

ECE Career Ladder Project (CLP) Overview

May 2010

Introduction

On April 21, 2010, First 5 California approved funding to develop a competencies-based career ladder for early care and education (ECE) professionals, in partnership with the California Department of Education Child Development Division (CDD), the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), and other stakeholders. This decision honors the past decade of research prescribing ECE professional development systems that are integrated, streamlined, and revamped to meet the needs of today's workforce. It also recognizes that California must align its career ladder with the state's new ECE competencies, to be issued later this year.

California's ECE community has been deliberating about the need for a career ladder and revised certification system for several years, and wants the state to have the full benefit of its ideas and expertise. The Early Childhood Professional Development and Education Collaborative (EPEC)ⁱ has been guiding a grassroots effort to develop such systems but EPEC recognizes that, to be useful to the state, its effort should be formalized through professional facilitation and a statewide input-gathering process that engages the full ECE community. In consultation with the CDD, CTC, and First 5 California, EPEC has begun this process, which it calls the ECE Career Ladder Project (CLP). The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (Packard Foundation) is providing support to this project through a consultant and some funds for community meetings and facilitation. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) at UC Berkeley is contributing staff time to consult on the project's design, materials and implementation.

The purpose of the CLP is to (1) gather input as broadly as possible from California's ECE field on the appropriate content and structure for an ECE Career Ladder; (2) identify the most relevant Career Ladder examples from other states; and (3) compile this input for the official entities responsible for developing a Career Ladder and revising ECE certification. The purpose is not to develop the final Career Ladder or to revise ECE certification in California.

History and Background:

Over the past decade, research has led to a consensus that ECE professional development systems need three inter-connected components: (a) Clear professional ECE Competencies; (b) a Career Ladder; and (c) a Registry. The Registry encompasses all the people who work with young children. The Career Ladder defines the training, qualifications, and credentials that those people will need, and the pathways that will be available. The Competencies are the foundation for the other two components, delineating what people need to know and be able to do in order to work with young children.

California's current ECE professional development system lacks many of these components. It consists of a Child Development Permit Matrix that was developed 15 years ago for Title 5 programs, which requires six college credits for teacher assistants with graduated steps to less

than an AA degree requirement for a Master Teacher. While the Permit Matrix reflected the professional wisdom of that era, it does not reflect the full range of work that ECE professionals perform today, the types of children they serve, the settings in which they work, the types of positions that they now hold, or the content areas they must master. More importantly, California's standards do not reflect the latest knowledge about brain development, how children learn, or the growing concern about the achievement gap and school readiness.

During years of discussing California's ECE structures with a diverse array of experts, EPEC itself prepared a draft career ladder. When this work initially began EPEC knew that a statewide process would be needed to incorporate multiple perspectives and create a career ladder that would best represent the field as a whole. Only a broad and inclusive process will lead to a professional development system that values each member of our diverse workforce and allows all of them to achieve their potential.

The CLP will identify issues that need further investigation, including areas of diverse and divergent opinions among sectors of the field. And it will allow the ECE field to begin this dialogue in its own community and share what it learns with the state, rather than responding to state drafts. The CLP will supplement and enrich California's process for producing new ECE standards by gathering information proactively from the field and sharing it with the state agencies as they begin to embark on the official task of developing an ECE Career Ladder and certification system. Due to the limited capacity of this project, and the ECE competencies' focus on people who work with children ages 0-5, the CLP will not encompass certification for school age providers, but their input is welcome. The final report will include the information collected from school age providers with a recommendation that further work be done for this population.

The diversity of stakeholders and the transparency of this project will strengthen the ECE field's ability to contribute valuable information to the state agencies responsible for developing California's competencies-based ECE Career Ladder. Due to their current association with EPEC, a variety of groups have agreed to participate in the CLP, including:

- California Early Childhood Mentor Program
- Child Development Training Consortium
- Curriculum Alignment Project
- Baccalaureate Pathways in Early Care and Education
- California Child Development Corps
- Working 4 Quality Child Care
- Community College representatives
- California State University representatives
- Center for the Study of Child Care Employment

CLP Overview

The Career Ladder Project (CLP) will be conducted in four phases:

- **Phase 1: Statewide outreach and recruitment of stakeholders**
- **Phase 2: Statewide online survey and ECE community meetings**
- **Phase 3: Follow-up survey on potential career ladder designs**
- **Phase 4: Developing a final report for submission to state agencies**

Phase 1: Outreach and recruitment (May 2010 – June 2010)

EPEC and the ECE community will conduct outreach to recruit agencies and individuals to participate in the CLP. The focus during this phase will be on recruiting a broad and diverse array of early care and education organizations and individuals throughout California who have email distribution networks that can be utilized to publicize and recruit people to complete the online survey (which will be launched in mid-June). The intent at this phase of the project is to establish an email network that will be utilized to reach the broader ECE community.

Phase 2: Statewide survey and community meetings (June 2010 - August 2010)

Phase 2 will involve an extensive online survey that is accessible to all members of the ECE community including child care providers, ECE agency/organization leaders and representatives from institutions of higher education and ECE training organizations. Through the agencies and individuals recruited in Phase 1, information and the link to the survey will be distributed throughout California with an emphasis on soliciting input from hard-to-reach practitioners, such as: center-based teachers and directors, family child care providers, K-3 representatives and parent advocates.

This survey will be constructed similarly to the 2007 competencies survey conducted by CSCCE. It will ask a series of design questions to elicit feedback on how California's career ladder should be structured. The survey will also encourage respondents to submit drafts of career ladders they have developed and to recommend career ladders from other states that they believe would be good models for California. These submitted career ladders will be part of the follow-up survey conducted in Phase 3 of the project.

To ensure participation by family child care providers EPEC will conduct a series of in-person community meetings directed to this population. Although these meetings will target family child care providers, they will be open for any provider who wishes to participate, or who may not be able to complete the online survey. Due to financial limitations EPEC can only host three meetings. However, it will encourage other regions to host such community meetings on their own, and will provide technical assistance on how to conduct the meetings and report the results. The locations for these meetings are still being determined, but they will be held in various communities throughout the state to ensure regional input.

During August, the results from the survey and community meetings will be consolidated and major themes/highlights will be made available to survey participants.

Phase 3: Follow-up survey (September 2010 – October 2010)

Phase 3 will ask all participants from Phase 2, and other interested people/organizations, to respond to drafts of potential career ladder systems that were submitted or compiled during the online survey and community meetings in a second online survey. This process will allow the ECE community to respond to specific career ladder proposals and indicate which aspects they believe should or should not be included in California's system. If funding permits, the community meetings will be repeated.

All of the input from Phase 3 will be included verbatim in an Appendix to the final project report. This will give CDD access to the unedited opinions of each participant and organization.

Phase 4: Final report (November 2010 – December 30, 2010)

The final phase will produce a report for the state agencies responsible for developing California's ECE Career Ladder and certification system. This report will provide an overview of the Career Ladder Project, including lessons learned and major themes from the Phase 2 & 3 surveys. The report's Appendix will include suggested career ladder designs, the results of the Phase 3 survey and copies of materials and surveys utilized in the project.

A draft of the final report will be distributed to project participants in late November for comments and suggestions. The final report will be submitted to state agencies and all project participants by December 30, 2010. The report will also be made available to the public.

Project Coordination

The CLP is primarily a volunteer project of EPEC with limited resources for meeting facilitation and logistics. EPEC will rely on a consultant funded by the Packard Foundation and staff from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment for guidance and support. Statewide conference calls open to the public will be organized during each phase, to provide information, offer technical assistance, and gather feedback from participants. In addition, periodic meetings will be held with representatives from First 5 California, the CDE Child Development Division, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and the ELAC.

¹EPEC is a group of individuals from community-based agencies, Child Care R&R, Local Child Care Planning Councils, First 5 Commissions, California Community Colleges and State Universities. Its objective is to strengthen the systems that promote ECE workforce development and higher education, with the goal of improving outcomes for young children in all of California's ECE settings. Although many statewide organizations participate in EPEC meetings, the attendees have tended to represent organizations from the greater Bay Area; thus, EPEC is broadening its membership to make sure that it reflects all regions in California.