

Meeting the Educational Requirements for Teachers Working in Publicly-Funded Programs: A History of the Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC)

Legislative Context: Public Act 12-50 amended CGS 10-16p outlining the educational requirements for publicly-funded early childhood programs. The legislation now states that by 2015 each program funded by the state shall have 50% of their teachers hold a Bachelor degree with a concentration in early childhood and/or a degree in early childhood, child development, child studies, human growth and development and the remaining teachers hold an Associate degree in the same areas. By 2020 100% of teachers in state funded programs shall hold a Bachelor degree in these areas. This legislation now brings CT in alignment with the federal (Head Start) and national (NAEYC) timelines on attainment of degrees.

The Associate and Bachelor programs are to be approved by the Board of Regents and Department of Education as outlined in legislation. After July 1, 2015, individuals that did not graduate from an approved institution and wish to leave their current employer to gain employment in another publicly-funded program must submit documentation to the Department of Education, in the manner that the department chooses, whereby the department determines if the individual has met the educational requirements.

History:

There have been many advisory groups of higher education administrators and faculty, representatives of the State Department of Education, early childhood education providers and other stakeholders involved in the development of the standards, process, and implementation of the ECTC. The foundation of the ECTC is to improve teaching and learning in the early childhood classroom.

2005:

- Public Act 05-245 was passed requiring a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or related field, approved by the Commissioner, in every School Readiness classroom by July 2015.
- A memo from Higher Education Early Childhood Coordinators was sent to the Early Childhood Task Force proposing a Birth to Age Five Teaching Credential and an Ad Hoc committee be formed to frame out the details.

2006-2007:

- The Ad Hoc committee was formed and became known as the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium. This group consisted of early childhood coordinators from Community Colleges and Bachelor level institutions. Throughout the year sub-groups of the Consortium framed out details that informed the work of the Early Childhood Cabinet Workforce Sub-Committee.

2008-2009:

- The Workforce Sub-Committee of the Early Childhood Cabinet (2008) developed a framework introducing the idea of an Early Childhood Teacher Credential.
- A credential workgroup made up of representatives from higher education faculty, state agencies, the head start collaboration office, CT Charts-A-Course, CT AEYC, the Hartford Area Collaborative, and child care providers worked on standards and competencies, an alternative route, a program approval process, practicum experience requirements, AA to BA transfer, and out-of-country and out-of-state candidate requirements. This work was presented to the Commissioners of Higher Education and Education.

2010:

- The State Department of Education determined that a pilot should be attempted to see how prepared higher education institutions would be to meet the standards developed in 2009 and to test the approval process. The Office of Workforce Competitiveness supported this effort. A report was submitted to the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (see attached).
- Work began on the recommendations from the report through the Department of Education. Correspondence from the Department of Education went out to the original 2008-2009 credential workgroup inviting participants to 1) review the draft standards, alternative route, program approval process, practicum requirements, transfer articulation, and out-of-state candidate requirements, 2) make revisions given that NAEYC revised their standards for college program approval, and 3) respond to the impending new legislation (PA 11-54). Members of the group that met represented the EC Alliance, 2-yr and 4-yr faculty, CT AEYC, Charts-A-Course, the Hartford Area Collaborative, and Departments of Higher Education and Education. Some revisions were made to the competencies to align with the new NAEYC standards and a pilot process was discussed and approved to assess a

program approval process designed for existing programs or development and approval of new early childhood concentrations and degree pathways.

2011:

- In March 2011 a letter from the Commissioner of Education, George Coleman, was sent to all 2-yr and 4-yr colleges inviting them to participate in a pilot phase of revising or developing early childhood concentrations and degrees. An application, a review process, and a technical assistance mechanism were developed for the project.
- The Early Childhood Cabinet Workforce Workgroup developed strategic goals focused on 1) approval of Bachelor and Associate degree early childhood programs in alignment with the NAEYC teacher preparation standards, 2) aligning competencies associated with multiple certifications and credentials to create a State Core Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Educators, and 3) studying disparities in compensation in the early childhood workforce.
- The project consultants conducted site visits to each of the seven institutions interested in the pilot, provided technical assistance in completing the applications, reviewed the applications, and provided written feedback. A second round of reviews occurred in December 2011 addressing those institutions that needed to revise some materials. Feedback on the second review was sent to institutions.

2012:

- Seven institutions were approved by the Board of Regents and the Department of Education as successfully modifying their current early childhood programs to meet the standards: BA level (Charter Oak, Goodwin, UCONN, and Post), AA level: (Housatonic, Gateway, Goodwin, and Tunxis). Indicating interest for approval in 2013 are Mitchell, University of Hartford, a CSU consortium as well as other community colleges engaged in the NAEYC accreditation process. We expect other 4-yr and 2-yr colleges to indicate interest within the next 18 months.
- A Credential Advisory Committee was created as a sub-group of the larger committee to provide feedback as the implementation process occurs.
- A memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed between the Department of Education and Charter Oak State College to co-design and implement the Individual Review Process for the Department of Education for those needing to submit documentation that they meet the educational requirements. A project coordinator was hired by Charter Oak State College to manage the work.
- Scholarship assistance was provided (\$350,000), in accordance with the criteria outlined in legislation, to assist individuals attaining degrees.

Next Steps:

- A pilot project begins in December to train reviewers for the Individual Review Process using teacher's portfolios. Findings from the portfolio development process and the training of the reviewers will be discussed with the Credential Advisory Committee for final revisions to the scoring rubrics and portfolio guidance.
- The first Credentials will be awarded to recent graduates from approved colleges beginning in January through CT Charts-A-Course after the Department of Education verifies the graduate's status. The Individual Review Process will be open to the general public in the spring of 2013, after recommendations regarding the process are addressed.
- Statewide overviews addressing the current legislation and the guidance to publicly-funded programs on meeting the educational requirements began in October and will continue through regional forums in 2013.
- Applications for a second round of college approvals will be sent to interested colleges in January. Reviews of applications will be conducted by three reviewers (an SDE consultant and two college peer reviewers) for potential approvals by the Board of Regents and the Department of Education in the summer of 2013.

Final Report to CWEALF
Career Ladder Project
Early Childhood Education

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The goal of the Career Ladder Early Childhood Education project was to pilot a process for awarding an Early Childhood Teacher Credential (ECTC) to graduates from associate and bachelor's degree programs in Connecticut. This project was developed to test recommendations by an ECTC workgroup regarding educational requirements to enhance the quality of the early childhood workforce. The major outcomes of this work is 1) ECTC criteria and competencies are in place for college and university programs, 2) three college programs are ready to be approved for the ECTC and four others are close to being ready to be approved and 3) information regarding the staffing requirements for appropriate technical assistance and the program approval process has been gathered.

The following specific steps were taken under this project:

- A Committee was established in December 2010 consisting of interested members of the original ECTC Committee with additional stakeholders added. The Committee revised the process and criteria for approval of associate or bachelor's degree programs and the competencies that need to be met in accordance with changes in the standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Graduates of approved programs will be eligible for the Early Childhood Teacher Credential.
- Announcements were sent to colleges and universities in the state explaining the ECTC pilot and requesting volunteer institutions interested in participating in the pilot. Four associate degree programs (Gateway, Housatonic, Tunxis and Goodwin) and four bachelor's degree programs (Charter Oak, Goodwin, Post and UConn) submitted complete applications. Other institutions (including Capital, Middlesex, Eastern, Mitchell, Southern, Saint Joseph, and the University of Hartford) expressed an interest in participating once the first round of the pilot is completed.
- The ECTC applications required extensive information about the ECE program and how that program met the stated criteria and ECE competencies. In addition, the institution was required to demonstrate through five key assessments that students were meeting those standards and how data from those key assessments would be used for program improvement. Applications were reviewed by Dr. Deb Adams from the State Department of Education and the consultants on this project. In most cases, the institutions were asked to submit additional information. Since the two- year programs all recently prepared NAEYC Self-Study reports that addressed most of the pilot program criteria and competencies, only minor revisions were requested. The four-year institutions needed to submit more substantive information to address some criteria and assessment questions.
- To assist four-year institutions with the assessment process, a workshop was held in September on developing Key Assessments and rubrics. All applicant institutions and other four-year institutions were invited. This was done to provide technical assistance to institutions considering submitting applications in the future.

- The additional information submitted by the institution was reviewed. The process has been completed for Gateway, Housatonic and Tunxis Community Colleges and once the official approval process is determined, students graduating from these programs will receive the ECTC through an individual application process to SDE. Final revisions are being made by Goodwin (A.S. and B.S.) and the University of Connecticut, Charter Oak and Post.
- Technical assistance visits, phone conferences, meetings and electronic support for the development of assessments and rubrics for many of the colleges involved in the pilot effort.
- The Committee established in 2010, with additional people representing ECE providers, was called together in December 2011 to discuss the pilot and gather suggestions to further delineate the Alternate and Expedited Routes. In addition, the need for a renewal process was raised and is under discussion.
- Presentations have been made to the Community College ECE Coordinators, faculty from four-year institutions with early childhood teacher education programs, regarding the pilot. The information was also presented to the ECE Cabinet's Workforce Committee. A meeting was held with Dr. Christine Thatcher from the Office of Financial and Academic Affairs for Higher Education to clarify that office's role in the approval process. A meeting was held with Dr. Louise Feroe, Board of Regents Vice President, to discuss the approval process for new programs and to encourage participation by BOR institutions.

Program Challenge:

- Because of new legislation creating the Board of Regents, the approval process originally designed was no longer viable. Under this legislation, the Governance structure for the community colleges, state universities and Charter Oak State College was consolidated. In addition, the Department of Higher Education's responsibilities were divided between the Board of Regents and a new Office of Financial and Academic Affairs for Higher Education. As noted above, meetings were held to determine how ECTC programs will be approved and what organization will award the Credential. It is anticipated that the process will be in place by early spring. The Alternate and Expedited Route procedures should also be determined by late spring.

Future Work:

- The development of new ECTC programs will require considerable technical assistance to diminish the staff time needed in the review process. Dr. Adams is developing a framework for staffing this work on an ongoing basis, as well as a proposal for the ongoing approval process.
- Considerable effort to provide technical assistance for colleges designing new ECE programs will be needed.
- Collaboration between colleges and SDE to track data on the progress of candidates while engaged in the program as well as after they leave the program needs to be coordinated and viable data systems created.

Overall Findings:

- There is general support among ECE professionals in centers and in higher education for degree programs that focus on early childhood education for both the current and future workforces. However, the concern remains regarding the retention of people in this field given the low level of compensation.

- The process for review has encouraged reflection on the part of ECE Coordinators and faculty and has resulted in many program modifications which should have a positive impact on the quality of the workforce. It will also be possible to begin to gather data to demonstrate that graduates from a college are prepared and where program changes will be needed.
- More resources are needed to assure that field work is appropriately mentored. This is particularly true if fieldwork experience is to be allowed at an individual’s work site, a need for those currently supporting themselves and families while pursuing a degree.
- Additional resources needed to provide the infrastructure at the agency level and independent consultant level to support the technical assistance process, the candidate application and review process for the expedited and alternative routes, and the ECTC issuance process with data collection systems.

**College ECTC Approval Process for Programs Currently Offering an ECE Program
and Approval Process for New Programs**

