

New York State Teacher Certification
Early Childhood Education (Birth – Grade 2)
Position Statement
Approved October 2006

The New York State Association for the Education of Young Children (NYSAEYC) Higher Education Committee in conjunction with the New York State Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NYSAECTE) and New York State Associate Degree Early Childhood Educators (ACCESS) have prepared this position statement to continue to support and promote Early Childhood Education (Birth – Grade 2) teacher certification. Early Childhood includes children ages 0-8 years of age. This document is meant to inform all concerned constituents (e.g., institutions of higher education, schools, policymakers, parents) as to the distinct developmental and learning needs of young children (0-8 years) and how they are best met by having teachers with specialized early childhood preparation (e.g., Ackerman, 2005).

Significant Student Achievement with Professional Early Childhood Teacher

Preparation. New York State has joined with the rest of the nation to meet high standards in education and to close achievement gaps among students. As Early Childhood professionals, we commend the Commissioner and New York State for making Early Childhood certification (Birth – Grade 2) the foundation of the recent (2004) certification changes. Recognition of the unique needs of young learners by implementing specialized preparation of their teachers is forward and important thinking and consistent with a robust and growing body of research that shows strong relationships between early childhood teachers with such preparation (a strong background in early childhood development and education) and young children’s development and learning (e.g., Ackerman, 2005; Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2000; Horm-Wingerd & Hyson, 2000; Hyson, 2003).

Early childhood educators are grounded in child development theory and informed through their specialized teacher education preparation of the importance of children’s earliest experiences in setting the foundation for their future success in schools. The most “highly qualified” teachers are well informed as to the specific nature of the unique education needs of young children, how young children learn and develop and how that differs from older children. Early childhood teachers must be prepared to link and apply knowledge of child development content and teaching strategies to match young children’s ways of learning (Isenberg, 2000, p. 20). Early childhood best practice ensures that the continuum of development and learning from birth through age eight is understood and used in development of curriculum and instruction for young children (e.g., Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Early Childhood Teacher Certification (Birth-Grade 2) in New York State. As recently as 2004 New York State initiated new teacher certification titles. New York State joined approximately 40 other states in offering some form of specialized early childhood education certification. In New York, teachers with Early Childhood Education

certification are eligible to teach children from Birth – Grade 2 while those with Childhood Education certification are eligible to teach Grades 1 – 6. The professional early childhood education community in New York State, collaborating as part of 28 state-wide organizations, commended the implementation of the Early Childhood Education certification. The rationale we proposed then and continue to support now includes the following:

- Specific certification in Early Childhood Education has long been recommended nationally as essential to ensure that all young children are served by professionals who recognize their unique education needs (ACEI, 1998; ATE & NAEYC, 1991; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Hyson, 2003; Isenberg, 2000; Kagan & Cohen, 1997; NAECS/SDE & NAECTE, 1993).
- Recognition of the specific and unique body of knowledge, practice, and attitudes in early childhood education constitutes a distinct pedagogy from other education disciplines (e.g., AACTE, 2004; Michigan Early Childhood Education Consortium & MAECTE, 2004).
- Increased achievement and success of children who have been taught by early childhood teachers with strong backgrounds in early childhood development and education is well documented (e.g., AACTE, 2004; ACEI, 1991; Ackerman, 2005; ATE & NAEYC, 1991, Horm-Wingerd et al., 2000; Hyson, 2003; Isenberg, 2000; Kagan & Cohen, 1997; NAECS/SDE & NAECTE, 1993).
- Young children in early childhood education programs should be assigned teachers with bachelor's degrees with specialized education related to early childhood (e.g., Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001).
- Positive economic benefits of high quality early childhood programs are well documented (e.g. Galinsky, 2006).

We further note that Early Childhood certification supports the Regents' Early Childhood Policy goal of high quality early childhood education for all of New York's children from birth onward by ensuring that teachers of young children have the necessary knowledge and skill to be highly qualified teachers.

The Current Birth-Grade 2 Early Childhood Teaching Certification. We strongly recommend that Kindergarten certification continue to be included only in the Early Childhood teacher certification to assure that our youngest citizens' educational and developmental needs are best met. We support alignment with the National Board for Professional Standards certification areas, Early Childhood (through age 8) and Middle Childhood (ages 7-12) (NBPTS in Hyson, 2003). It is difficult for Childhood Education (grades 1-6) programs to adequately address the unique developmental characteristics and implications for curriculum and instruction for kindergarten children while giving sufficient attention to the learning needs of children in grades 1-6. Therefore, we recommend maintaining the distinctive preparation of kindergarten teachers within the current early childhood teacher certification (Birth-Grade 2).

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