

**Teaching Elementary Agriculture Education:  
A New Approach to Preparing Educators**

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### **Introduction**

The adoption of agriculture education into the elementary curriculum and schools has gained momentum nationwide (ARK House Bill 1336, 2018; GA Senate Bill 330, 2018; TX Senate Bill 801, 2021), with Georgia at the forefront of this movement. In 2022, the Georgia legislature passed a bill to transition elementary agriculture education programs from pilot programs to an ongoing option for Georgia elementary schools (GA House Bill 1303, 2022). While this legislation presents an exciting opportunity for interdisciplinary learning, it also poses challenges for teacher preparation programs and practicing teachers. Elementary Education and Agriculture Education are two distinct fields, each with its own pedagogical approaches and certification requirements. The University of Georgia's innovative approach to preparing educators for teaching Elementary Agriculture Education is through the establishment of an EAE minor and endorsement.

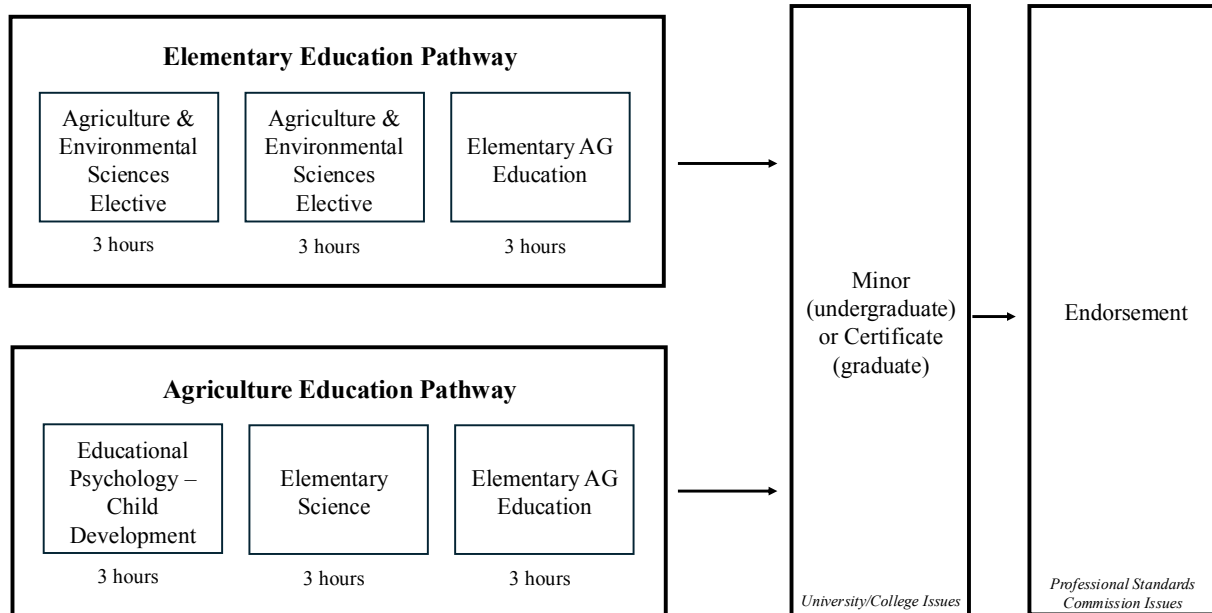
Agricultural Education is typically part of Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE), certifying teachers for grades 6-12. According to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC, 2024), Agricultural Education certification does not qualify teachers to instruct elementary Agricultural Education students P-5, which includes kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and Elementary-certified educators cannot teach agricultural education under their standard certification.

To teach Elementary Education or Agriculture Education in Georgia, educators must pass the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) in their respective areas (GaPSC, 2024b). Currently, there is no post-secondary pathway or GACE for Elementary Agricultural Education. In response, the GaPSC, in collaboration with Georgia Agricultural Education, and state colleges and universities, established an Agriculture Education (P-5) endorsement program (GaPSC, 2022). This endorsement program offers two pathways. One prepares Elementary Education (P-5) certified individuals to teach Agriculture Education content in grades P-5. The other prepares Agriculture Education (6-12) certified individuals to teach Agriculture Education content to students in grades P-5. Educator Preparation Programs are responsible for developing and determining the coursework for each pathway to meet the outlined requirements (GaPSC, 2022).

### **Program Design and Implementation**

Students in the elementary agriculture endorsement program at UGA are both undergraduates and graduate students. Endorsements are issued through the GaPSC, but the university also recognizes the work of students who complete the program. The undergraduate minor is designed for majors who want to specialize in elementary agriculture education. The graduate certificate targets certified teachers seeking to enhance their knowledge and skills in this area. The endorsement program allows certified elementary and agriculture teachers to add an elementary agriculture education endorsement to their existing teaching certificate. The University of Georgia's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences collaborated with Mary Frances Early College of Education to develop an endorsement program and minor/certificate program to ensure relevance and quality. To obtain the endorsement through GaPSC students must demonstrate mastery of child development and learning, developmentally effective approaches, use content knowledge to build curriculum, and mastery in Agriculture Education content. Figure 1 outlines UGA's pathways to obtaining the Agriculture Education (P-5) endorsement.

**Figure 1.**



*Note: Courses are not sequential for either pathway.*

**Results to Date**

Currently, the GaPSC recognizes Agriculture Education (P-5) Endorsement Programs from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Emmanuel University, Okefenokee RESA, and the University of Georgia (GaPSC, 2022). Each program approaches the endorsement coursework differently. UGA’s Elementary Agricultural Education Endorsement program has attracted students from both elementary education and agriculture education backgrounds. Students can pursue an endorsement regardless of their primary certification area. Due to the adoption of a minor through the university, students across the university can minor in EAE regardless of their major and certification status.

**Future Plans and Recommendations**

As we move forward, it is essential to avoid a "one-size-fits-all" approach. We must continue to tailor our program to the unique needs of elementary education and agriculture education. For institutions seeking to replicate this model, we recommend early collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including education and agriculture colleges, the PSC, state Agricultural Education staff, and K-12 schools.

**Resources and Costs**

Implementing this program requires significant resources. Hiring faculty with expertise in both elementary education and agriculture education is essential. Developing curriculum that bridges these two fields necessitates investment in instructional design and materials. By collaborating across colleges and with external stakeholders, the University of Georgia has developed a program model preparing educators for this field. As other states do the same, this model can inform teacher preparation nationally.

## References

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