



Vermont Association for the  
Education of Young Children

## Professional Identity - Consensus Document April 2020

### INTRODUCTION

VTAEYC's Advancing as a Profession Task Force seeks to answer the question: "To what extent might Vermont choose to align with NAEYC's [Power to the Profession](#) framework as a blueprint for advancing the early childhood education profession?" In December 2019, the Task Force created a [Discussion Draft](#) on Professional Identity for consideration by the early childhood education workforce. In early 2020, feedback on the draft was gathered from 481 individuals who participated in 34 conversations across the state and 167 survey respondents. Based on that feedback, the Task Force made revisions to create this Consensus Document for Professional Identity, which aligns with Power to the Profession's national framework with a few small, important variations derived from the Vermont feedback.

### PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

#### Name of the Professional / Name of the Profession

**Early Childhood Educator / Early Childhood Education** (Survey on *Name*: Agree - 90%)

#### Role and Responsibilities of the Early Childhood Education Profession

(Survey on *Role & Responsibilities*: Agree - 98%)

The **distinct role** of the early childhood education profession is to care for and promote the learning, development and well-being of children from birth through age eight to establish a foundation for lifelong learning and development. This foundation for learning is built through reciprocal relationships between early childhood educators and the children they serve. Reciprocal relationships require attention to family and child diversity – including race, ethnicity, language, culture, social class, immigrant status, family structure, special needs, and learner characteristics – which is one of the multiple influences on children's development and learning.

Members of the early childhood education profession, a distinct profession in the early childhood field, are prepared to be accountable for the following **responsibilities**:

1. Planning and implementing intentional, developmentally appropriate learning experiences - including play-based learning experiences - that promote the social-emotional development, physical development and health, cognitive development, and general learning competencies of each child served;
2. Establishing and maintaining a safe, caring, inclusive, and healthy learning environment;
3. Observing, documenting, and assessing children's learning and development using guidelines established by the profession;
4. Developing reciprocal, culturally responsive relationships with families and communities;
5. Advocating for the needs of children and their families;

6. Advancing and advocating for an equitable, diverse, and effective early childhood education profession that is well-compensated;
7. Staying current with new research and updated practice (e.g. trauma-informed, etc.);
8. Engaging in reflective practice and continuous learning; and
9. Following a [Code of Ethics](#) for professional conduct

These responsibilities are consistent across all early childhood education settings that support young children from birth through age eight. (Survey on *Age Range*: Agree - 84%)

### **The Early Childhood Education Profession within the Early Childhood Field** ([see graphic](#))

(Survey on *ECE Profession within the EC Field*: Agree - 93%)

Supporting the learning and development of young children requires complex, demanding, and valuable work that is performed by many individuals in many different roles. It is important to recognize and value the complementary, yet distinct roles in the broad early childhood field and also to understand the particular place the early childhood profession holds in that field.

#### **The Early Childhood Education Profession**

Members of the early childhood education profession meet the guidelines established for the profession and are prepared to be accountable for all of the responsibilities outlined in the section entitled Role and Responsibilities. These individuals are **early childhood educators**. They have mastery of specialized knowledge, skills and competencies and are accountable to the standards of the profession.

Additional, important roles in the early childhood education profession include:

- (1) **professional preparation faculty and trainers** who instruct, monitor, and observe the practice of aspiring early childhood educators, and
- (2) **pedagogical or instructional administrators** who guide the practice of early childhood educators in early childhood program settings.

It is anticipated that these individuals must be prepared as early childhood educators before assuming their responsibilities in guiding others in that role.

#### **The Early Childhood Field**

The early childhood field includes **other roles** that are not accountable for all of the responsibilities outlined in Roles and Responsibilities. Other roles are related occupations and professions in the early childhood field, such as mental health consultants, social workers, child psychologists, home visitors and others who often work closely with early childhood educators. They may be prepared within an allied profession. While employers or funders may require that individuals serving in other roles be qualified as early childhood educators, that is at the discretion of the employer or funder and doesn't make that role part of the profession.

The early childhood field also includes **individuals not meeting professional qualifications** established by the early childhood education profession. They may choose not to meet the qualifications for the profession. They may be employed in programs that do not require them to meet the qualifications. They may hold credentials outside of the early childhood education profession. While these members of the early childhood field are valuable collaborative partners, they are not considered members of the early childhood education profession. Pathways for any individuals wanting to meet qualifications for the early childhood education profession should be accessible, equitable, and supportive.