



DEC/ECPC Think Tank: Blended Personnel Preparation Programs



Data Report 8

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DEC/ECPC Think Tank: Blended Personnel Preparation Programs

The Office of Special Education Programs funded Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC) collaborated with the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to convene a Think Tank to obtain recommendations 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.

A framework to guide the subsequent Think Tank discussion was provided by the facilitators. This framework included five givens.

- Blended personnel preparation programs should fully address both the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (ECE Standards, 2020) and the Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSE Standards, 2020).
- NAEYC will no longer be part of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accreditation review process for higher education programs.
- CEC will continue to participate in the CAEP review process.
- National approval/recognition is an important incentive to increase the number of blended personnel preparation programs.
- The definition of blended programs and the role of faculty in blended personnel preparation programs to be used for the Think Tank discussions are:

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).

In addition, NAEYC staff provided an overview of the new ECE Standards and NAEYC higher education program accreditation process.

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the Think Tank was to obtain input from leaders in the ECE and EI/ECSE fields with expertise in developing and implementing blended personnel preparation programs.

Think Tank objectives were based on three questions:

1. How can blended personnel preparation programs be evaluated and/or recognized at the national level, given the development of NAEYC accreditation independent of the CAEP accreditation process?
2. What resources should be developed to support blended personnel preparation programs' use of the new ECE and EI/ECSE standards?
3. How can DEC/CEC influence states to support blended personnel preparation program development and recognition?

Methodology

Participants

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. Faculty represented a mix of comprehensive, research two,

and research one universities. They all had experience in developing, implementing, and evaluating blended personnel preparation programs. One participant provided technical assistance to a higher education consortium in a state with blended ECE and EI/ECSE certification. Several participants were at the time or had facilitated OSEP funded personnel preparation programs that supported their blended personnel preparation program. In addition, four participants had conducted research on blended programs.

Procedures for Conducting the Think Tank

After presentation of the framework information, participants engaged in series of small group discussions in response to specific questions followed by whole group reporting. The meeting ended with whole group discussion of how state certification/licensure policies can be influenced to support blended preparation.

Discussion for Question One

Participants were divided into three small groups for discussion of question one: *How can blended personnel preparation programs be evaluated and/or recognized at the national level, given the development of NAEYC accreditation independent of the CAEP accreditation process?* That overarching question was then organized into three subcomponents with questions for each subcomponent. The agenda included two small group times for the first question with each participant having the opportunity to address two of the three subcomponents for this question.

Subcomponent one focused on the CAEP accreditation review process through CEC with the following questions used to guide that discussion.

Given that NAEYC will not participate in the CAEP review of blended programs:

- a. What are CEC's options for reviewing ECE and EI/ECSE blended programs in the future?

- b. What could these reviews look like? Who would need to be involved to make these reviews happen?
- c. What are options for CEC to collaborate with NAEYC to use the ECE Standards in a CEC-only review that would be acceptable to CAEP, NAEYC, and DEC/CEC?
- d. What could these reviews look like?
- e. What other questions do we need to consider (and maybe answer)?

Subcomponent two focused on the new NAEYC accreditation review process with the following questions used to guide that discussion.

- a. What are the variety of ways DEC/CEC could collaborate with NAEYC to review blended programs as part of the NAEYC accreditation process?
- b. What could these reviews look like? Who would need to be involved to make the reviews happen?
- c. What other questions do we need to consider (and maybe answer)?

Subcomponent three provided an opportunity for participants to identify new ideas for recognizing blended personnel preparation programs. The following questions guided this discussion:

- a. What are some other ways to think about doing national reviews of blended personnel preparation programs?
- b. What could these reviews look like?
- c. If you were going to create a 'new' process:
 - What would be the most important evidence that programs should provide?
 - What are the important aspects of blended personnel preparation programs that are not considered in the current CAEP review process?

- Do you think there should be an on-site component?
- d. What other questions do we need to consider (and maybe answer)?

Discussion for Question Two

Prior to breaking into small groups to discuss question two, DEC and NAEYC staff identified available DEC, NAEYC, and ECPC resources: *What resources should be developed to support blended personnel preparation programs' use of the new ECE and EI/ECSE standards?*

In the whole group, participants brainstormed additional resource needs. In small groups, participants prioritized the most needed resources and provided additional detail regarding resource needs for both policy and higher education program support.

Discussion for Question Three

Whole group brainstorming was used to address question three: *How can DEC/CEC influence states to support blended personnel preparation program development and recognition?* Participants were asked to consider advocacy for and development of state policies for blended ECE and EI/ECSE certification/licensure.

Results

Results of the Think Tank are organized around each of the three main questions that guided small group and whole group discussion. A summary of the key recommendations per question is provided.

Question 1: How Can Blended Programs be Evaluated/Recognized at the National Level, Given the Development of NAEYC Accreditation Independent of CAEP?

Subcomponent 1 – Recommendations for Evaluation/Recognition of Blended Personnel Preparation Programs through the CAEP CEC Review Process

The following are recommendations that participants identified as possible ways to evaluate/recognize blended personnel preparation programs through CEC using the CAEP review process.

- Develop a blended review process.
- Facilitate reviews through CEC with DEC's assistance and NAEYC supplementing.
- Train DEC and NAEYC members as reviewers with training conducted jointly by DEC and CEC.
- Establish agreements between CAEP, CEC, DEC, and NAEYC for one review process for blended programs.
- Develop a joint DEC and NAEYC personnel standards position statement that addresses blended preparation after cross walking the two sets of standards.

Subcomponent 2 - Recommendations for Evaluation/Recognition of Blended Personnel Preparation Programs through the NAEYC Accreditation Process

The following are recommendations that participants identified as possible ways to evaluate/recognize blended personnel preparation programs through CEC using the NAEYC accreditation process for higher education programs.

- Cross walk the two sets of standards.
- Seek NAEYC accreditation with DEC recognition.
- Consider the overlap with edTPA and report edTPA outcomes as part of the NAEYC measures.
- Identify DEC's role in NAEYC's three levels of support for accreditation as follows:
 - Level 1 – Changes to self-study and site visits – no decision from DEC,
 - Level 2 – DEC reviewer attends site visit and provides feedback,

- Level 3 – Joint DEC and NAEYC review with accreditation from NAEYC and recognition from DEC.
- Seek Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) recognition for the NAEYC accreditation process resulting in CAEP recognition of the NAEYC accreditation.

Subcomponent 3 – Recommendations that Reflect New Ideas for Evaluation/Recognition of Blended Personnel Preparation Programs

When asked to consider new ideas for evaluating/recognizing blended personnel preparation programs, Think Tank participants made the following are recommendations.

- Develop a joint recognition process with both NAEYC and DEC reviewers that gathers information about:
 - Faculty,
 - Field experiences,
 - Artifacts,
 - Systems for assessment, and
 - Students – either all students or a random selection.
- Develop a formal communication process between NAEYC and DEC with goals and formal structures.
- Inform the field with consistent talking points across both professional associations.

Question 2: What Resources Should be Developed to Support Blended Preparation Programs' Use of the New EI/ECSE and ECE Standards?

Recommendations specific to this question were generated through both whole group brainstorming of resource needs and small group prioritization of the most needed resources with

additional detail regarding resource needs for both policy and IHE program support. Those recommendations are reported below.

Whole Group Brainstorming: Resources to Support Blended Programs

- Cross walk of the EI/ECSE and ECE Standards.
- Cross walk of developmentally appropriate practices and DEC recommended practices.
- Resources on how to use the cross walks for curriculum development.
- Sample assessments and rubrics based on the EI/ECSE and ECE Standards.
- Examples of different models of blended programs of study and include curriculum maps for those programs.
- Sample/model syllabi aligned with both sets of standards.
- Examples of different collaboration models in blended programs.
- A joint DEC and NAEYC position statement on blended programs, including a definition and quality indicators, or revise the DEC personnel standards position statement to include blended personnel preparation.
- Revised/updated DEC inclusion position statement.
- Joint resources for the NAEYC equity statement.
- Funding to support development and accreditation of blended programs.
- Content in the NAEYC accreditation self-study to assist blended programs.
- Joint training of NAEYC and DEC members as program reviewers.
- ECPC curriculum development tools.
- Resources for field and clinical practice such as:
 - Guidance on how to select sites,
 - Guidance about what to do when appropriate sites cannot be identified,

- Guidance on how to cover all age ranges and settings,
 - Guidance about how to develop partnerships with field placement sites,
 - Examples of assignments, and
 - Examples of the roles for which students are prepared.
- A communication and marketing plan for dissemination of resources.

Small Group Discussion: Policy Related Resource Needs

- Cross walk of the EI/ECSE and ECE Standards.
- Quality indicators and definition of blended programs (possible sources – program faculty, literature, program reviewers).
- EI/ECSE leveling system of standards similar to ECE.
- Position statement focused on blended, inclusion, personnel preparation, equity, and developmentally appropriate practices.
- One page “briefs’ on each of the above for marketing purposes.

Small Group Discussion: IHE Related Resource Needs

- Cross walk of the EI/ECSE and ECE Standards.
- Case studies that illustrate exemplar models and quality indicators, including challenges and how to address the challenges.
- Examples of curriculum maps with links to different assessments.
- Examples of programs of study.
- Guidance for field and clinical experiences to include:
 - Rubrics,
 - Reflection questions,
 - Interactive experiences, and

- Guidelines for cooperating teachers – responsibilities, case studies of exemplar programs.

Question 3: How Can DEC/CEC Influence States to Support Blended Program

Development and Recognition?

Recommendations specific to this question focused on advocacy for and development of state policies for blended certification/licensure.

- Identify the key agencies and individuals at the state level with whom to collaborate.
- Develop certification/licensure policies with the same age ranges as recommended by DEC and NAEYC.
- Advocate for the use of national standards within the political realities of the state.
- Advocate for adoption of national standards instead of developing state standards.
- Develop fact sheets that provide the rationale for adopting national standards for different stakeholders (e.g., families, administrators, legislators).
- Develop training for administrators to include webinars, family stories.
- Present at leadership conferences and other relevant state conferences.
- Develop connections with Power to the Profession recommendations at the state level – possibly through preschool development grants.
- Determine the relationship of edTPA to state certification/licensure policies.

Summary: Recommendations to the Field

In reviewing the recommendations for each of the three questions posed during the Think Tank, several recommendations were consistently identified across questions and/or groups. These recommendations are identified below and 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.

Resources to Support Blended Higher Education 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 different models of blended programs that illustrate the quality indicators.
- Sample program assessments and rubrics.

Recommendations for Review of Blended Programs for National

Recognition/Accreditation:

- Review possible options for national recognition/accreditation (e.g., the NAEYC accreditation process, CHEA recognition of the 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 States' 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.

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