



Vermont Association for the
Education of Young Children

Task Force on Advancing Early Childhood Education as a Profession **Discussion Draft #2** *Three Designations with Aligned Preparation Pathways*

Background

VTAEYC's Advancing ECE as a Profession Task Force was formed late 2019 (membership on page 5) with the charge to engage the ECE workforce in answering the question: To what extent might Vermont's ECE workforce choose to align with the national Power to the Profession recommendations? So far, the Task Force has published [Consensus Document #1](#) which finds that Vermont would choose to align with Power to the Profession's framing of *Professional Identity*, including:

- Name: Early Childhood Educator/ Early Childhood Education Profession
- Description: Role & Responsibilities
- Distinction between: The Early Childhood Education Profession and the Early Childhood Field

Next, the Task Force studied and discussed the summary recommendations in Power to the Profession's [Pathways, Preparation and Compensation](#). This document you are now reading, describes specific recommendations from **Power to the Profession (P2P; orange headers)**, followed by responses from the **Task Force (TF; green, in boxes)**. The Task Force is gathering feedback on this draft from the ECE workforce through conversations and surveys. The Task Force will review that feedback, make any revisions, and publish a Consensus Document #2 for *Three Designations with Aligned Preparation Pathways*. In early 2021, the Task Force will repeat this process with *Professional Compensation*.

Where We Are Going: P2P Audacious Vision for the Profession of Tomorrow

This first-edition Framework offers a bold vision for a future structure for the early childhood education profession in which:

- Every child (0-8) across all settings, is supported by early childhood educators with recognized early childhood degrees and credentials;
- Early childhood educators at all professional designations (Early Childhood Educator I, II, and III) are valued, respected, and well-compensated for the important roles they play;
- Educators with lead responsibilities across settings and age bands are prepared at the ECE III designation (earning a bachelor's degree in early childhood education), at a minimum;
- Anyone who wants to become an early childhood educator, at any designation, has equitable access to affordable, high-quality professional preparation and development that supports them in developing the agreed-upon set of knowledge, skills, and competencies for any setting; and
- Early childhood educators at all designations are compensated in accordance with the complex and demanding work they perform, as part of a system that recognizes the cost of quality and finances early childhood education as the public good that it is.

P2P overarching commitment: As we work to make this vision a reality, we will advocate for phased-in implementation that honors the existing and future workforce. (See [Unifying Framework](#) p. 5 for more.)

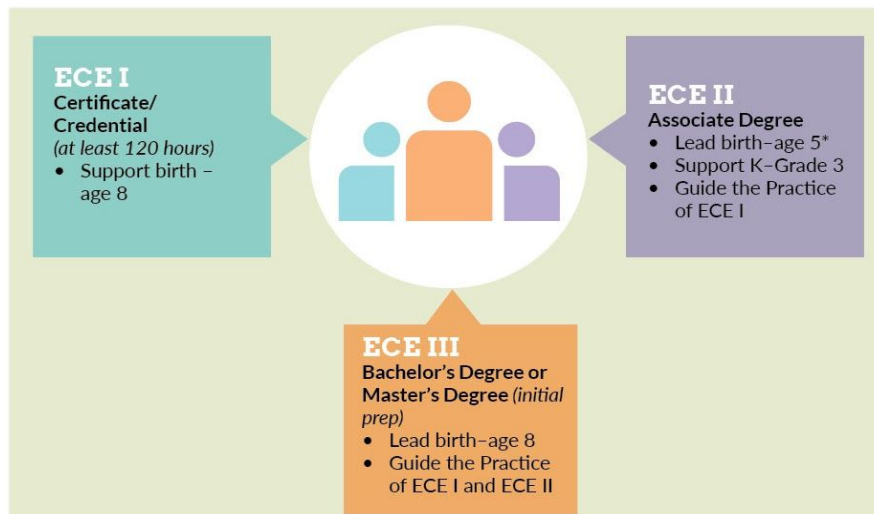
P2P RECOMMENDATION 1: Create one early childhood education profession with three distinct and meaningful designations - ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III.

NOW: Our workforce is inequitable and stratified, with many labels, designations, and roles that vary within and across states, sectors, and settings. The complexity and inconsistency of our system means that we fail to recognize differences in preparation, skills, and experience.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a structure in which the confusion of labels and roles is reduced to three distinct and meaningful designations. Each early childhood educator within these designations will be prepared to work as part of a teaching team, with unique roles and responsibilities. Compensation and responsibilities will increase as individuals increase the depth and scope of their expertise, regardless of the setting of their job.

Three designations with aligned preparation pathways

Compensation (including benefits) increases with greater responsibility and deeper preparation



*In state-funded preschool programs, provided in mixed-delivery settings and explicitly aligned with the K–12 public school system (such as in Vermont), ECE III plays a lead role and ECE II plays a support educator role.

TASK FORCE RESPONSE: Three Distinct Designations (ECE I, ECE II, ECE III)

We see many positives in having one profession with these three distinct designations. There is a clear structure, easily understood by those within the profession, by partners in the early childhood field, by families and by the general public. Because all three designations are prepared to work as a team, it is inclusive with an emphasis on accountable, collaborative practice. We see parallels to other professions, such as nursing, with national, portable credentials and clear pathways for career growth.

TF Consensus: Put forth P2P recommendation to the workforce as written.

Some additional thoughts that emerged in our discussion about the roles embedded in the three designations (support educator, lead educator, and guiding the practice of others) include:

- Build in suitable supports for any current family child care provider (sole practitioner) to attain an ECE II designation; ensure a “true choice” to be in the profession
- Incorporate the role of experience in readiness to guide the practice of others
- In terms of equity:
 - If an ECE III must be the lead educator in public preK through Grade 3, why is it different for infants and toddlers, where an ECE II may lead?
 - It is important to have consistency in preparation and compensation across school-based, center-based and FCCH settings.

P2P RECOMMENDATION 2: Establish the primary set of preparation pathways, aligned with the designations.

NOW: We have a hodge-podge of preparation programs of uneven quality. There is little alignment within or across states or colleges. There is little accountability. Instead, there is an injustice in professional development that leads to no resulting credential. The system’s chaos disproportionately harms candidates without power and privilege, as well as impacting quality for children and families.

RECOMMENDATION: Establish the primary set of pathways, aligned to the three designations, roles, responsibilities, and compensation of the profession. This will reduce fragmentation of the field while recognizing that the science of early learning is equally complex for children across birth through age 8. Recommended are four primary pathways, with different requirements, each requiring completion of an organized program of study in early childhood education. Included must be work to eliminate systemic barriers to higher education and to encourage innovative models that maintain a commitment to quality.

TASK FORCE RESPONSE: Aligned Primary Preparation Pathways

We see many positives in these pathways, as described. They are clear and align directly with the three designations. They build on each other, with no need to backtrack or start over. Each leads to a valued credential or degree. The preparation pathways are based on neuroscience and built on national standards and competencies.

We particularly appreciate this part of the “audacious vision”:

- ❑ Anyone who wants to become an early childhood educator, at any level, has equitable access to affordable, high-quality professional preparation and development that supports them in developing the agreed-upon set of knowledge, skills, and competencies.

TF Consensus: Put forth P2P recommendation to the workforce as written.

P2P: Phased-in implementation that honors the existing and future workforce

UNTIL NOW: We recognize that, to date, when policymakers have increased accountability for educators by raising expectations and educational requirements, they have frequently done so without sufficiently attending to or funding necessary supports and increased compensation. Because of these policy and financing decisions, current and future educators have had to make decisions as well -- including deciding to leave the field or not to enter it at all.

COMMITMENT: Getting from where we are to where we want to go requires a bridge that embraces our future workforce and honors our existing one. With our shared vision in mind, implementation of the framework will include recommendations for policies that acknowledge and address the serious challenges today's workforce faces in accessing and attaining credentials and degrees. As we advocate for the *Unifying Framework*, we commit to advocating for:

- Funding for necessary supports and increased compensation
- Realistic implementation timelines that recognize the challenges faced by the existing workforce
- Implementation plans and timelines that recognize the particular challenges that family child care and other community-based providers face, so as not to contribute to or worsen their widespread decline

TASK FORCE RESPONSE: Implementation

We embrace P2P's commitment to "phased-in implementation that honors the existing and future workforce". In that implementation, we understand that a national Professional Governance Body will make some decisions that are national in scope, such as short-term "exemption policies" and flexible ways for the existing workforce to demonstrate competencies. Other aspects of implementation, such as non-traditional pathways and innovative practices, may be unique to each state. In Vermont, the CCV's Assessment of Prior Learning option, TEACH scholarships, and the apprenticeship program are examples of supports and innovative practices that must be part of any thoughtful implementation.

TF Consensus: The profession itself must take the lead in defining what supports we need to ensure our success as an early childhood education profession.

Some other things we discussed:

- Ensure we communicate well with family child care providers, so they have faith about their place in the future profession.
- Share: "P2P's intentional approach for unifying the entire early childhood profession - not only across settings and states, but also across licensure age bands, provider types, government jurisdictions, and funding streams - is uncharted territory for the ECE field." (DC7&8, p. 3)
- Build trust and maintain relationships, as we advance the profession.
- Metaphors may be helpful:
 - During construction of a highway bridge, a temporary bridge helps travelers to reach their destination while all the complex parts of the long-term bridge are put in place.
 - In a community revitalization project, the image to focus on is what it will look like, not the messy in-between.

- Specifically, define all the supports that will be needed and the funding to ensure those.
- Make it clear how to access supports, including mentors during the “temporary bridge” time.

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