

Early Childhood Workforce: Career Pathway Goals and Strategies for Developing, Improving, and Evaluating Higher Education Articulation Agreements

Background

As the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council report [Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation](#) (2015) has noted, the work of educating young children is complex and “just when children would benefit most from high-quality experiences that build on each other consistently over time, the systems with which they interact are fragmented” (p. 1). That fragmentation can become evident during work on early education career pathways and related articulation agreements. The report offers two recommendations that can guide this work.

- Recommendation 1: Strengthen competency-based qualification requirements for all care and education professionals working with children from birth through age 8.
- Recommendation 2: Develop and implement comprehensive pathways and multiyear timelines at the individual, institutional, and policy levels for transitioning to a minimum bachelor’s degree qualification requirement, with specialized knowledge and competencies, for all lead educators working with children from birth through age 8. (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 6).

Taken together, these recommendations suggest that articulation agreements with and between institutions of higher education (IHEs) are critical in moving the workforce toward bachelor degrees and that training and education at all levels should be strengthened to focus on the specialized knowledge and competencies needed to work effectively with children from birth through age 8. The report notes that representation in these efforts should include “practice communities, the research community, policy research and analysis, policy makers and government leadership, higher education, agencies that oversee licensure and credentialing as well as accreditation, and organizations that provide ongoing professional learning. Another key consideration for participating organizations is to reflect the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the workforce itself and the children and families served, as well as geographic diversity to represent the varied circumstances in different local contexts” (p. 13).

For this resource, articulation is defined using the [Higher Education Act SEC. 486A. ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS](#).

“(a) DEFINITION —In this section, the term ‘articulation agreement’ means an agreement between or among institutions of higher education that specifies the acceptability of courses in transfer toward meeting specific degree or program requirements.”

Selecting Goals

In considering the development and evaluation of articulation agreements, it is likely that each IHE partner will have goals in mind. Identifying both individual and shared goals can help partners select the best design and implementation strategies. Similarly, evaluating progress toward articulation goals will be most useful when they report on progress related to specific early childhood professional development system or higher education institution goals, beyond increasing the number of agreements and number of students who successfully transfer. Multiple state agencies may also need to be involved in articulation agreements, and each may have related but distinct goals. State administrators of federal child care funds may see this work as contributing to the CCDBG Act of 2014, supporting a progression of professional development as identified in 658E(c)(2)(G) and 658G(b)(1) of the Act. Higher education boards (and other state-level agencies) may set regulations for articulation agreements and see the work as supporting state degree transfer and completion goals.

Ideally, goals for articulation agreements will serve the early childhood workforce, employers, higher education institutions, and early childhood professional development systems. In practice, multiple goals may need to be considered in the design of each agreement. For example, a high school-to-associate degree articulation agreement might offer a set of college-level courses to students who are still completing high school and align those courses with the professional preparation standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential so that students may complete high school, transfer coursework into an NAEYC-accredited associate or baccalaureate degree program, and have a CDA Credential in hand.

Goals will be determined by state and local contexts. Goals to consider might include the following: Can this articulation strategy help us to

- Create a pipeline from high school to associate and/or baccalaureate degree programs at a community level that can be replicated statewide?
- Build a progression from initial through advanced standards of professional preparation and practice as students move from one level or type of professional development to the next?
- Create guidelines for training organizations that seek to develop training eligible for college credit?
- Create agreements that link specific core credentials recognized in the professional development career pathway?
- Support equitable access to higher education for specific current or future members of the workforce such as first-generation college students, English-language learners, students who are working adults, or students who are also parents?
- Ensure that all professional development programs included in the agreement—from high school through graduate levels and any non-credit-bearing training activities—are of high quality?
- Avoid designs that force students to choose between associate degree programs that are substantive in workforce preparation but do not transfer and associate degree programs that will transfer but may not be substantive enough to affect early childhood teacher practice?
- Support apprenticeships, accelerated developmental courses, or other innovations to support students already in the early childhood workforce?
- Explore ways to ensure that credits awarded by a community college for these programs will transfer forward to baccalaureate programs?
- Help us build a career pathway that links credentials, increases competency, and has value in the job market?

Selecting Strategies to Support Desired Goals

Consider strategies for the design, development, and evaluation of articulation agreements that will be most likely to support workforce development goals. Strategies to consider include the following:

- Use desired goals to identify and engage higher education allies and other primary stakeholders as partners and peers, recognizing where each partner holds primary responsibility and accountability.
- Expect possible change and improvement in all the partner organizations and in the career pathway and professional development system itself.
- Strengthen preparation for work with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in child care, Head Start, and Pre-K settings while keeping students on a path toward teacher licensure.
- Provide technical assistance and peer-exchange opportunities to sustain focus on the goals of articulation and to stimulate innovative solutions to challenges that are bound to arise related to state and institutional policies and traditions.
- Encourage stakeholders to include statements of student supports provided by each partner, with a periodic review of the effectiveness of those supports for nontraditional students.
- Learn from models in other states and other professions.
- Learn about state higher education funding formulas and requirements for approval of degree programs in your state. Become an advocate for policies that support the higher education programs needed to prepare a strong early childhood workforce.
- Learn how institution-level accreditation (such as regional accreditation) or department-level (such as CAEP [Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation]) standards might guide articulation design. Consider which degree program standards are relevant to the partners in each articulation agreement (such as NAEYC for early childhood education [ECE] programs and DEC for early intervention/early special education programs).
- Align state core knowledge and competency frameworks (CKCs) with the domains and key elements of relevant national professional and accreditation standards to make articulation decisions easier by creating a shared framework for early educator knowledge, skills, and competencies developed in high school, associate, baccalaureate, graduate, and non-credit training programs.
- Learn about and partner with other state agencies that may regulate, approve, and evaluate articulation agreements, student transfer rates, and degree completion rates. Communicate goals specific to the early childhood workforce, and generate shared goals where possible.

Related Resources

Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu>

High School to College

This web page collects current research on the transition from high school to college, including dual-enrollment programs.

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/High-School-to-College.html>

Student Persistence, Completion, and Transfer

This web page collects current research on community college student success, with attention to underrepresented students (immigrants, students of color, and low-income students).

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Student-Persistence-Completion-and-Transfer.html>

The Transfer Playbook: Essential Practices for Two- and Four-Year Colleges

by Joshua Wyner, K. C. Deane, Davis Jenkins, and John Fink (2016)

A practical guide to practices in higher education institutions that help students navigate degree completion and transfer requirements.

<http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/transfer-playbook-essential-practices.html>

Early Educator Central: Articulation Agreements

<https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/articulation-agreements>

A Perspective on Early Childhood Education and Articulation

by Deborah J. Cassidy (2015)

Practical guidance and tips about successfully negotiating articulation agreements.

<https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/A%20Perspective%20on%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20and%20Articulation.pdf>

Articulation Agreement Templates

These templates offer sample language and appendix items that typically need to be negotiated and documented in articulation agreements. They were developed through a scan of multiple examples of each type of agreement. The samples include templates for articulation agreements from high school to college, non-credit community-based training to credit-based college coursework, associate to baccalaureate programs, and statewide associate to baccalaureate agreements.

<https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/articulation-agreements>

Getting Started with Articulation: What State Partners Need to Know

by Early Educator Central Staff (n.d.)

An introduction for state partners and leaders to current issues surrounding articulation in support of early childhood degree attainment.

<https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/Getting%20Started%20with%20Articulation.pdf>

Supporting Successful Degree Completion by Early Childhood Professionals

by Alison Lutton (2013)

An article discussing four major features of strong articulation agreements.

<https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/supporting-degree-completion.pdf>

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015). *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2015/Birth-To-Eight.aspx>

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center Articulation Project

A collection of resources developed by the National Center and ten T.E.A.C.H. states, including webinars, project principles, and an [Early Childhood Articulation Project Compendium](#) of work completed by project teams.

<http://teachecnationalcenter.org/center-initiatives-and-resources/center-initiatives/articulation/>

Higher Education Accreditation Systems

Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA)

This website explains the difference between institutional accreditation of the college or university (e.g., regional accreditation) and accreditation of specific professional programs (e.g., NAEYC accreditation of early childhood teacher education programs). The NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs is a member of the ASPA.

<http://www.aspa-usa.org/students/>

Council for Exceptional Children/Division of Early Childhood (CEC/DEC) Recognition of Early Childhood Special Education/Early Intervention Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Higher Education Institutions that Are Accredited by the CAEP

CEC works with CAEP to review special education baccalaureate and graduate degree programs at colleges and universities. CEC peer reviewers evaluate program reports to determine whether programs meet the CEC Professional Preparation Standards and DEC Specialty Set: Early Childhood Special Education/Early Intervention. If a program meets the standards and receives CEC recognition, and if the institution goes on to be accredited by the CAEP, the program earns a nationally known mark of high quality. NAEYC and CEC partner to provide a blended review process for programs that choose to meet both NAEYC and CEC/DEC standards. Information about blended reviews is available on the NAEYC higher education recognition website.

<https://www.cec.sped.org/Standards/Special-Educator-Professional-Preparation-Standards>

NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs

The commission awards accreditation to early childhood associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree programs that demonstrate evidence of excellence by meeting the [NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards](#). The NAEYC accreditation process provides a framework for self-study, external evaluation, and improvement in the quality of teacher preparation programs. There are currently 177 institutions in 33 states with NAEYC-accredited programs.

<http://www.naeyc.org/highered/accreditation>

NAEYC Recognition of Early Childhood Baccalaureate and Graduate Degree Programs in Higher Education Institutions that Are Accredited by the CAEP

NAEYC works with CAEP to review early childhood baccalaureate and graduate degree programs at colleges and universities. NAEYC peer reviewers evaluate program reports to determine whether programs meet the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards. If a program meets the standards and receives NAEYC recognition, and if the institution goes on to be accredited by the CAEP, the program earns a nationally known mark of high quality. Currently, there are over 250 institutions with NAEYC-recognized baccalaureate and graduate degree programs in 37 states/territories and two international recognized programs.

<http://www.naeyc.org/highered/recognition>

State and Local Examples

California

California Community Colleges Curriculum, Associate Degrees for Transfer

2010 legislation required California Community Colleges to develop Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADT) with no more than 60 total credits and no fewer than 18 credits in the major.

<http://www.ccccurriculum.net/associate-degrees-for-transfer/>

Statewide Career Pathways

This website collects information about high school-to-college articulation agreements. Early childhood agreements can be found under the Articulation menu tab.

<http://www.statewidepathways.org/index.html>

Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: Implementation Plan for the State of California

This report was generated by a state team that participated in the first cohort of the National Academy of Medicine's Innovation to Incubation (i2I) project. The plan includes multiple references to the next steps in California's early childhood program articulation work.

http://twb8-ca.net/files/CA_TW8_Implementation_Plan.pdf

Indiana

Indiana Transfer Single Articulation Pathway (TSAP) Agreement

Early childhood faculty in the Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana system engaged in NAEYC standards alignment and accreditation work, the Lumina Achieving the Dream project, and the T.E.A.C.H. Articulation project. Statewide articulation work used the national professional standards for each professional major and the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile as resources to define a statewide general education core and shared discipline-specific student outcomes at associate and baccalaureate levels. Early-childhood-specific content can be found on pages 22-25.

http://www.in.gov/che/files/TSAP_BW_Binder_Final.pdf

Additional resources including the general education core can be found here.

<http://www.in.gov/che/3138.htm>

http://www.in.gov/che/files/STGEC_BW_Binder_Final_5.19.15.pdf

Mississippi

The state Early Childhood Advisory Council compiled this review of program-to-program and 2+2 agreements identifying common elements, statewide and institution-to-institution types, and best practices from multiple states. The report includes current institution-to-institution ECE agreements in Mississippi and program-to-program statewide agreements in other majors.

http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/media/318638/Articulation-Agreements_Scan_Full-Report.pdf

Pennsylvania

Early Childhood Education Teachers 2.0: Strategies to Transform the Profession, A Preliminary Report from the Early Childhood Education Workforce Transformation Initiative (ECEWTI)

The Early Childhood Education Workforce Transformation Initiative, (2016) wrote this brief in an effort to learn more about the ECE workforce in Philadelphia and to design strategies for realizing a teacher workforce fully qualified and of sufficient size to deliver quality ECE. ECEWTI collected data through online surveys, focus groups, interviews, case studies, secondary data analysis and literature reviews. Data were collected about ECE employers, ECE staff, and ECE teacher preparation programs. Now in year 2, the project is working with Philadelphia area institutions of higher education to strengthen infant, toddler and preschool preparation in P4 teacher certification programs, recognize and promote accreditation by the NAEYC Commission on Higher Education Accreditation, and engage private colleges and universities in articulation work with local community colleges.

http://melc.org/wp-content/uploads/WPF-report-march-16_formatted2.pdf

Northampton Community College (NCC) Online CDA Program to Associate to Baccalaureate Pathway

NCC's CDA program was developed in collaboration with Teaching Strategies Inc., and earns nine credits toward NCC's NAEYC-accredited ECE associate degree program, which is available online and transfers into multiple baccalaureate-level Pennsylvania PK–4 teacher licensure programs through the Pennsylvania statewide associate-to-baccalaureate, program-to-program, articulation agreement leading to PK–4 teacher licensure.

<http://www3.northampton.edu/ecda/what-is-ecda.html>

Pennsylvania Statewide Program-to-Program Articulation Agreement for Degrees Leading to PK–4 Teacher Certification: A Paper from the Pennsylvania Department of Education Transfer and Articulation Oversight Committee

The statewide agreement uses the NAEYC standards for professional preparation as the framework for the state-required associate degree capstone portfolio and for identifying comparable course blocks across associate and baccalaureate programs.

http://www.pacollegetransfer.com/Portals/6/PAFiles/PK4EDU_P2P_AGREEMENT_Aug_18_2011.pdf

Texas

Texas Early Childhood Education Degree Articulation Toolkit (2013)

This report reviews what is working and where challenges lie, and then it provides elements of model agreements and a tool kit for developing articulation agreements. Case studies look at the role of the CDA Credential, NAEYC accreditation for associate degree programs, training that can be accepted for credit, and vertical alignment from secondary/high school to postsecondary/higher education.

<http://www.earlylearningtexas.org/media/22448/texas%20ece%20degree%20articulation%20toolkit%20may%202013.pdf>

Virginia

Upskilling Virginia's Early Childhood Workforce (2015)

This working paper is the product of a stakeholder meeting hosted by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. It compiled data on the state's children and early childhood workforce, along with current challenges, barriers, and opportunities to strengthen, or “upskill,” early educators working with children from birth through age 5.

Bridging the Divide: Implementation Plan for the Virginia Core Team Developed through Participation in the National Academy of Medicine's Innovation to Incubation B–8 Initiative (2015–16)

This report builds upon the 2015 *Upskilling Virginia's Early Childhood Workforce report* and was generated by a state team that participated in the first cohort of the National Academy of Medicine's Innovation to Incubation (i2I) project. The plan includes the work of a newly legislated school readiness committee, guiding principles for a higher education pathway, and recommendations for a project to pilot regional articulation agreements.

Both the “Upskilling” and “NAM” reports are available here <http://smartbeginnings.org/reports-and-tools/>



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