

# The Early Childhood Challenge

*Preparing High-Quality Teachers for a Changing Society*

A White Paper of the  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
FOCUS COUNCIL ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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## Contents

Members, Focus Council on Early Childhood Education, 2003-2004 .....	2
Preface .....	3
Introduction .....	3
Background .....	4
Principles .....	7
Assumptions .....	7
Changing Needs and New Challenges .....	7
Table 1. Changing Needs and Challenges for Children .....	8
Table 2. Changing Needs and Challenges for Society .....	9
Table 3. Changing Needs and Challenges for Institutions .....	9
Table 4. Changing Needs and Challenges for the ECE Profession .....	10
Table 5. Changing Needs and Challenges for Professionals Working With Young Children .....	11
Summary of Recommendations for SCDEs .....	12
Summary of Recommendations for Policy Development .....	12
Summary of Recommendations for the Private Sector .....	13
References .....	14

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## Preface

Early childhood education (ECE)<sup>1</sup> has recently been the focus of increased attention from different constituents in the public and private sectors. Reports, studies, and legislation emphasize the importance of ECE in closing the achievement gap and call for teacher preparation programs to address the issue of teacher quality as the prime factor for student achievement.

This paper targets schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs), as well as other institutions involved in the preparation of ECE teachers, regarding the advancement of the quality of early childhood teachers and caregivers.

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## Introduction

Millions of children enter kindergarten classrooms each year in the United States. They are not all provided, however, with the same opportunities to develop the necessary skills to succeed in school. When children enter the school system, they bring with them a range of backgrounds and experiences that will facilitate or impair their further learning. Even before a child reaches kindergarten age, factors such as poverty, race/ethnicity, and home language, among others, influence the child's success at school (Lee & Burkam, 2002). It is realistic to say that the gap in educational achievement starts from the very moment a child is born. Fortunately, research shows that access to good early childhood programs<sup>2</sup> with appropriate curriculum and content, and in particular, good early childhood teachers, may help bridge this achievement gap by providing children from lower socioeconomic status or from at-risk environments with social and academic experiences that correlate with school success (Caughy, DiPietro, & Strobino, 1994; Peisner-Feinberg, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, & Kagan, 1999; Lee & Burkham, 2002). While emphasis on

curriculum and content is important, high-quality ECE teachers<sup>3</sup> are essential for addressing pervasive and persistent educational problems such as low reading and math achievement, particularly of children from low socioeconomic environments. Research supports the contention that the professional preparation of teachers, focused primarily on child development and early childhood education, is the main factor in assuring the quality of prekindergarten centers and positive student outcomes (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2001).

Regrettably, the United States lags behind many other developed countries in providing equitable learning opportunities for its younger children (Hodgkinson, 2003). This early disparity of learning opportunities has not only future academic implications for America's children, but also serious social and economic repercussions for our society, as various demographic and economic policy studies show (Committee for Economic Development, 2002; Hodgkinson, 2003). Providing equitable access to EC programs for all children and assuring

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<sup>1</sup> Most ECE programs prepare teachers to work with children between birth and 8 years of age. The term *early childhood* (EC), therefore, will be used in this paper to refer to all programs serving children under 8 years of age. However, policies and programs specific to early childhood, such as Head Start, refer mostly to the period before entry to kindergarten.

<sup>2</sup> A diversity of programs and services exist in the early childhood area, and a variety of terms have historically been used to refer to programs that serve children before entry to kindergarten. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) differentiates early education and care programs as *preschool or center-based programs*, which include prekindergarten, day care centers, nursery schools, and Head Start, and *nonparental home-based education and care*, which may be offered by relatives or home-based providers.

<sup>3</sup> The different types of early childhood teachers and workers (teachers, teacher aides, and child care workers) will be referred to as *early childhood educators or teachers*.

the quality of ECE teachers must be national goals. The achievement of these goals will require substantial financial investment, solid policies, and programmatic changes that involve all sectors of the education community.

In order to begin framing the Association's position on ECE, and to formulate ways to meet the challenges confronting SCDEs in the preparation of quality teachers for young children, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) convened a focus council of ECE experts from member institutions. This paper outlines recommendations made by the focus council for the different constituents of the ECE field, including professionals working with young children, SCDEs, policy makers, and the private sector.

The paper is organized into the following five sections:

- Background data on the status of early childhood education and early childhood teacher preparation programs
- Main principles or goals for early childhood education
- Assumptions that undergird early childhood teacher preparation programs
- Challenges and changing needs that call for program reforms, along with a series of recommendations that address the different challenges and needs
- Summary of recommendations in response to the increasing accountability requirements for SCDEs, and recommendations for policy and decision makers in the public and private sectors

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## Background

Statistics from the U.S. Department of Education-sponsored Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (Kindergarten cohort)—ECLS-K—show substantial diversity in the U.S. population of children starting kindergarten, as well as a large gap in learning achievement coupled with that diversity (Lee & Burkam, 2002). According to the ECLS-K data, in 1998, 61% of children entering kindergarten were White, 17.6% were Black, 14% were Hispanic, and 2.5% Asian. When they enter kindergarten, children of color and/or children from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds typically lag behind their White and middle- or higher SES counterparts academically. Although poverty is the socioeconomic factor most highly correlated with low academic achievement, it is also confounded with ethnicity (Lee & Burkam, 2002). For example, Hispanic and Black children are more likely to live in low-income households.

Whereas all homes provide some sort of language, numeracy, and literacy experiences (Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1992), these experiences may not always be school-friendly. White kindergartners from higher

SES groups are more likely to have the type of home experiences that teachers recognize as necessary to foster the development of language, numeracy, and literacy skills than are Hispanic and Black children and children from lower SES households (Bowman et al., 2001). While almost 75% of the children from high-income families are enrolled in preschool programs prior to kindergarten, only 45% of the children from low-income families are enrolled. The implications of these and other realities need to be addressed in ECE teacher education programs.

The U.S. public investment in ECE programs is insufficient, placing the financial burden on families for the costs of early care and education. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2003), only 35% of U.S. public elementary schools offer prekindergarten classes. In 1999, 58% of 3- to 4-year-old children were enrolled in center-based programs, with 50% of these children attending private programs. An additional 18% were in nonparental home-based care (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2003a). Head Start currently only

serves about 60% of eligible<sup>4</sup> preschool children and 3% of eligible infants and toddlers. Head Start was originally designed to provide comprehensive child development services, not to focus on children's academic skills. However, the program has been moving toward a more academic orientation. Despite this change, recent program evaluations revealed that children coming out of Head Start programs tend to lag behind academically when compared to the "typical American child" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). It is important to note though, that the underlying socioeconomic reasons for this gap are much more complex than a lower emphasis on academic skills in Head Start.

Proposed changes to federal legislation (US. S 1483; US. S 1940) seek to expand Head Start to all eligible preschool children and to further enhance the program's focus on supporting children's language, literacy, and numeracy skills. If these bills were to become law, their implementation would require much larger investments in facilities and teacher preparation. A report and policy statement by the Committee for Economic Development (CED) (2002) unveils the inadequacy of public funding for ECE in the US. The CED urges federal and state governments to commit to early childhood education by providing funding to subsidize preschool for all children, as well as making funds available for the improvement of ECE centers' staff and facilities.

Early childhood centers have the challenge of attending to the population's increasing diversity in terms of language, culture, poverty, as well as including children with disabilities in regular classrooms. Unfortunately, not all caregivers and teachers have the necessary preparation to meet these challenges. Although research shows that teacher preparation is correlated with

teacher quality, the level of education of preschool teachers in the U.S. ranges widely, from a GED (high school equivalency diploma) to a master's degree. Surveys of preschool teachers show that while 87% of preschool teachers in public schools have a bachelor's degree or higher, only 30% of teachers in Head Start programs and 39% of teachers in for-profit centers have a bachelor's degree (Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002; National Institute for Early Education Research, 2003b). Currently the federal government does not regulate the licensing of workers in childcare and early education programs except those working in Head Start. Each state develops its own set of minimum standards for licensing early childhood programs and workers. Today, many states require preschool teachers or caregivers in state financed prekindergarten centers to complete at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate, but and only a few states require professional training (e.g., Certified Child Care Professional Credential, or CCP) for other child care workers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Child Care Information Center, 2003). It is important to note that a certificate or degree is no warranty of quality, or at least, of knowledge and understanding of how young children learn and develop, if licensure programs providing those certificates are not in line with accepted teacher-quality standards.

The organizations that develop standards for ECE teacher preparation, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), as well as a growing body of research on teacher characteristics and preschool quality, suggest that good preschool teachers should have at a minimum (a) knowledge of child development, based on sound theory and practice,

<sup>4</sup> Children from birth to age five from families with low income (based on Head Start poverty guidelines) are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services. Children from families receiving public assistance and children in foster care are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services regardless of income. Ten percent of enrollments are offered to children with disabilities. Children who come from families with slightly higher income may be able to participate in Head Start when space is available (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Information and Publication Center, 2003).



(b) understanding of what is developmentally appropriate practice and assessment, (c) knowledge and understanding of the foundations for literacy and numeracy, and of appropriate and effective methods to foster their development and acquisition, and (4) understanding of the children and families with whom they work (Association of Teacher Educators & National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1991; Hyson, 2003). However, program requirements for teacher or caregiver preparation at the prebaccalaureate level—such as Child Development Associate, Associate of Applied Science (AAS), and Associate of Arts (AA)—focus primarily on teachers' and care providers' skills rather than on concepts of child development and learning. A growing number of preschool teachers are seeking certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This certification measures teachers' practices against high and rigorous standards and complements, but does not replace, state licensing. As of summer 2003, about 22% of all board-certified teachers had been certified as ECE generalists (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2003). However, most preschool teachers outside public schools are not aware of the existence of this certification process (Jacobson, 2002). The process can also be financially prohibitive for poorly paid preschool teachers.

According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (Barnett, 2003), preschool teachers earn salaries that are only about 50% of kindergarten teachers' salaries. In 2002, Head Start teachers earned an average annual salary of \$21,287, while public school kindergarten teachers earned an average of \$43,152. Preschool teachers in most private preschools are paid even less. Childcare workers and teacher aides receive the lowest wages often inferior to most other skilled workers' wages. This affects EC program quality, because many better qualified ECE teachers and more capable caregivers leave for better paid jobs either in K-12 or outside the education field. Research links teacher compensation with retention, teacher quality, and classroom climate (Cost,

Quality, & Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995). Research also shows that EC program quality in public schools is generally higher than in other settings (Epstein, 1999). The number of prekindergarten programs in public schools has grown in the past 10 years. However, studies of demographic characteristics of early childhood teachers and programs (Saluja et al., 2002) show that only 8% of all U.S. prekindergarten programs are Head Start, and only 16% are based in public schools. More than 50% of center-based preschool programs are privately run, 29% of these for profit. Many for-profit centers hire less prepared teachers at lower salaries, resulting in high turnover.

Proposed federal legislation on the reauthorization of Head Start require that at least 50% of all Head Start teachers in the nation hold as a minimum a bachelor's degree by September 2010, and that all Head Start teachers have at least an associate's degree in early childhood education or a related field by 2007 (Head Start Coordination and School Readiness Act, 2003; Head Start Improvements for School Readiness Act, 2003). If enacted, this legislation would pose a new challenge for SCDEs, since thousands of seasoned ECE practitioners would be applying to enter their programs, and, as recent data indicate (Professional Education Data System, 2002), only 55% of the AACTE member institutions offer early childhood education programs at the baccalaureate level.

This situation presents many questions for SCDEs:

- What should admission policies encompass to welcome diverse teachers and also ensure high standards?
- How can we standardize the preparation and credentialing of ECE teachers so that EC program quality is consistent from class to class and from school to school?
- What are the common expectations across the multiple types of early childhood care and education programs?
- What are basic program components? How can they be organized?

## Principles

While there are numerous and important notions in ECE, the following principles are considered to be fundamental for the early childhood education field and the education community:

- The family is the primary and most important provider of care and education for young children. Early childhood education must start with the family and should involve the family throughout the education process.
- Early childhood education sets the groundwork for subsequent levels of schooling; therefore, emphasis on ECE is pivotal for educational reforms. The ultimate goal of education reform efforts should be the creation of a seamless 0 to 20 (or PK–16) education pipeline.
- Exemplary (or high-quality) teacher preparation is necessary for all early childhood educators. Every child from birth to 3 years deserves a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Every child between 4 and 8 years of age deserves a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and certification in the early childhood field.

## Assumptions

- The role of SCDEs in the professional preparation of high-quality teachers of young children is essential.
- ECE involves a specific and unique body of knowledge, practice, and attitudes, which must be included in the curricula of prospective ECE teachers. ECE pedagogy is distinct from other education disciplines.
- Professionals who educate ECE teachers must themselves have ECE expertise.
- Within SCDEs, there must be clear linkages between ECE and elementary teacher preparation programs.
- Multiple departments, schools, and colleges on university campuses have expertise to contribute to ECE teacher preparation. SCDEs should find ways to partner with these units to prepare ECE professionals.
- High-quality ECE teachers know both ECE content and pedagogy. Content and pedagogy should be integrated.
- Due to the complex nature of educational problems to be addressed by early childhood education, community partnerships are essential.
- Families must be an integral part of all early childhood education reform efforts.

## Changing Needs and New Challenges

The education of young children is not limited to the classroom. In order to effectively address pressing educational problems, ECE teacher preparation programs *must* attend to the changing needs of children, society, institutions, professionals, and the profession. The different systems that form or affect the child's environment have direct and indirect effects on the child's development and learning. Early childhood teachers and ECE teacher preparation programs should be in tune with changes and interactions within and between all of these systems.

While children's basic needs for nurturing relationships, family, and sense of belonging remain, certain factors demand that teaching assumptions be continuously examined and adapted (see Table 1).

Teacher preparation programs must pay attention to the recent and accelerated changes in the nation's demographics in terms of cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as the diversity of family structures, in order to adapt and attend to the needs of today's society (see Table 2).

**Table 1. Changing Needs and Challenges for Children**

Needs and challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing numbers of children from diverse language, racial/ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.</li> <li>Decreasing numbers of teachers from similar backgrounds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare all teachers to teach children from different racial/ethnic, cultural, language, or socioeconomic backgrounds.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exposure to age-inappropriate information and nonfiltered stimuli due to children's increased use of technology and media in their daily lives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include technology in ECE teacher preparation curriculum to meet contemporary children's needs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Living in diverse, global community due to current global migration patterns and advancements in communications and technology. This exposes the child's family culture to new or different worldviews. At the same time, the family may become increasingly isolated from the surrounding social culture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate multicultural education in ECE teacher preparation curriculum to meet contemporary children's needs.</li> <li>Incorporate both content and practical experiences in ECE teacher preparation curriculum that address children's both basic needs and these new pressures.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher performance expectations imposed on preschools and kindergarten to meet new standards and produce results (e.g., Head Start testing).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that curricula of teacher preparation programs are contemporary, appropriate, and aligned in content, pedagogy, and assessment, to P-12 state and national program standards.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widening of achievement gap between White, middle-class children and children of color and poor children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop ECE standards and programs that address home child-care teacher/caregiver preparation and quality, because only 25% of EC care and education takes place in centers.</li> </ul>

A miscellany of institutions has historically carried out the preparation of ECE teachers and caregivers, resulting in fragmentation among multiple constituents (see Table 3). Not all of these institutions share the same goals or uphold the same standards for quality teacher preparation. In fact, a number of institutions and units that prepare ECE teachers are not being held to the new accountability demands for teacher quality imposed on SCDEs.

An overarching recommendation for the education community is to build a seamless curriculum for ages 0 to 20 (prenatal to grade 16), with each level of education contributing to the foundations of the next

ones. Teacher preparation curricula complete the cycle by aligning with PK-12 standards.

ECE teachers traditionally have been seen as caregivers rather than as teachers. The movement toward professionalization of the ECE field requires attention to particular issues (see Table 4).

Teaching and caring for young children is a challenging task. Teachers and caregivers are confronted with multiple factors inside and outside the classroom (see Table 5) that can make this one of the most stressful teaching fields.



**Table 2. Changing Needs and Challenges for Society**

Needs and challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High divorce rates with increasing numbers of single-parent homes.</li> <li>• Large numbers of working mothers (dual working families, welfare-to-work program).</li> <li>• Increased geographical mobility/migration of families that affects family/child stability and school enrollment.</li> <li>• Altered/diverse family structures.</li> <li>• Widening income gap, reflected in a widening achievement gap between middle-class and poor children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create more EC care and education programs. Within those programs, allow for flexibility that addresses families' changing needs. Make programs more tailored to needs of contemporary children.</li> <li>• Ensure preservice teachers are as well trained on issues external to the school (e.g. family structures, demographic and cultural changes) as they are on issues internal to the classroom.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing demographics: increasing numbers of children of color and English language learners/immigrant children in traditionally White schools. Most such schools are unprepared for these changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the numbers of racially/ethnically and linguistic diverse teachers to better reflect the demographic changes in America's schools.</li> <li>• Increase the number of White teachers who are adequately prepared to teach racially/ethnically and linguistic diverse children.</li> </ul>

**Table 3. Changing Needs and Challenges for Institutions**

Needs and challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interinstitutional fragmentation (4- and 2-year colleges)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create linkages between 2- and 4-year colleges.</li> <li>• Establish articulation across degrees (i.e., associate/bachelor/master/doctor) by defining knowledge and skill levels for each degree.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrainstitutional fragmentation (SCDEs and other schools or departments within universities prepare ECE teachers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish collaborations between SCDEs and other units within higher education institutions to develop consistent quality standards in ECE teacher/caregiver preparation programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-institutional fragmentation (SCDEs and increasing numbers of for-profit teacher credentialing institutions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create linkages between SCDEs and for-profit teacher credentialing institutions.</li> </ul>

**Table 4. Changing Needs and Challenges for the ECE Profession**

Needs and challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low status of ECE in the education field and in society overall.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credential all ECE staff/teachers.</li> <li>• Prepare all professionals in the field to be competent/experts in early childhood education.</li> <li>• Educate society that early childhood is a distinct time of life with corresponding pedagogy based on scientific research.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of accurate information on the different constituents of the field. Current official data on ECE include mostly programs in public schools and the children who attend them. Data on private, nonprofit, and home settings are incomplete and fragmented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a complete data set on ECE at the national level that includes all children, teachers, and programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent ECE teacher licensing and program approval across agencies and states. Lack of adequate standards for ECE teacher preparation in many states.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish greater portability of teaching credentials across institutions and states.</li> <li>• Create shared content, concepts, and vocabulary; shared meaning; shared sense of purpose within the ECE community.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early childhood teacher retention rates are among the lowest in the education field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct more research on the reasons for teacher turnover and on characteristics of successful retention programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher compensation has not kept pace with increased licensure and certification requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote increased preschool teacher pay to equal K-12 teachers' salary conditions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple and divergent standards for EC care and education programs for pre-school children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve teacher education programs and educators in the development of EC care and education standards, based on what is known about child development and learning and on best practices in ECE.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of a stand-alone professional certification for ECE teachers in many higher education institutions. ECE certification is often embedded in elementary teacher certification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish professional preparation and certification of ECE teachers that is distinct from elementary teacher certifications.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of coordination between current research/theory and actual practice in EC care and education centers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect actual EC practice with current research and theories.</li> <li>• Align teacher credentialing/preparation with early learning standards that address all dimensions of children's development.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough public or nonprofit education programs to supply the increasing demand for ECE, causing the proliferation of for-profit centers and commercializing education. This is occurring at both the teacher preparation level and the early childhood program level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The education community should advocate for higher public investment in early childhood education.</li> </ul>

**Table 5. Changing Needs and Challenges for Professionals Working With Young Children**

Needs and challenges	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to educate children of the present and future, not the past.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop teacher preparation curricula that reflect recent societal changes as well as new knowledge and advances in child development and learning.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic incongruence between staff and the children they teach (race/ethnicity and SES) paired with teachers' lack of understanding of the cultural and linguistic characteristics of these children, which impairs teachers' ability to teach well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase ease of transfer and degree actualization across CDA/AA/AAS, establishing a continuum of ECE teacher preparation and credentialing that facilitates licensing of minority teachers.</li> <li>• Provide all teachers with tools to work with diverse children by introducing culturally sensitive practices in teacher preparation and professional development curricula.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of teaching credentials for large numbers of seasoned ECE workforce members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide alternative training/credentialing options.</li> <li>• Create more programs in SCDEs to prepare licensed individuals.</li> <li>• Establish a pipeline for ECE teacher preparation and credentialing that takes into account teachers' previous training and experience.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although EC teachers function in teams, with the typical early childhood classroom including at least two adults, teacher education programs do not train for adult relationships in the classrooms, e.g. teacher-family, teacher-community, teacher-teacher/aide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include curriculum content on how adults work effectively with one another in ECE teacher preparation programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dealing with ever-changing and many times conflicting systems (school, family, community).</li> <li>• Lack of professional support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide professional support for ECE teachers.</li> <li>• Foster peer support/mentoring programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor balance on levels of preparation and quality of inservice and preservice teachers.</li> <li>• Increased emphasis on new child assessments and increased accountability for children's learning.</li> <li>• Teachers must keep up with assorted, divergent, and continually changing information (knowledge base, rules, requirements).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the work of teacher preparation programs to inservice teachers, creating professional development programs in partnerships with schools and private providers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early childhood education programs have the highest turnover rates in education, over 40%.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study the reasons for the high ECE teacher turnover. Examine whether they leave the field or merely change institutions.</li> </ul>

## Summary of Recommendations for SCDEs

New regulations have produced increased accountability demands for institutions, professionals, and the field. In order to adequately meet these demands, it is necessary that—

- The education community create a sense of urgency about the importance of ECE.
- ECE teacher preparation faculty be experts on ECE.
- SCDEs welcome and facilitate transfer of AAS, AA, and CDA students credentialed in ECE, establishing a pipeline for ECE teacher preparation and credentialing.
- Students be as well trained on issues external to the classroom as they are on issues internal to the classroom.
- Teacher preparation programs be aligned with children's early learning standards that address all dimensions of children's development.
- Teacher education be involved in the development of ECE standards based on what is known about child development and learning as well as best practices in ECE.
- ECE be respected as a specialized discipline, distinct from elementary education.
- Families and communities be involved in the development of ECE teacher preparation programs, ensuring that programs respond to the needs of local communities and families.
- Research on teacher quality be increased, both on correlates of teacher quality and on impacts of teacher quality.

## Summary of Recommendations for Policy Development

The public sector has traditionally been less invested in ECE than in any other level of education. Public policy makers must become more aware of the importance of ECE and of the need to improve access and quality in ECE. Policies are needed to—

- Create more programs within SCDEs to prepare licensed teachers.
- Provide alternative training/credentialing options that maintain high-quality standards.
- Promote increased preschool teacher pay to equal K-12 teachers' salary conditions.
- Establish greater portability of teaching credentials across institutions and states.
- Foster programs that prepare more racially/ethnically and linguistic diverse teachers to better reflect the demographic changes in American society.
- Encourage teacher preparation programs to adequately prepare all teachers to teach diverse children.
- Involve teacher education programs in the development of ECE standards.
- Align teacher preparation programs with children's early learning standards, addressing all dimensions of children's development.
- Recognize ECE as a specialized discipline, distinct from elementary education.
- Increase research on ECE teacher quality, both on correlates of teacher quality and on impacts of teacher quality.
- Facilitate access to quality preschool for all children.

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## Summary of Recommendations for the Private Sector

The private sector, particularly business, industry, and philanthropic agencies, can play an important role in the advancement of ECE. To become part of the solution, the private sector should—

- Join the education community in creating a sense of urgency about the importance of ECE.
- Invest in early childhood education.
- Advocate for higher public investment in early childhood education.
- Support the creation of EC care and education programs that address families' changing needs and that are tailored to the needs of contemporary children.
- Foster the creation of programs that prepare more ECE teachers of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse backgrounds to better reflect the demographic changes in America's society.
- Fund programs that adequately prepare all teachers to teach diverse children.
- Fund programs to mentor caregivers, teachers, and parents working with young children.
- Foster the development of research on EC teacher quality.



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