



EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER CERTIFICATION TOOLKIT

for use with

**THE POSITION STATEMENT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CERTIFICATION FOR
TEACHERS OF CHILDREN 8 YEARS OLD AND YOUNGER IN PUBLIC SCHOOL
SETTINGS**

JUNE 2008

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATORS

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June 2008

Dear Early Childhood Certification advocates:

We are pleased to have completed work on NAECTE's **Position Statement on Early Childhood Certification for Teachers of Children 8 Years Old and Younger in Public School Settings**.

We want to thank members of the NAECTE Advocacy Committee who worked with us on development of the Position Statement, helped to secure endorsements and participated in writing the supporting documents.

This has become a collaborative project with input, support and endorsements from other early childhood associations including, ACCESS, ACEI, NAEYC, NCCCC, SECA. We are especially grateful to Harriet Egertson, Jason Sachs and Gera Jacobs, members of the NAEYC sub-committee on teacher certification who offered us valuable advice regarding this project.

We have compiled some supporting documents into a **Certification Advocacy Toolkit** to assist in efforts to get the Position Statement adopted in states and communities. Following is a brief description of the items in the Toolkit and how you might use them.

1. **Critical Steps in Advocating for Stronger ECE Certification/Endorsement at the State Level: An Open Letter to Advocates** by Harriet Egertson provides an overview of how certification may be organized in different states and offers some very practical suggestions for how you might proceed to initiate changes in certification requirements in your state.
2. **A Child Development Rationale for Specialized Training for Teachers of Young Children** by Jan Taylor can assist you in communicating the child development implications of policies that promote the placement of early childhood trained teachers in classrooms for young children.
3. **Valued Added: Early Childhood Education Certified Teachers in the Kindergarten and Primary Elementary School Workplace** by Lynn Hartle makes the case that it is advantageous for school principals to hire teachers with specialized training in ECE. This document describes the potential benefits of hiring early childhood trained teachers on children's development and learning.
4. **Understanding Transitions: Part of the Rationale for Early Childhood Teacher Certification** by Kent Chrisman adds another argument for placing teachers with early childhood training in classrooms with young children. Specialization in early childhood increases the chances that children and families will be supported through transitions and as a result will have a more successful kindergarten year.
5. **Academic and Social Outcomes of Early Education Linked to Early Childhood Certification for Teachers In Pk-3** by Donna Couchenour emphasizes the value of having high quality, consistent and predictable relationships with EC trained teachers across the grades from PK to third grade.

We hope that the Position Statement and supporting resources will be helpful in your efforts to get more teachers early childhood education trained teachers placed in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and primary classrooms. We would be very interested in learning about your experience using these materials in your state.

Warm regards,

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**CRITICAL STEPS IN ADVOCATING FOR STRONGER ECE CERTIFICATION/ENDORSEMENT
AT THE STATE LEVEL**

**AN OPEN LETTER TO ADVOCATES FROM
AN EMERITA EARLY CHILDHOOD STATE SPECIALIST AND VETERAN OF THE FRAY**

In the Spring of 2008, I worked with some of the leaders of NAECTE on their recently adopted statement regarding the hiring and assignment of early childhood certificated teachers working with three- and four-year olds and kindergarteners in classrooms in public school settings. Because I am a 27-year veteran of early childhood work in a state education agency, the NAECTE leadership asked me to help develop a document that could be part of an accompanying Toolkit—a Toolkit designed to help advocates play the important role of encouraging state departments of education (or other certification agencies within the states) to consider strengthening states' requirements for certification/endorsement in ECE in school operating regulations.

As I started to write, it became clear that the typical narrative form we employ in such documents would be awkward for this task (actually, insufferably boring). I needed a way to be more direct and personal (and maybe even a little irreverent). Hence, I have chosen this open letter form to address the complex and sometimes arcane pathways you will need to negotiate to promote the adoption of the recommendations in the NAECTE Position Statement.

Many of you are probably already veterans of these battles. You may already know some or all of what I'm suggesting. You may be a professor in one of your states' teacher preparation programs at a 2- or 4-year institution or a practitioner or administrator at either the Pre-K or Primary level. We thought it might be useful to set some of these ideas down in a way they can be used to promote the Position Statement by whoever chooses to advocate on its behalf. Please use what you need. Ignore the rest. You also already know, or will come to know, that making changes of this kind requires challenging the many-headed hydra. It may require changes in your state's certification requirements, but it will also require changes in school operating requirements (often called school accreditation). That may require local school districts to amend their policies and practices. You can't change just one thing and expect the outcome the Position Statement encourages. The most important strategy you can employ is a commitment to persist.

Why You May Encounter Resistance and From Whom

I'm certain this varies across the states (a theme you will hear me repeat), but it has only been fifty years (virtually within my work life) that elementary teachers in the state where I worked for so long have been required to have bachelor's degrees. I've been told that idea met with resistance all along the way both from teachers who already had jobs and thought they knew everything there was to know and from school officials who feared it might mean they would need to pay them more. These are perfectly defensible reasons to resist change and it is a perfect parallel to what we face today with promoting more education for early childhood teachers. I keep reminding myself of that when I become frustrated with how long these changes take. It helps me to persist.

The resistance of policy and school leaders will be rooted in concern about limited resources. No one knows better how limited resources have constrained our field than any of us who have trod the advocacy path over decades. What the NAECTE Position Statement promotes will also have a profound effect on teachers already in positions. Many will not have the specialized training in early childhood that the Position Statement advocates. This will be one area of resistance. In their defense, many teachers will have added to their knowledge and skills through less formal training and may be doing perfectly competent work. It would be useful to support state initiatives that either offer long windows for compliance or some form of grandmothering, especially for teachers already in kindergarten positions.

Making progress in this area is necessarily incremental. It may feel unacceptable to accept less than everything that you want, but it may be necessary. It might be better in the end to make a few friends for a time you could use their support in a subsequent fight. Having friends helps you to be persistent.

Why It Might Turn Out To Be Easier Than We Thought

Early childhood, early learning, school readiness—or whatever appellation it wears—concern about the development of young children is hot. While there continue to be significant and intractable issues about improvement of the early care and education non-system that already exists, we have the attention of policymakers and school officials as never before. They may resist making the necessary investments to improve wages and working conditions, but they are more interested in supporting the conditions that strengthen children's capacities to be successful in school and beyond. This is the best time we have ever had to make the argument for well-prepared teachers.

What follows is a laundry list of suggestions for knowledge building and action to capture this moment and some elaboration of each of them:

- Become fully informed about how the certification/licensure system in your state works. The various states organize the education function very differently and how education is organized and governed has important implications for how advocates need to approach their work. In roughly thirds, the fifty states look like this:
 - The governor administers the State Department of Education much as s/he runs the Department of Human Services and other state agencies. S/he hires/fires the person who administers the agency and, if there is a State Board of Education, appoints the citizens who serve on that Board. Sometimes the Legislature has a hand in these appointments, OR
 - Education is a separate function from the Governor, perhaps so designated in the state's Constitution. When this is the case, there is usually an elected Board of Education that hires/fires the Chief State School Officer, OR
 - The Chief State School Officer is elected. If there is a Board of Education, it may be advisory, rather than the body that governs. Sometime such a Board is appointed by a Governor or the Legislature.

You can see that one cannot make assumptions about how all this works. It may be one of the scenarios I described above in your state, but it could be some other permutation. You need to know. Here's a set of questions you can ask to find out:

1. What does my state's constitution say about the governance of education?
2. How is my Chief State School Officer selected (e.g., hired, elected)? What is the term?
3. How is the State Board of Education constituted (e.g., elected, appointed)? This is important because if they are appointed, that body is not the place you direct your efforts to get change. However, you may want to educate them and gain their allegiance to your cause.
4. What is the Governor's role? This is an especially important question at this juncture. In some states, especially where the governance of education is distinct from the direct control of the Governor, several governors have lately tried to change that. There is a national trend toward governors taking more control. It may appear more tidy, but it tends to politicize education in less than useful ways. I confess no neutrality on this issue. You can make up your own mind.
5. Who has control of the budget? In states where the State Board is elected, the Board usually does. The Board/Department makes an annual or biennial request to the Legislature. The Governor is not directly involved; however, it's good idea to have the Governor informed and in agreement with the objectives of the budget. To fail to do so may trigger what is described in 4. above.

Now you know about the governance of education in your state, but you don't have a clue yet about how teacher certification happens. Again, one cannot make assumptions about where or how. First, it is important to understand that teacher education and the governance thereof and certification/licensure are typically two separate functions. Teacher education is often overseen by an appointed board/council of some kind, often external to the State Department of Education. How it is appointed, by whom, and where it sits in state government varies widely. Once you know more about the governance of education, it will probably be easier to figure this out. This is the body that establishes the standards that colleges and universities use to design their teacher education programs in whatever area of study. In states where the State Board of Education is elected, those standards are then approved by the Board.

In a few states, the greater involvement of the Governor has led to the appointment of other teacher standards boards. This creates an odd version of "War of the Boards." The intent is usually to sidestep what is viewed as entrenched control of processes. You may be in one of these states. These efforts may ultimately prove beneficial; no one knows. In the short term, they can have the effect of complicating the changes groups like ours are promoting. Our issues are viewed as trivial in the larger struggles that are underway.

Teacher certification/licensure, however, is usually (not always) carried out at the State Department of Education. Once a candidate completes an approved teacher education program at one of the state's colleges or universities, their institution makes a recommendation to the State Department of Education that the candidate is eligible for

certification. The candidate can then apply for a certificate in the area in which they have been prepared.

States carry out certification in one of two ways (usually). Either the approved teacher education institutions make a recommendation to the certification official in the Department of Education that a candidate has completed an approved teacher education program in some subject or area and is thereby eligible to be certificated OR the candidate sends transcripts to the Department of Education and someone there reviews their completed coursework and determines whether the person has met the requirements. You need to know whether your state is a “program approval” state or a “transcript review” state.

You might be asking yourself: Why do I need to know all this? The answer is: The more you can talk the talk, the greater credibility you will have. This is a truism true almost everywhere—not just with teacher certification people. The more you understand about all this, the easier it will be for you to figure out whom you need to educate about your issues, whom you need to persuade, and who it isn’t worth wasting your energy on.

- Figure out how to understand the differences among the meanings of certification, licensure, endorsements, freestanding, and so on, especially as they apply in your state. The NAECTE Position Statement has a brief glossary that is a good place to start. Unfortunately, (and once again) different states imbue these terms with idiosyncratic meanings. You need to understand the meanings for your state.
- In some states, a candidate becomes eligible for a general K-12 certificate by completing a teacher education program containing a professional sequence (the history, governance, and sociology of education, etc.--all the courses the students hate a the time, but that they really need to understand the context of their work) AND a set of courses in a specific field (e.g., early childhood, elementary, biology). Therefore they are eligible for a certificate with an endorsement in “something” and that endorsement is considered to be freestanding.

Some students elect to earn a certificate in two “somethings.” A student might elect to earn enough credits to be endorsed in early childhood and elementary education or some other pairing. Such endorsements have equal standing on a general certificate and are both “freestanding.” Sometimes the college/university requires that a student complete two field endorsements (see below for more about that).

- Some states issue certificates at specific levels (e.g., and elementary certificate, a secondary certificate). In those instances, early childhood is often an “endorsement” on an elementary certificate. The candidate is required to complete all the course work to become an elementary teacher and, if they so elect, can add however many courses a particular state requires to have an early childhood endorsement added (usually fewer courses than were required for the base certificate). In these cases, early childhood is not a freestanding certificate.

The two examples above are only illustrative of the ways certificates are configured across the states. You can see how much this diversity complicates such important issues a reciprocity (getting “equally” certificated in another state). I remember painful conversations with new young teachers from other states who asked to be transferred to someone who understood early childhood. Our state had a freestanding and inclusive (included preparation to serve children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms) early childhood endorsement (30 credit hours minimum). When someone came to our state from one where early childhood was an “endorsement” on an elementary certificate and maybe only required 12 credit hours, they could not understand why they were not eligible for an early childhood endorsement in their new home.

My explanations to them were logical and I fully understood why their responses were not. New practitioners cannot begin to absorb the complexities. I ached for them, but could do nothing to relieve them. The history of the decisions about how to organize the shape of basic certification in any state is buried in dusty boxes in dank basements. Today we are left with “that’s the way it is.” That’s why persistence on the part of advocates is crucial.

- Keep up with what is happening with early childhood certification/endorsements in your state. While the overall system may be slow in changing, the nature of early childhood certification/endorsement may be relatively fluid. Find out what your state’s early childhood certification/endorsement looks like. If you look at any national chart of them, you are likely to see these examples: 0-8, birth-grade 3, 0-5, preK-2, K-3, 0-8 inclusive, etc. Particularly the level of early childhood preparation is widely variable and in a way, it reflects the confusion our field struggles over within itself. Since it takes several years to move a change in either the content or the level of early childhood preparation, the chart reminds me of an amoeba making its way across time. For a while the 0-5 arm poked out; now the trend seems toward 0-8 Inclusive. Perhaps that will persist. We don’t know.
- Connect with whatever early childhood advisory bodies exist in your state —especially any that concern themselves with professional preparation. Most states now have one or more advisory bodies concerning themselves with some aspect(s) of early care and education. Several of these are required by federal funding streams (e.g., the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) for children with disabilities and their families; the Head Start–State Collaboration project; Title 1 of NCLB) and some states have constituted their own. The latest Head Start reauthorization now requires the appointment of a state-level Early Learning Council and specifies its roles and responsibilities. Advocate need to be certain that professional preparation is a strong focus of the coordinating councils in your state. Emphasize the importance of a full view of professional preparation—from pre-service to in-service, including the importance of credit-bearing opportunities for all practitioners. This group would be a good one from which to seek an endorsement of the NAECTE Position Statement. Remind them that the statement has been endorsed by ACCESS.

- Contribute to the general policy conversation about high personnel standards—even likening this issue to the “Highly Qualified Teacher” qualifications in NCLB. The growing conversation about P-12 offers the perfect venue to raise this issue. Many states have P-12 Councils. Again, this is a group that needs to learn about the importance of fully prepared early childhood teachers. They would also be an important group to endorse the NAECTE Position Statement. Every time you secure the support of a group like this, you are building the case for the implementation of the recommendations at the state and local levels.
- Encourage your state AEYC affiliate to take up this cause. The NAECTE Position Statement has been endorsed by NAEYC, ACEI and ACCESS and other professional organizations. Whether your state’s AEYC enthusiastically takes up this cause may not be a given. It all depends on the nature of the membership and the leadership. There is a troubling and persistent bifurcation of our field that continues to separate those who work in primarily 0-5 programs of various sponsorship from those teachers who work in K-3. The growth of Pre-Kindergarten programs associated with elementary schools is sometimes heightening the tensions. Local AEYC groups are the perfect venue to play a role in changing the perceptions that cause this division to persist. Encourage (and help provide) programming designed to attract K-3 teachers to the organization. Together, the 0-8 teachers in a community could be a powerful voice—not just for this effort to support early childhood certified teachers in public programs, but to advance early childhood efforts of all kinds.
- Examine and know the policies of your state’s teacher preparation institutions regarding certification/endorsement programs; become involved in improving them. When you understand all of the above about the governance of education and the standards process in teacher education, it is easier to comprehend what happens within teacher education institutions. The standards the state sets for teacher education programs are minimums; colleges and universities can go beyond them. This is the place that I’ve encountered a good deal of confusion on the part of colleagues in higher education because institutions are perfectly happy to let their professors think “the state” is the culprit. Sometimes “the state” doesn’t do it. It’s happening at the leadership level of the college/university. Here is a good example: a state’s teacher education standards may provide for a “freestanding” early childhood certificate/endorsement, but the institution’s officials determine that their teacher candidates will graduate with double endorsements, or that certain programs will require double endorsements. Because it is often new and not well understood by upper level higher education officials, early childhood may be one of those requiring a dual endorsement. That would mean that a candidate who only intends to work with young children would also be required to earn another whole endorsement to graduate.
- Find out what is happening with student advising; it can be a major bottleneck. It took me a long time to figure out that freshman advising was not acting in our field’s best interest at several of our institutions. Again, because early childhood is new (not to us, of course) and not well understood, advisors regularly told new students not to go in that direction because they couldn’t earn a living or that they would need a dual major to be

employable. Advisors need new information about employability and about the growth of employment opportunities in state Pre-K programs. You can help supply that.

- Join or connect with your state's elementary principal's organization. Depending on what previous work you might have done with them, this will take much work. For perfectly good reasons, which we don't always understand given the wider set of issues they must address every day, they may not be wildly enthusiastic about this idea. Supervising a set of teachers with broad preparation makes it far easier to configure groups of children, make most efficient use of the space in their school, and adjust to ups and downs of enrollment. Their administrator preparation may not have helped them understand the distinct nature of early childhood preparation.

The best approach is to make friends with principals who are already sold on the benefits of well-prepared teachers in Pre-K and K. Many of you will be from states where Pre-K already requires early childhood-certificated/endorsed teachers so principals who have Pre-K in their buildings will already have the opportunity to learn more about the strengths of such teachers. In my experience, the best way to reach the principal's group is to enlist the "sold" to carry the message to their peers. If you have made friends with that group, you can provide them with the information they need to do that work. Encourage them to join and participate in the appropriate early childhood organizations. Offer to present at their conferences. The elementary principals are the ones who can be ambassadors to the upper level administrators in school districts, especially to the ones who supervise hiring.

- Remember that your state ECE specialist is your friend. Visit the website of the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (<http://naecs.crc.uiuc.edu/index.html>) to learn more about them and their work. If you do not already know the lead early childhood administrator in your state's Department of Education (the majority of states have one now), make an appointment for lunch. This person should be your strongest ally in seeking to promote the NAECTE Position Statement. S/he can help you find out much of what is discussed in this open letter and can help strategize about how to promote its recommendations in your state. For a window into the various state department early childhood offices, go to http://www.ccsso.org/projects/scass/projects/early_childhood_education_assessment_consortium/publications_and_products/3688.cfm and click on the Matrix.
- Promote requirements for assigning early childhood-prepared teachers to Pre-K and Kindergarten in your state's school regulations. Even when your state has a strong early childhood certification/endorsement, and even when your institution supports and promotes it, it doesn't mean a thing if schools are not required to use teachers who hold such certificates/endorsements. It is at this point that the recommendations of the NAECTE Position Paper come most strongly into play. Become familiar with these regulations; they are often called school accreditation requirements. This is another place where talking the talk is very important. Usually they are under the purview of the State Board of Education. That may vary depending on your state's governance model. However, by now, you will know that and can answer this question for yourself.

You will need allies to bring recommendations for strengthening the endorsement requirements for teachers of Pre-K and Kindergarten in the state's school regulations. Here, the information about the importance of well-qualified teachers that can be found elsewhere in this Toolkit will be invaluable. You will need all the friends you have nurtured in your state's Early Learning Council, your AEYC, the Teacher Education Standards Board, the Elementary Principal's organization—and I would even suggest you approach groups like the PTA. State Boards are more apt to respond to local citizen groups than advocates from a particular field.

This open letter became longer than intended. I hope that its length is not discouraging. It does reflect the complexity, but it also shows that there are real pathways for progress. Remember, if you encounter it, that seeming obduracy may have perfectly logical roots in history. Changing this history is difficult. The most important strategy you can employ is a commitment to persist—and inform. Thank you for your persistence in reading this missive.

Best wishes as you carry this work forward,
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A CHILD DEVELOPMENT RATIONALE FOR SPECIALIZED TRAINING FOR TEACHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN AND PLACEMENT OF THESE TEACHERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS

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Nationally, early childhood education is defined as the education of young children from birth through third grade. This definition is grounded on an extensive body of research that documents that young children's ways of knowing differ considerably from those of older children and adults regardless of culture. The research findings of Jean Piaget, Barbel Inhelder, and Hermina Sinclair in Switzerland, France, and Italy; Barbel Inhelder on the Ivory Coast of Africa; Seymour Papert, Rheta DeVries, and Constance Kamii in the United States; and Emilia Ferrerio and Ana Teberosky in Argentina all demonstrate the commonalities in young children's thinking at specific maturational levels regardless of the culture into which they are born.

The thinking ability of children from four to eight years of age is significantly different from the thinking ability of children above eight years of age. Thought originates from inborn instincts and develops from very naïve and inexperienced forms through more sophisticated pre-operational (intuitive and non-logical) forms of reasoning until it becomes operational (able to think logically). According to Hermina Sinclair (1994), there is a spiral-like development in children where ideas that they work out at one level of thinking become more elaborated at different levels of development. However, it is not until the ages of eight or nine that children's ability to think becomes operational and more adult-like in nature.

Children four to eight years of age are active learners who continuously ask questions and seek answers to those questions. While children's questions and answers differ from adult ways of thinking about the same experience, their thinking follows predictable sequences that arise out of *spontaneous or liberated convictions*. These convictions about what is true or right are not "learned" from adults, and are quite uniform across all children at a certain level of reasoning. For example, when children of four or five years of age are asked who is older, their father or their grandmother, they will generally respond that their father is older. They base this spontaneous conviction on the idea that their father is taller than their grandmother so he must be older. These earlier ideas are necessary developmental parts of later thinking about the phenomena. Each new level of thinking reflects a qualitative transformation in children's reasoning about the nature of things. As in the above example, one can consider height as an indicator of age when we continue to mark the child's height as he/she ages. However, this notion must be coordinated with other ideas such as birth order and the unidirectional advancement of age before ideas about age are mature. These early spontaneous convictions of children are necessary steps in the development of young children's reasoning. Such convictions can be observed in children's initial ideas about written and spoken language, and in their ideas about what is real, what is alive, and the origins of things that exist in the physical world.

Consequently, before eight years of age children need to be taught in a manner that is most consistent with their developing abilities to think and that is accepting of their ways of knowing. Young children are always ready to learn and to think about things that interest them, but their thinking and learning is easily stifled by inappropriate teaching efforts.

An understanding of how children learn and the nature of the knowledge to be learned are critical in helping teachers know how to design and implement a quality classroom for young learners. An early childhood teacher must be able to begin with what the child knows and the child's way of knowing *rather than with any preset curriculum materials*. Additionally an early childhood teacher must be able to offer a curriculum that advances the learner's ability to think. This kind of curriculum allows children to learn through play, project work and hands-on experiences; this is distinctly different than a curriculum that focuses merely on the memorization of specific facts or algorithms.

Effective teachers of young children must have a strong knowledge base in how children learn and in the content to be learned. Early Childhood teacher education programs provide this knowledge base and offer opportunities for pre-service teachers to apply what they have learned in developmentally appropriate settings. Additionally, these programs prepare early childhood teachers who can meet the current standards and demands for assessment in developmentally appropriate ways.

It is critical that State Departments of Education require certification in Early Childhood Education for all teachers hired to teach in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms in public school grades; Early Childhood certified teachers should also be given preference for hiring in first through third grades. It is also critical that teacher certification programs are based on current research that has identified the unique learning capabilities of the children in this age range (see examples in the reference list), and that the programs provide teachers with the appropriate knowledge base for supporting children's developing capabilities. All young children deserve the very best teachers we are able to provide, requiring specialized training for teachers at this level is a way to meet this goal.

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ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES OF EARLY EDUCATION LINKED TO EARLY CHILDHOOD CERTIFICATION FOR TEACHERS IN PK-3

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FROM: *PK-3: An Aligned and Coordinated Approach to Education for Children 3-8 Years Old*
by Kimber Bogard & Ruby Takanishi

A Definition of PK-3:

An alignment of standards, curriculum and assessment practices across the early grades (preschool through grade 3).

- Teacher preparation and professional development (PK-3) are both aligned with child development knowledge and skills
- Children ages 3-8 years benefit from an aligned educational program taught by skilled professionals (certified PK-3)

The Importance of PK-3:

Intentionally aligned PK-3 education with specially prepared and certified teachers is seen as a way for children to continue cognitive and social gains made in preschool and kindergarten.

- It is known that investments in PK and programs of Early Intervention place children on a closer to equal footing as they enter kindergarten, but for many children, the gains are not sustained throughout the elementary years (due in large part to lack of alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment).

Operationalizing PK-3:

Specially prepared and certified teachers for PK-3 would apply child development knowledge to implement a sequenced curriculum, effective pedagogy and appropriate assessment. PK-3 would be guided by a set of principles that will provide a coherent first level of public education.

- With a common preparation in child development, certified PK-3 teachers would implement a sequenced curriculum, within each year and across grade levels, based on research about child development and learning.

Theoretical Framework:

Specially prepared teachers will be responsive and understand that children 3-8 years develop at varying rates and will be skilled at supporting individual needs. “It is clear from this body of research that early experiences in relationships in multiple contexts are critically important” (p. 9).

- “...high quality, consistent and predictable relationships with teachers across the years from PK to third grade will facilitate and promote children’s learning, and, thus, can influence achievement” (p. 8).
- When teachers build on children’s interests, higher cognitive and language scores result in PK
- Use of assessment to guide practice, including work with small groups and individuals, is shown to be effective.

- Both cognitive and social skills are related to school success.
- Family involvement and support services are important factors to be included in PK-3 alignment.

Teacher Preparation is Both a Structural and a Process Component of PK-3:

Structural components are related to social and academic outcomes for children and can be mandated through legislation and regulation. Thus, PK-3 certification is a structural component of PK-3.

Process components with empirical evidence include: teacher sensitivity, quality of teacher-child interactions, and teacher instructional style. These components are also related to specialized preparation for PK-3.

Currently, educational experiences are not aligned for most children in preschool through 3rd grade. A common certification is intended to lead to universal alignment.

**UNDERSTANDING TRANSITIONS:
PART OF THE RATIONALE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER
CERTIFICATION**

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The need for teachers who have specialized professional development in early childhood education is especially evident as young children experience transitions in their care and education. Transitions for children typically involve a move from a familiar child care setting, pre-kindergarten or Head Start program to public school kindergarten placement. However a transition may also mean moving from home into a school setting.

In order to support children and families during transitions, teachers must understand the wide range of readiness in young children, the diverse experiences they have before enrolling in kindergarten and the variety of family structures in which they live. Without early childhood specialization, teachers are often unaware of the importance of these experiences, do not value them, or ignore them completely. A specialization in early childhood increases the chances that children and families will be supported through transitions and as a result will have a more successful kindergarten year. Evidence now suggests that success in kindergarten is a powerful predictor of later school success, especially for children at risk (Hodgkinson, 2003).

Transitions are made smoother for children if the adults in both settings have planned together. Research conducted by Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) supports this type of cooperation and affirms its benefits for children. Kagan, Carroll, Comer & Scott-Little (2006) have also written about the benefits of alignment in planning transitions; especially alignment of standards, assessment and curriculum. However, planning between child care and kindergarten settings is not widely practiced across the country. It takes time, thought, effort and willingness to have successful transitioning programs in place. It also takes teachers who have a knowledge base in child development and early childhood education.

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VALUED ADDED: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CERTIFIED TEACHERS IN THE KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WORKPLACE

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Teacher Quality and School Readiness

- Teacher quality is the most salient factor in young children's readiness for school
- Children in early childhood programs should have teachers with bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood
- High quality early childhood education is linked to success especially for children in high risk and low-income areas

The synthesis of research in the 2001 report from the National Research Council (NRC), *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers* pointed to teacher quality as the most salient factor in young children's readiness for school, and the report also recommended that each group of children in an early childhood program have a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. High quality early childhood education including teacher quality along with high-quality, well-planned curriculum and child assessment was reported in several longitudinal studies as factors for long-term child success, especially for children in high risk and low income areas (Wasik, Ramey, Bryant, & Sparling, 1990; Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993; Carolina Abecedarian Project, 1999; Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., Burchinal, M.R., Clifford, R.M., Culkin, Howes, Kagan, Yazejian, Byler, Rustici, & Zelazo, 1999; Bowman., Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, Mann, 2001)

Early Childhood Distinct from Elementary Teacher Preparation

- Specialized early childhood professional preparation is more predictive of positive child outcomes than teachers' number of years of experience.
 - Professional preparation for early childhood teachers is relevant to the age group of young children (ages 3-8yrs.) and different from Elementary teachers' preparation
 - National Association for the Education of Young Children, the accreditation institution for the National Council Accreditation of Teacher Education requires-specific college-level preparation which includes:
 - a foundation in child development, theory, research, and
 - training in developmentally appropriate instructional practices, and
 - supervised field experience with young children ages 3 – 8 years of age
- ✓ Early childhood preparation also includes specific skills to identify children with special needs for early referral and early interventions than may reduce longer term complications and reduce more extensive special education in later Elementary and High school

Studies have found that even among non-degreed teachers, the number of hours spent in trainings and workshops in specialized early childhood education preparation is more predictive of success in positive student-teacher interactions than the number of years experience a teacher

may have (Honig & Hirallal, 1998; Kontos, Howes, & Galinsky, 1997; Kontos & Wilcoz-Herzog, 2001). The National Center for Early Development and Learning's Multi-State Pre-Kindergarten Study of 238 classrooms across six states also found that quality was higher when teachers had some level of specialized preparation in early childhood (Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early, & Barbarin, 2005).

The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) recommends that Colleges of Education include professional preparation and certification for Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers that is specific to the ECE field and is not just an adaptation of preparation elementary teacher certifications. The AACTE also adds that teachers have, at a minimum, a four-year college degree and specific [professional preparation] in early childhood education. Early Childhood Education (ECE) involves a *specific and unique body of knowledge, practice, and attitudes*, which must be included in the curricula of prospective ECE teachers. Early Childhood Education pedagogy is *distinct* from other education disciplines (AACTE, 2004 p.7)

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), consistent with AACTE recommendations, has identified that teachers in high quality Early Childhood Education programs should have field-specific college-level preparation which includes a foundation in child development, theory, research, and training in developmentally appropriate instructional practices, and supervised field experience with young children ages 3 – 8 years of age. NAEYC, the accreditation institution for NCATE, state conclusively that Early Childhood teacher preparation programs must provide unique professional preparation for teachers of this age group of children. NAEYC / NCATE underscore - that the preparation of teachers for the primary grades [using] a traditional elementary model should NOT be labeled Early Child Education (ECE).

In fact, most Early Childhood teacher education programs include coursework that includes specific skills to identify children with special needs for early referral and early interventions than may reduce longer term complications and reduce more extensive special education in later Elementary and High school (Early & Winton, 2001). During observations for children's key expected developmental milestones, those areas where children have special needs will be readily detected and referred for further evaluation.

Unique Learning and Development of Young Children ages 3- 8 years - Specialized Early Childhood Teacher Preparation

- ✓ Young children are transitioning from sensory learning to more abstract learning
- ✓ Early Childhood teachers are prepared in strategies to scaffold children's learning
- ✓ Early Childhood teachers learn observational assessment strategies that inform key instructional decisions for children this age

During these periods of preoperational thought and concrete operational thought as young children are transitioning from learning through their senses, there is a need for teachers to develop an experiential base for children to connect new ideas with developing abstract thought (Kamii, C., & J.K. Ewing, 1996). Guidelines published by the National Association for the

Education of Young Children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) stress the importance of teachers' scaffolding new knowledge and skills in ways each child understands by allowing the child to act upon new knowledge through their existing knowledge and skills—even more important for this developmental level of young children. Scaffolding learning is something teachers themselves must learn to do first, suggesting the need for a distinct preparation program for Early Childhood teachers.

Early childhood teachers learn observational assessment strategies based on the brain research, not taught in Elementary Education teacher education programs (Rushton, S.P., 2001). Standardized assessments for program and child outcomes alone have been misused for high stakes placements during the kindergarten and primary grades, especially since young children do not always have the linguistic capabilities to express themselves accurately on assessments. Multiple measures, which include performance assessments along with standardized assessment used by specialized early childhood educators, provide more accurate and comprehensive views of children's needs and interests to use in planning successful learning activities.

Misunderstanding Curriculum Implementation based on Standards

- ✓ Curriculum for young children ages 3 -8 should not be “watered down” elementary curriculum and assessment
- ✓ Programs developed by specialized early childhood educators, such as center-based activities with effective teacher scaffolding lead to increased positive outcomes for young children
- ✓ The pace and medium and medium of play-based learning provide for not only accurate learning of new information, but play provides for the motivation of children to love learning throughout their schooling years.

State and federal policies have created a new focus on early childhood standards, curriculum, child assessment, and evaluation of early childhood programs. One important initiative in many states - Universal PreK for 4 year olds has shed new light on the importance of high quality early childhood education. Teacher preparation that is distinctly early childhood and not “watered-down” elementary is required to meet the needs of young children and their families considering the demands of this legislation. Attention on early childhood education programs without comprehensive understanding of the needs of young children ages 3 – 8 years old has sometimes led to misuses of curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2002).

Without specific preparation in working with young children, curriculum may be “pushed down” to young children and result in “didactic teaching, bored and listless kids, and an aimless curriculum” (Black, 2003; McDaniel, Isaac, Brooks, & Hatch, 2005). Preschool and then Kindergartens and primary grade teachers should instead use more developmentally appropriate curriculum and developing the readiness skills that underpin the academic skills learned in later elementary school and into high school. Doing more or easier worksheets is not what young children age 3 – 8 need to develop needed social and academic knowledge and skills. Recent emphasis on program evaluation provides scientific evidence that certain program qualities developed by specially prepared Early Childhood educators, such as center-based activities and

play-based learning with effective teacher scaffolding do lead to increased positive outcomes for young children (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003).

Johnson, Christie, and Wardle (2005) cite theory and research studies that play-based learning has historically, and continues to be, at the center of a quality early childhood curriculum. A vast amount of research in the field of child learning documents the positive cognitive and social outcomes when young children are allowed to be active in play as they learn new concepts. The pace and medium provide for not only accurate learning of new information, play provides for the motivation of children to love learning throughout their schooling years. Children solve problems by exploring toys and manipulatives, building with blocks, pouring water, sifting sand, looking through microscopes, reading books and many more activities that link to positive cognitive growth, language development, social skills, and fine and gross motor development.

Teachers from early childhood preparation programs have multiple experiences in which they fine-tune their facilitation of play and enhance verbal interactions. The ACEI position on Play: Essential for All Children (Eisenberg & Jalongo, 2002) state that teachers need to plan for children's engagement in play (including dramatic play and blocks) so it is linked to classroom topics of study. Early Childhood teachers *can* also help to enrich, extend, and cognitively upgrade children's peer play, while reducing the impact of social and individual differences (Farran & Son-Yarbrough, 2001; Leseman, Rollenberg, Rispens, 2001).

Everything (almost) You Needed to Know You Learned in Kindergarten

- ✓ Kindergarten teachers who have a strong background in social and emotional development help children develop self-regulation skills of planning organizing their work
- ✓ Kindergarten teachers help children develop the work-related skills that contribute to children's success in reading, mathematics, vocabulary, general information and alphabet skills with lasting results through the primary grades; conversely children with poor work-related skills are a risk factor for low academic achievement at the beginning of school and continuing into the early school years.

Successful kindergarten teachers with specialized early childhood preparation that includes a course in Social and Emotional development realize importance of young children's development of underlying regulatory strategies or self-regulation that help lead to academic skills (Child Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network, 2000). Kindergarten teachers realize that children this age are still developing those skills and cannot be rushed into academics without these related regulation skills (Rimm-Kaufman, Early, Cox, Saluja, Pianta, Bradley, & Payne, 2002). Self-regulation is a necessary school-related activity that children need to develop early to be successful throughout their school years. Self-regulation is a metacognitive activity in which children plan and monitor their progress toward goals, as well as adapt strategies improves their chances of success. Young children who are successful in problem-solving apply basic self-regulation skills of planning and organizing significantly more than unsuccessful problem solvers when faced with complex tasks (Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989; Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003).

McClelland, Morrison, and Holmes (2000) study of 540 Kindergarten children found that young children need to develop BOTH interpersonal skills and work-related (also called learning

related) social skills. Interpersonal skills include behaviors such as interacting positively with peers, playing cooperatively, sharing, and respecting other children; whereas work-related skills encompass behaviors like listening and following directions, participating appropriately in groups (such as taking turns), staying on task, and organizing work materials. In general, work-related skills tap the domains of independence, responsibility, self-regulation, and cooperation (Cooper & Farran, 1991). McClelland, et. al. found that at the beginning of kindergarten, work-related skills contributed to children's success in reading, mathematics, vocabulary, general information and alphabet skills, beyond the influence of other important child, social, and family and sociocultural variables such as a child's IQ, entrance age, amount of preschool experience, ethnicity, parental education level, and home literacy environment. These work related skills continued to be a predictor of these same children's academic successes through the second grade.

And Early Childhood Teachers in First-Third Grade Are Important, Too

- ✓ Children in first grade perform better with teachers whose instruction is direct and children received regular feedback on their work
- ✓ Children with social, behavioral, or academic problems when placed with high-instructional quality teachers can overcome these challenges in first grade.

The following research is clear that the need for teachers with specialized preparation in early childhood Education does not end when children are promoted from PreKindergarten or kindergarten, especially for children at-risk for school success. Hambre & Pianta (2005) found that of the 910 first grade children in their study, children with mothers' with less than a four year degree who were placed in high-instructional quality classrooms with teachers whose instruction was direct and children received regular feedback on their work, performed as well as students with more highly educated mothers on achievement tests.

Further researchers found that children with social, behavioral, or academic problems when placed with these high-instructional quality teachers could overcome these challenges in first grade. “These data suggest that what teachers know, feel, and do are the critical determinants of student learning—both academic and social. Sure, subject-matter knowledge is useful, but so is a teacher’s understanding of students as social beings.” (Hambre and Pianta, interviewed in *Education Week*; see also Maxwell, McWilliam, Hemmeter, 2001; Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta, & Howes, 2002).

But Shouldn’t Children Have Gotten that Nurturing and Learned Social Skills in Preschool?

- ✓ Children who attend high quality preschool will come to school with many of the needed readiness skills.
- ✓ BUT, children from low income families, those who are *most* in need of additional academic and social opportunities are *least* likely to attend preschool.
- ✓ AND if children from low income families do attend preschool, they are *most* likely to attend *poorer quality* preschool.

Children who attend high quality preschool will come to school with many of the readiness skills. In fact, two significant studies found that the effects of quality preschool last well into adulthood (Barnett, Young, & Schweinhart, 1998). BUT children from low income families, those who are *most* in need of additional academic and social opportunities are *least* likely to attend preschool. And if children from low income families do attend preschool, they are *most* likely to attend *poorer quality* preschools.

According to Snow in the publication *Preventing Reading Failure*,(1998), those children are likely to begin school less prepared to learn to read unless they receive early intervention are preschool children:

- living in low-income communities
- with limited English proficiency
- slated to attend an elementary school where achievement is chronically low
 - suffering from specific cognitive deficiencies, hearing impairments and early language impairments
- whose parents have a history of reading problems.

A National Center for Education Statistics study compared entering kindergarten children from disadvantaged and the most affluent families (*Table 1*). The study found that only 47 percent of children from the most disadvantaged families had attended either preschool or Head Start. In contrast, 59 percent of non-poor children and 65 percent of those from the most affluent families attend some kind of preschool (Coley, 2002; Lee & Burkum, 2002; Mead, 2004)

But even more alarming - several studies have found that *few preschools* for children of *any* family income level (high, middle, NOR low) are considered *high quality*!(*Table 2*)

Most of the children in the US are NOT attending high quality preschool programs to prepare them for elementary school; to prepare them for life (Espinosa, 2002).

Table 1

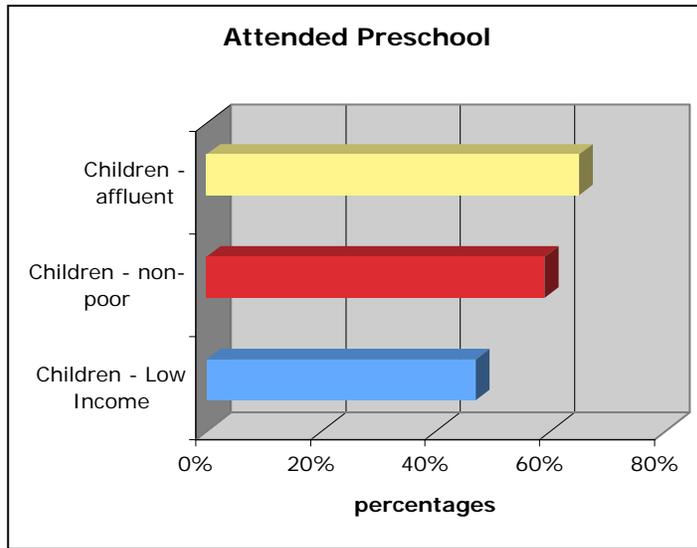


Table 2
Preschool Quality Study Findings based on ECERS scores

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (1998) study of early care for children through age 3 in nine states	8% were rated <i>poor</i> , 53% <i>fair</i> 30% <i>good</i> 9% <i>excellent</i>
The Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study (1999), large scale study examined full-day child-care centers in four (4) states	Only 24% had total average scores in the <i>good to excellent</i> range.
The Massachusetts Cost and Quality Study (2001) described the quality of community-based programs serving preschool-aged children ¹⁷	Average scores - <i>almost good</i> Most scores - <i>minimally adequate</i> range

Valued Added, Early Childhood Education (ECE) Certified Teachers in the Kindergarten and Primary (1st-3rd grade) Elementary School Workplace

1. ECE teachers enter teaching already prepared with specialize knowledge and skills learned through college coursework and related practical experiences to ***teach the needed social and interpersonal skills young children need***, while teachers with Elementary background would need *additional in-service training* to acquire and then develop those skills.
2. ECE teachers would be more specifically prepared in how to guide, support, and scaffold the ***early work related study skills and academic skills that young children need for district assessments and NCLB mandates*** because they understand child development and learning needs of young children including transitioning children to emerging skills needed to succeed in Kindergarten and Primary grades, as well as for later grades.

3. ECE teachers are prepared in ***performance assessment and observation tools that align with typical child development to identify a child's special need.*** Early identification can save the child, family, and school from excessive remediation in later grades --sometimes saving excessive special education remediation time and dollars later.
4. There is an overwhelming need for teachers in, K, and 1st – 3rd grades with specific preparation in the area of Early Childhood Education, especially for those ***children who did not experience any preschool at all AND for the majority of young children (from ALL income levels) who did not attend a quality preschool.***

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ECE/ELEMENTARY LICENSURE SURVEY

This following survey was an effort to determine the extent to which existing early childhood teacher licensure/certification is being used. Early childhood is generally defined as the period from birth through age eight and teacher preparation reflects the three age ranges of birth through age three, ages three through five, and ages five through eight. Early childhood teacher certification may cover the full age range or subsets of it.

As shown in the column titled "ECE License?" all but two states, Nevada and Montana report having early childhood certification, but the survey revealed that such certification is rarely required.

The survey looked specifically at overlapping elementary certification for Kindergarten teachers. This is reflected in the column titled "required for K?" The answer in this column was determined by comparing the information in the following two columns; these show the grade levels covered by ECE licensure and by elementary licensure. Where elementary certification overlapped early childhood certification grades, early childhood was determined not to be required for teaching kindergarten.

Only 9 states received a "yes" in the "required for K" column and 5 states show "yes for all." The response "yes for all" indicates that ECE certification is required for all primary grades, not just Kindergarten. However it is logical to wonder whether K-4th and preK- 4th or 5th grade teaching certificate has a true focus on the early years, regardless of the title. Based on that concern, West Virginia with both a preK-K and a K-4 licensure, shows a question mark.

In most states elementary certification covers kindergarten through grade six or grade eight; and school administrators tend to favor hiring teachers certified to teach the full range of grades. Additionally, teacher certification is not generally required for outside public schools, including most preschools. These two facts make early childhood teacher certification irrelevant in most states.

As shown, current teacher licensure practices discourage unique early childhood teacher preparation in most states.

ECE LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS IN THE STATES

<u>STATE</u>	<u>ECE License?</u>	<u>Required for K?</u>	<u>ECE grades</u>	<u>Elem grades</u>
Alabama	yes	no	PreK-3rd	K-6
Alaska	yes	no	PreK-3rd	K-6
Arizona	yes	yes PreK & K	0-3rd (new)	K-8
Arkansas	yes	no	PreK-4th Child Dev	PreK-8th multiple subjects
California	yes?	no no - except	permits	
Colorado	yes	Denver	PreK-3rd	K-6
Connecticut	yes	no	0-K/N-3rd	K-6
Delaware	yes	no	0-2nd	K-6
Florida	yes	no	PreK-3rd	K-6
Georgia	yes?	YES for ALL	PreK-5th	4th-8th
Hawaii	yes	no	PreK-3rd	K-6
Idaho	ECE/SpecEd	no	0-3rd	K-8
Illinois	yes	no	PreK-3rd	K-9
Indiana	yes	no	B-K	K-6
Iowa	yes	no	0-3rd	K-6
Kansas	yes	no	B-5 or B-8	K-6
Kentucky	ECE/SpecEd	no	0-5 yrs	K-5th
Louisiana	yes	yes for K	PreK-3rd	1st-8th
Maine	yes	no	K-3	K-8
Maryland	yes	yes for K	PreK-3rd	1st-6th
Massachusetts	yes	yes for K	PreK-2nd	1st-6th
Michigan	yes	no	0-age 8	K-5
Minnesota	yes	no	0 - 8 yrs	K-8
Mississippi	yes?	no	PreK & K	K-6
Missouri	yes	YES for ALL	PreK-3rd	4th -
Montana	no	no		K-8
Nebraska	yes	no	B-3rd or B-K	K-6
Nevada	no	no		K-8
New Hampshire	yes	no	N-K	K-8th
New Jersey	yes	no	PreK-3rd	N-8
New Mexico	yes	no	0-3rd	K-8
New York	yes	yes for K	0-2nd	1st-6th
North Carolina	yes	no	B-K	K-6
North Dakota	yes	no	B-3rd	K-6/K-8
Ohio	yes	YES for ALL	PreK-3rd	4th-9th
Oklahoma	yes	yes for K	PreK-3rd	1st-8th
Oregon	yes	YES for ALL	PreK-4th	3rd-8th
Pennsylvania	yes	no	N-3rd	K-6
Rhode Island	yes	yes for K	Preschool-2nd	1st-6th
South Carolina	yes	yes for K	prek-3rd B-PreK or B-age	2nd-6th
South Dakota	yes	no	8	K-8th
Tennessee	yes	no	PreK-3rd	K-6

<u>STATE</u>	<u>ECE License?</u>	<u>Required for K?</u>	<u>ECE grades</u>	<u>Elem grades</u>
Texas	yes	YES for ALL	ECE-4th	4th-8th
Utah	yes	yes for K	K-3rd	1st-6th
Vermont	yes	no	B-3rd	K-6
Virginia	yes	no	PreK-3rd	PreK-6th
Washington	yes	no	PreK-3rd	K-8th
West Virginia	yes	?	PreK-K or K-4	K-4 or 5-9
Wisconsin	yes	no	B-age 8	ages 0-11/6-12
Wyoming	yes	no	B-age 8	K-8

NOTE: Information obtained by Marjorie Fields (President of the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators) and Anne Mitchell (President of the National Association for the Education of Young Children) in November and December 2006 from State Dept of Education web sites, the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification website <http://www.nasdtec.org/> and responses from state Dept. of Education personnel in Indiana, Louisiana, Maine and Mississippi.

Abbreviations:

- O = Birth
- B = Birth
- ECE = Early Childhood Education
- Elem = Elementary
- K = Kindergarten
- N = Nursery
- PreK = Prekindergarten