

# P2P DECISION CYCLES 3, 4, AND 5: PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION, DESIGNATIONS, AND SPECIALIZATIONS

## P2P Decision Cycles 3, 4, and 5: Professional Preparation, Designations, and Specializations

*Given the deeply interconnected nature of Decision Cycles 3, 4, and 5, they are being addressed as a whole, rather than on a sequential basis. We cannot detangle professional preparation, professional designations, scopes of practice, and specializations.*

### Source document

- [Working Draft 1 for Decision Cycles 3, 4, and 5](#)

### Summary statements

1. The early childhood education profession (made up of early childhood educators) is a distinct profession among other professions and occupations in the early childhood field.

Most professions have one designation: this structure offers clarity but has often resulted in stratified and highly segmented fields that are more likely to result in the exclusion of educators from communities of color and those without bachelor's degrees. Prioritizing diversity and equity, the Task Force recommends a structure in which there are three designations within the early childhood profession – Early Childhood Educator I (ECE I), Early Childhood Educator II (ECE II), and Early Childhood Educator III (ECE III).

2. Early childhood educators are defined by their mastery of the knowledge, skills and competencies referenced in Decision Cycle 2. The Task Force recommends that the following programs be endorsed and supported to prepare early childhood educators. These programs will serve as the primary preparation pathways:

- Early Childhood Education Professional Training Programs (minimum 120 training hours)
- Early Childhood Education Associate Degree Programs
- Early Childhood Education Bachelor's Degree Programs
- Early Childhood Education Master's Degree Programs (initial preparation)

3. Innovative approaches in professional preparation should be encouraged. Examples include competency- based programs, use of prior learning assessments for awarding credit, work-based supervised practicum/clinical experiences and intensive degree programs with shorter duration. In particular, innovations that are designed to reach non-traditional and diverse students are essential to eliminating the existing barriers to higher education.

4. Uniform designations (ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III) and levels of preparation listed in #2 should be distinct and meaningful. Clear expectations for early childhood educators and the programs preparing early childhood educators for each designation must be established. As early childhood educators gain

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deeper mastery of the unifying competencies through increased levels of preparation, the scope of their practice and professional responsibilities will increase.

Early childhood educators must generalize before they are eligible to specialize. Once the generalist framework is established by the profession and as it becomes reflected in key state and federal policies, the profession can mobilize to create and/or promote specializations. Specializations should help early childhood educators deepen their knowledge and practice and create a professional niche.

5. In implementing the unifying framework, we will honor the existing early childhood workforce by creating exemption policies, pathways, and timeframes that serve as a bridge from our present to our future. We will not advocate for increased educational requirements without advocating for funding to provide requisite supports and attendant compensation. We will not advocate for new regulations without advocating for funding to implement them. We will not advocate for policies that disproportionately and negatively impact educators from communities of color, and we will advocate for policies that mitigate unintended consequences and create meaningful pathways for advancement.

### Review (Points to note)

- Note the systems that will be influenced by this draft decision. They include:
  - Higher education-based and non-higher education based preparation programs
  - Training programs
  - Professional development and support
  - Staff performance evaluations
  - Exams and professional assessments
  - Higher education accreditation
  - Educator certification, credentialing and/or licensure
  - Professional registries and databases
  - Hiring practices
  - Training/trainer approval and more
- Note that ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III are all prepared and valued as early childhood educators. ECE I, as much as the other designations, should be celebrated for their level of mastery. While there are limitations to their practice because of their comparatively limited preparation, they should be given meaningful responsibilities and valued as an important member of the profession.
- Note that for some 0-5 contexts, ECE II will be seen as aspirational. For others, such as K-3, ECE III is closer to the established minimum.

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- Note that we are currently focused on defining primary preparation pathways. Decision Cycles 7 and 8 will focus on the accountability, quality assurance and resources needed to ensure that pathways can meet the needs of the profession.

### Reflect (questions to consider)

- What are your thoughts about a profession with three designations (ECE I, ECE II, ECE III)?
- How can we ensure that individuals earning the ECE I designation in particular are respected and valued as a members of the profession, and not limited to clerical tasks or basic caregiving routines?
- Some professions allow for some market flexibility, meaning requirements may change depending on context and setting. For example, registered nurses can be prepared by associate's or bachelor's degree programs in some contexts while other contexts will only hire or grant licenses to registered nurses prepared by bachelor's degree programs. What are your thoughts about how this type of market variability by context could work in early childhood education?
- Does the proposed structure with multiple designations help or complicate the pursuit of increased compensation? How?
- Does the proposed structure help or complicate the pursuit of increased diversity and equity? How?
- The differences in preparation and practice between those who earn associate's, bachelor's and graduate degrees may primarily focus on the ability to make independent decisions about the implementation of curriculum and assessments in kindergarten through third grade settings. What are your thoughts about these distinctions?
- How do we ensure that all individuals, particularly individuals representing diverse populations, can successfully complete and seamlessly advance through these programs?
- What intentional decisions, policy recommendations, and actions steps do you think could help reduce the impact of structural racism, elitism, sexism, and bias across preparation programs?
- How does this proposed structure align with your state's career lattice or ladder? Are there steps on your state's career lattice or ladder that are not reflected on this proposed structure?
- How does this proposed structure align with your state's career licensure or certification for teachers and paraprofessionals working in elementary schools?

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### Respond (join and inform the movement)

- [Sign-up](#) to inform unifying decisions and receive updates. Invite others to sign-up.
- Organize a Power to the Profession discussion (or series of discussions) with your work colleagues (i.e. an informal lunch discussion, designate time during a staff meeting, etc.)
- [Co-host](#) a Power to the Profession convening in your community. This can include focus sessions, panels, keynote addresses, and workshops at local, state, and national meetings/conferences.
- [Share](#) your burning questions and reflections.
- Let's chat during our [virtual office hours](#).