

## DEC/ECPC Think Tank: Blended Personnel Preparation Programs

A Think Tank meeting was convened to develop recommendations for the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC), and other partners on how to move the field forward in the development and support of Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) and Early Childhood Education (ECE) blended personnel preparation programs. Think Tank objectives were based on three questions:

1. How can blended programs be evaluated and/or recognized at the national level, given the development of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation independent of the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation Programs (CAEP)?
2. What resources should be developed to support preparation programs' use of the new ECE and EI/ECSE standards?
3. How can DEC/CEC influence states to support blended program development and recognition?

Fifteen faculty representing EI/ECSE and ECE blended programs from across the U.S., a state technical assistance provider, and two NAEYC staff participated in the Think Tank which was facilitated by four ECPC staff.

## Establishing a Framework for the Think Tank

The Think Tank began with discussion of the following information to establish the framework for the meeting.

### Givens:

- Blended programs should fully address both the ECE and the EI/ECSE standards.
- NAEYC will no longer be part of the CAEP accreditation review process.
- CEC will continue to participate in the CAEP review process.
- National approval/recognition is an important incentive to increase the number of blended preparation programs.
- The definition of blended programs and the role of faculty in blended preparation programs used for the Think Tank discussions:  
Candidates are prepared in a single curriculum with a complete integration of courses and field experiences designed to address the needs of all students, including those with disabilities.

Both ECE and EI/ECSE faculty engage in ongoing collaboration for the single preparation program, modeling collaboration and inclusion. (Blanton & Pugach, 2011)

### NAEYC Updates:

NAEYC staff provided an overview of the new ECE Standards and Program Accreditation process.

## Recommendations to the Field

Several recommendations were consistently identified across the three questions posed for this Think Tank. These recommendations will inform ECPC and DEC as they move forward in developing resources to support blended programs. Further, these recommendations identify areas for collaboration and joint advocacy by DEC and NAEYC specific to national recognition of blended programs and blended state certification policies. For a complete discussion of the questions posed for each small group session, key recommendations made through the small group discussions, and the final whole group discussion about state policy, see Data Report 8 at <https://ecpcta.org/>.

## Recommendations to the Field

### Resources to Support Blended Programs' Use of EI/ECSE and ECE Standards:

- A joint DEC and NAEYC personnel standards position statement to include blended programs.
- Cross walk of the EI/ECSE and ECE Standards.
- A definition and quality indicators for blended programs.
- Case studies of models of blended programs that illustrate the quality indicators.
- Sample assessments and rubrics.

### Review of Blended Programs for National Recognition/Accreditation:

- Review possible options for national recognition/accreditation (e.g., NAEYC accreditation process, CHEA recognition of NAEYC process, something new).
- Develop/agree to a collaborative blended review process between CEC, DEC, and NAEYC .
- Train both DEC and NAEYC members as program reviewers.

### Strategies to Influence Inclusion of National Standards in Blended Certification Policies:

- Advocate for use/adoption of national EI/ECSE and ECE Standards in state certification/licensure policies.
- Develop resources and training opportunities to promote use of the standards for key state stakeholders (e.g., certification officers, Parts B619 and C coordinators).

## References

Blanton, L.P., & Pugach, M.L. (2011). Using a classification system to probe the meaning of dual licensure in general and special education. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 34*(3), 219-234.

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). (2020) *Initial practice-based professional standards for early interventionists/early childhood special educators*. CEC. <https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-practice-based-standards-early-interventionists-early-childhood-special-educators>

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (2020). *Professional standards and competencies for early childhood educators*. NAEYC. <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/professional-standards-competencies>