



# **CORE KNOWLEDGE and COMPETENCIES (CKC's) ANALYSIS**

## **FINAL REPORT**

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on behalf of CT Charts-A-Course  
for the Professional Development/Workforce Sub-Committee of the  
Early Childhood Cabinet**

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**Final Report**  
**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**  
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**Introduction**

Connecticut Charts-A-Course (CCAC) was awarded the *Connecticut Workforce Competency Framework* proposal by the Workforce Committee of the Early Childhood Cabinet. In coordination with the State Department of Education, the charge was to review and compare Connecticut’s sets of competencies associated with each credential, certificate or professional development program offered to “teachers” across all sectors serving children birth through age 8 with the nationally identified criteria associated with a Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Results from this work will inform the development of Connecticut’s Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKC’s) for teachers of young children and will help better articulate the teacher competencies across settings so that colleges and professional development providers can prepare individuals to work in all contexts.

***Workforce Core Knowledge and Competency Framework***<sup>1</sup>(CKC) means a set of expectations that describes what Early Childhood Educators (including those working with children with disabilities and English learners) should know and be able to do.

The purpose of this project was to provide a research base for the future development of a ***Workforce Core Knowledge and Competency Framework*** for Connecticut, informed by work on Core Knowledge and Competencies from other states, and, importantly, reflective of the foundation for this work already in implementation in Connecticut.

***The Workforce Core Knowledge and Competency Framework***, at a minimum, (a) is evidence-based; (b) incorporates knowledge and application of the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards, the Comprehensive Assessment Systems, child development, health, and culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies for working with families; (c) includes knowledge of early mathematics and literacy development and effective instructional practices to support mathematics and literacy development in young children; (d) incorporates effective

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<sup>1</sup> *Core knowledge and competencies (CKCs) refers to the expectations for what the workforce should know (content) and be able to do (skills) in their role working with and/or on behalf of children and their families. These CKCs provide a foundation for professional development design (including instructional practices) and other quality improvement efforts. Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems. NAEYC 2009.*

use of data to guide instruction and program improvement; (e) includes effective behavior management strategies that promote positive social emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors; and (f) incorporates feedback from experts at the State’s postsecondary institutions and other early learning and development experts and Early Childhood Educators.

For the purpose of this phase of the research, Core Knowledge and Competencies for the role of teacher, solely, was analyzed. The working definition of “early childhood teacher” developed for this purpose follows.

***Definition of Early Childhood Teacher:*** Parents are their children’s first and most influential caregivers and teachers. During the course of their early years, however, most children in Connecticut will also have their development and experiences shaped by at least one early childhood professional – someone dedicated to the well-being of young children, birth to age eight, and their families.

Connecticut has multiple sets of competencies associated with the early childhood “teacher” role across various settings. This analysis focused on examining these competencies through the lens of the federal definition of a Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.

For the purposes of this analysis project, “teacher” was defined as those who have the direct care and education of young children in a wide variety of settings.

### Background

The Federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant application set forth expectations and definitions for states to build the foundations for a great early childhood workforce. The baseline for this work is a Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. The RTT-ELC workforce workgroup examined Connecticut’s current workforce status and documents that guide Connecticut’s workforce development. The workgroup found that:

- Connecticut has multiple sets of competencies associated with the teacher role and multiple certifications and/or credentials but no single framework that describes the expectations associated with the role of the teacher.
- Connecticut has some competencies associated with other early childhood roles but not for all roles and no single framework that describes the expectations associated with each early childhood role.

These findings set the frame for the first level of work explored by the Cabinet Workforce Workgroup: to further examine the multiple sets of competencies associated with the teacher role in order to set a baseline for the next phase – developing a CT Core Knowledge and Competency Framework for the teacher role and eventually all other early childhood education roles.

## Process

Building off the RTT-ELC workforce workgroup findings, the research team designed the following process in order to engage stakeholders across early childhood roles and sectors in the details of the work in efforts to also build momentum for designing the second phase; developing a CT Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.

### 1. Identified experts.

Experts in seven competency sets representing Connecticut's base of core knowledge and competencies for early childhood teachers were identified and invited to participate in this project. The seven competency sets included:

- State Department of Education Teacher Certification PK – 3 or B – K
- State Department of Education Teacher Certification Special Education PK – 12
- Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC)
- Child Development Associate (CDA) credential
- Training Program in Child Development (TPCD)/ CCAC Core Areas of Knowledge
- Infant/Toddler Credential (for Birth to 3 system)
- Infant/Toddler Certificate (offered by Charter Oak State College)

### 2. Introduced experts to CKC research plan.

Identified experts attended a full day Core Knowledge and Competencies Institute on June 21, 2012. At this institute, participants were:

- Introduced to the Workforce Core Knowledge and Competency project and its goals.
- Educated on the Federal criteria in the Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.
- Trained on the “Identify and Rate Process” involving the use of a rubric for identifying and rating the presence of elements in assigned national and Connecticut certification, credential, and training program documents as compared to the integral elements of the Federal Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.
- Grouped into teams to make a plan for accomplishing identify and rate homework.

### 3. Experts compared their assigned competency documents to Federal Criteria.

Working in teams, participants were asked to focus on analyzing the competency documents with a common lens – the criteria in the Federal Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. Team members were asked to choose a team coordinator, and take notes on their process and results.

Expert teams gathered to review each competency set associated with the teacher role against the Federal criteria of the Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. Groups were asked to find matches, within their documents, to elements of the Federal criteria of Core Knowledge and Competencies and then to rate the strength of the match. This Identify and Rate Process provided a map of strong similarities as well as highlighted gaps between the Federal criteria associated with a Core Knowledge and Competency

Framework and national and Connecticut's current certifications, credentials, and training program documents. A report on the findings of each expert team will inform next steps in the development of a CT Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.

4. *Coordinated unified vision and shared commitment from the inside, out.*

Participants attended a meeting on August 9, 2012, to report back their results; share insights gained from the Identify and Rate Process and offer suggestions, based on this work, for developing a CT Core Knowledge and Competency Framework for early childhood roles, beginning with the teacher.

5. *Organized information and suggestions.*

The research team gathered the input from the Identify and Rate Process and the contributed thoughts at the two working meetings to identify themes of importance to participants, suggestions they offered, and information on strengths and gaps in current national and Connecticut certifications, credentials, and training program documents as compared to the Federal criteria associate with a Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.

6. *Reported results and support the evolving momentum and collaborative vision.*

Currently, results from the expert team work as well as previous research on the development of Core Knowledge and Competencies in other states is being synthesized and a report prepared to be presented to the Connecticut Early Childhood Cabinet. This report will include findings from this phase of research, as well as recommendations for an action plan and deliverables for accomplishing an informed and organic Connecticut Workforce Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.

## Results

### Themes:

Themes that emerged from the expert teams after the Identify and Rate group process included:

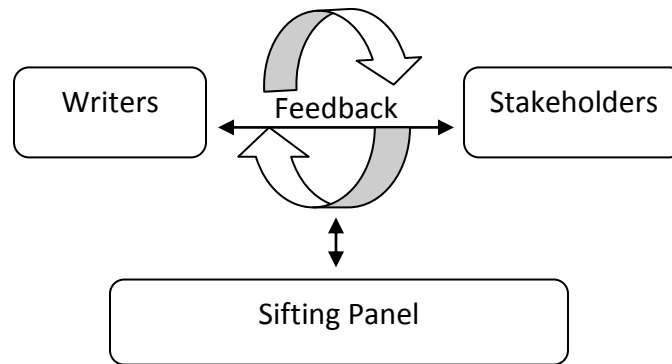
- Agreement that all documents included in this analysis should more explicitly state the criteria in the Federal Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.
- A shared sense of fragmentation between paths toward certifications and/or credentials. Suggested causes of fragmentation included different funding streams and legislation requiring different outcomes and a lack of a central governance structure to unify the parts.
- A shared desire to reconnect the fragmented pieces.
- Concern about how to measure teachers meeting Core Knowledge and Competency criteria.

- Lack of a uniform language or vocabulary across certifications and/or credentials to allow for ease in comparison to the criteria in the Federal Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.

**Suggestions:**

Suggestions offered from the expert teams after the Identify and Rate group process included:

- Develop a writing group that interfaces with stakeholders to settle on domains/categorization of standards.
- Involve a panel of stakeholders that “sifts” through information the writers gather. This sifting group should be representatives from roles that will be using or will be affected by the Core Knowledge and Competencies.



- Pay attention to breadth and depth of knowledge – using specialized standards such as those known in national sets (CEC/DEC, NAEYC, National Reading Association, etc.)
- Research and take into consideration the work of other states. Consider surrounding states and alignment across states as different roles have certifications that may cross state lines.
- Keep in mind during the process that measurement is important. We need to have a Core Knowledge and Competency Framework first before considering measurement tools, but as writing happens we should keep in mind that measurement will be needed.

**Additional Criteria:**

Expert teams were asked to identify criteria Connecticut should include in its Core Knowledge and Competency Framework that was missing from the Federal criteria. Suggestions included:

- Add more on application and knowledge
- Cultural Competency and Diversity
- Professionalism and Ethics
- Community Relations
- Family Engagement – especially in the area of building relationships with families
- Parent Education

- Self-understanding: Criteria around how one acknowledges their consciousness; that is an awareness of their values and beliefs and how their lens effects their decisions about teaching – intentionality.
- Differentiated Instruction
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- Expand content areas to include the following: science, social studies, approaches to learning, personal/social, creative & aesthetic, dual language learning.

**Patterns of strength and variability:**

Results of the Identify and Rate Process illuminated a pattern of overall strengths as well as wide variability across competency sets with some of the criteria in the Federal Core Knowledge and Competency Framework.

Across all competency sets reviewed against the Federal criteria, there was consistent strength in the following criteria:

- Incorporates knowledge and application of child development.
- Incorporates knowledge and application of health. However, despite high ranks, mental health and language specific to children with disabilities were repeatedly mentioned as areas in need of strengthening.

Across all competency sets reviewed against the Federal criteria, there was consistent weakness in the following criteria:

- Incorporates knowledge and application of the State’s early learning and development standards.
  - Only one set was considered to have strong evidence of this criteria.
- Incorporates knowledge and application of culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies for working with families.
  - Comments suggested language emphasized classrooms rather than families and noted a lack in specific reference to non-traditional families (same sex, grandparent, foster, single parent, etc).
- Includes knowledge of early mathematics and literacy development and effective instructional practices to support mathematics and literacy development in young children.
  - Only one certification was rated as high on this criterion; others all received very low ratings.
- Incorporates effective use of data to guide instruction and program improvement.
  - Again, only one certification was rated as high on this criterion; others all received very low ratings.

Across all competency sets reviewed against the Federal criteria, there was great variability in strength of match in the following criteria:

- Incorporates knowledge and application of the comprehensive assessment systems.

- While half of the expert teams rated their competency set as strong in this criterion the other half rated their competency set as extremely weak, citing the need for more explicit language.
- Incorporates feedback from experts at the State’s postsecondary institutions and other early learning and development experts and Early Childhood Educators.
  - Again, half of the expert teams rated their competency set as having this evidence, while the other half rated their competency set lacking this evidence.
- Includes effective behavior management strategies that promote positive social emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors.
  - No pattern emerged.
- The competencies reviewed are evidence based.
  - No pattern emerged.

### **Recommendations**

The research team designed and facilitated the process for the first phase in developing a Connecticut Core Knowledge and Competency Framework. Results indicate the desire to further explore the current fragmentation between certifications and credentials resulting in a Connecticut CKC Framework that aligns with the Federal criteria but also expands the depth and breadth of that criteria to accurately reflect the Connecticut early childhood population and contexts.

The Connecticut Early Childhood Cabinet approved funds to take the next steps toward developing a Connecticut Core Knowledge and Competency Framework utilizing the results from this initial research project, reviews of other State CKC Frameworks, and engagement in national learning opportunities such as webinars, learning tables, and national experts.

The following steps toward developing a Connecticut Core Knowledge and Competency Framework over the next 2 years were approved by the Connecticut Early Childhood Cabinet:

- Contract with a facilitator to engage cross-agency and cross early childhood sector engagement in team process work.
- Select a writing panel, review panel, and stakeholder committee that would interact with each other in a feedback loop process. The writing panel would consist of individuals trained in standards writing.
- Conduct a job analysis of the penultimate Core Knowledge and Competency draft. This is a survey to the field asking for responses to questions about the content, functionality, purpose, and structure of the document. Results from the survey will be considered by a sub-set of the writing panel, review panel, and stakeholder committee.
- Print and disseminate the Core Knowledge and Competency document using technology structures to multiple stakeholder and sectors in conjunction with informational seminars on the uses of the document.



- Continue discussions with agencies and stakeholders addressing coordination of in-service and pre-service delivery using competency-based foundations.

A Connecticut Core Knowledge and Competency Framework will provide higher education institutions, in-service professional development providers, coaches, consultants, and others who provide professional learning experiences for early childhood educators a common foundation to build those experiences for educators across multiple sectors. Certifications and credentials identified as needed for specific roles will first use the Core Knowledge and Competency as the competency-based foundation and add competencies associated with the unique skills needed to fulfill specific roles, such as special educator, interventionist, home visitor, etc.

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