figures represent teaching shortages across all areas, elementary/middle school teachers make up the bulk of teaching positions in the state. Additional analysis by Teachers of Tomorrow identified elementary education as one of Wisconsin's "biggest teaching needs" ([Teachers of Tomorrow](#)).

The teacher shortage is exacerbated by a retention crisis. The DPI's most recent report on Educator Preparation and Workforce Analysis shows that after one year, approximately 22% of first-year teachers are no longer employed in a Wisconsin school. By year seven, only 55.6% of teachers initially employed in Wisconsin schools remain. Again, acknowledging these are statistics for all licensure areas; elementary and middle school education make up the largest piece of the K-12 system, as shown in the [DPI Annual Workforce Report](#).

Labor market projections indicate a steady demand for elementary and middle school teachers. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development projected an 8.7% increase in Southeast Wisconsin over ten years, 2020-30. ([Wisconsin DPI](#))

DPI's 2023 Report on Educator Preparation Programs and Workforce Analysis calls for new ways to increase enrollment in teacher education programs, and the EME program will help address the teacher shortage that Wisconsin is facing. The program will expand the pool of qualified teachers. It will do this in less time and at lower expense than the traditional 4-year program offers. The program will support the state's and UWM's goals to stabilize our education workforce.

Need as Suggested by Current Student Demand:

As an urban institution, UWM's student body is diverse in many ways including race, social class, and age. These identities only begin to capture the lived experience of working parents who want

to improve the lives of their families through education. Studying to become a teacher is a dream deferred by constraints of traditional college class schedules and fee structures, as we have learned through meetings with potential students.

Another group that struggles to fit into our traditional offerings are students who currently hold a baccalaureate degree but cannot attend our current classes. Our post-baccalaureate student population has decreased by approximately 80% over the past 10 years. The structure of the face-to-face day or evening schedule does not fit for many. The asynchronous nature of this program will address that concern.

Additionally, there are many teachers in the Milwaukee area that are teaching with an emergency license. Milwaukee Public Schools alone currently has over 200 emergency licensed teachers. This EME program can help to address the need of making sure Milwaukee's students have appropriately licensed K4-9th grade teachers.

Data shared by Waukesha County Technical College indicates that they have around 68 new and continuing students in their FoTE each year over the last four years. The EME program will be designed to meet the needs of this new population of students completing the FoTE programs across the state. Our program will provide the necessary components of a bachelor's degree and of a DPI approved teacher education program that can lead to licensure. We plan to work closely with advisors and faculty in these programs to ensure smooth transitions for students.

Overview of the Program:

The reduced-credit, three-year online program will be designed to allow students to progress at a manageable pace through coursework and clinical experiences with the support of faculty, a community of peers, campus professionals and advisors to make continuous progress to degree while maintaining other demands in their lives.

High Impact Practices

To learn to be an excellent teacher, one should experience excellent teaching. UWM suggests the use of HIPs or High Impact Practices. While all the HIPs will be employed, here we highlight four that will run throughout the program.

1. *Higher Complexity* requires students to work beyond their current knowledge, skills and understanding. Program coursework will ask the teacher candidate to research, develop age-appropriate lessons, teach lessons to classrooms of children, assess the children's learning, and evaluate their own impact.
2. The EME program will be designed to promote *Frequent Feedback*. Instructors, university clinical supervisors, cooperating teachers and peers will provide feedback on coursework and fieldwork.

3. Two more HIPs are *Real World Application* and *Public Display of Competency*. Supervised clinical experiences put students in classrooms and community learning sites to demonstrate their abilities and improve through reflections on those experiences.

Program structure

To help students balance school demands and life outside of the program, the program will offer courses throughout the year, including summer and WinterIm. Currently, the average semester will require 12 credits (or four courses) often divided into two seven-week sessions per semester with two courses in each. Summer semesters will be designed to allow students to complete an additional six credits. Winter terms will allow students to complete another three credits. Students will complete UWM's GER throughout the program.

To support the completion of the program, students will begin the program with a credit-bearing course on successful practices in online asynchronous programs. In addition to this, students will be offered access to an online community in Canvas and invited to on-campus events for all students in the traditional EME and online programs.

Student Supports

Current staff in the School of Education, including the Office of Clinical Experiences, CCEP's academic advisors, the Student Well-Being Manager, and the scholarship officer, will be available to students virtually and in person to assist the teacher candidates. This will be important to help with their success in program and school/life balance.

Projected Time to Degree:

The program will be proposed as a reduced-credit degree which a student can complete in three years.

Actual time to complete the degree will vary depending on which, if any credits are brought into the program. Time to complete the degree may be longer as students will be able to meet the program requirements at their own pace.

Accreditation:

This program requires no accreditation. However, we will submit the necessary documentation to DPI for approval to offer a new licensure program. We do not see this as a barrier as UWM's licensure programs have met these requirements for many years.

As a new reduced-credit bachelor's program, it will also require Higher Learning Commission approval.

Institution and Universities of Wisconsin Program Array:

The EME Program fits well into UWM's program array as it fills a gap that currently exists in the School of Education's offerings. The only way a student can earn a degree leading to licensure is through our traditional face-to-face pathways and earning 120 credits.

The Higher Learning Commission recently approved the awarding of bachelor's degrees by IHE's for fewer than 120 credits. This program will create that option for our teacher education programs at UWM and in the System.

Anticipated Resources:

To deliver the EME Program, we will leverage current faculty and teaching faculty for course development. A current teaching faculty member with expertise in K-9 education in the SoE will act as the program director. This individual will manage day-to-day operations, work with DPI, oversee the curriculum, and provide instruction. They will also promote the program to and collaborate with districts interested in providing the program for their paraprofessionals.

The EME Program will be delivered through distance education courses (except for clinical experiences). UWM has long been a leader in online education. We offer more than 900 courses online in a typical year. Distance learning technologies are available at UWM as are resources for pedagogical course design and practice support through the campus' technology support unit and the Center for Advancing Student Learning.