



EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE DISCUSSION - MEETING MINUTES

May 5, 2022

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Virtual Meeting

Recording of meeting available upon request

Panel Members: Madeleine Bayard, DECC Chair, Lucinda Ross, Shelley Rouser, Rena Hallam, Virginia Forcucci, Caitlin Gleason

Attendees: Amber Shelton, Andrew Edmonds, Brandi Short, Brittany Hazzard, Carissa Stevens, Cindy Brown, Clara Martinez, Elizabeth Timm, Heidi Beck, Holly Griest, Jamie Schneider, Jen Pulcinella, Jennifer Marsh, Jenny Grady, Jessica Vandewater, Julie Beebe, Kimberly Garvey, Kimberly Krzanowski, Kirsten Olson, Kristy Sheffler, Kyle Herron, Lillian McCuen, Linda Zankowsky, Lisa Miller, Lori Foraker, Marcie Pate, Marlette Lofland, Melanie Thomas-Price, Michelle J. Williams, Molly Merrill, Nancy Hoffman, Ofelia Castaneda, Thomas Hall, Tiffany McPhatter, Toni Dickerson, Tracey Wertz, Victoria Molloy, and others (unnamed) via telephone.

Madeleine Bayard, Chair, Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC), called the meeting to order at 2:31 PM, and welcomed everyone to this Early Childhood Workforce Discussion Panel hosted by DECC. The group was advised of the following:

- This is a public meeting and is being recorded
- Use chat box to submit questions
- Mute your microphone if not speaking and unmute if speaking
- If you are not on the DECC email distribution list please email Early.Childhood@doe.k12.de.us

Other updates/information Madeleine spoke about:

- The [Early Childhood Educator Target Compensation Scale and Professional Pathway](#) and thanked everyone who contributing to this work.
- House substitute 1 for [HB 377](#) passed the House Education Committee May 4, 2022, and that is a system for support for the early childhood workforce, codifying may things that we have had in Delaware over the years. Please encourage your legislators to support it.

Madeleine provided context related to this special panel meeting: The workforce has been a big focus for DECC and recent data from the National Association from the education of young children said that 96% of Delaware child care centers are having staffing shortages and more than half are having to turn away families because of that

Lucinda Ross, Moderator and Co-Chair Partnerships for Professionals Committee

As we begin rising out of this COVID-induced paralysis, it seems obvious that given how severely the pandemic exasperated the workforce crisis, now more than ever we need to align, collaborate, and communicate all those possible venues and efforts being put into action to address the intensity of this crisis. Our profession has weathered an incredible storm, and I personally and professionally, am so very proud of how we continue to answer the needs of children and families in the most dire of times. We've heard many sincere expressions of gratitude as well as financial support and we are now anxiously awaiting to hear those next steps and to hear the hope. The four folks in this panel are all involved in concentrated, thoughtful, and innovated efforts to begin repairing the damage and we are grateful for their work.

Given the current state of the workforce “perfect storm” paint the picture you see in early childhood and name a challenge you see today in the field that we must address?

Virginia (Jinni) Forcucci, Career and Technical Education, Delaware Department of Education

One of our pathways is the early childhood education teacher academy and I also work closely with our K12 teacher academies. I spent the last year and a half really trying to understand the landscape of our programs what our students need, what our educators need and I am seeing so much passion from this generation of high school students. Like, we see this Gen Z as a young group of people humans who are rooted in service. Who care deeply about change and want to make a difference. So, when we look at the research, they are super excited to give back and what better way to give back to community than to work with youth. What I hear when I talk to the students and what I see and data is the concern for how am I going to support myself when I move into this workforce. There are Level 1, 2, 3, and in some schools level 4 depending on the program. Levels 2 and 3 are seeing a massive decline in enrollment.

- Level 2: 400 students are enrolled in year 2
- Level 3: drops to half of level 2 students
 - Fewer than 200 students complete the ECE program in the State of Delaware
- Level 4 (if the school offers): students enrolled goes down even more

We are losing these incredibly passionate, young people, because minimum wages are higher in spaces where the level of certification and training isn't required that's required to work in early childhood.

Caitlin Gleason, Associate Secretary, Early Childhood Support, Delaware Department of Education

We need to pick ourselves up and refocus the profession on why they are professionals, help them see themselves as being people who matter after two years of a time that they were considered essential. I always hear that people are in this field because of their passion, their desire to help shape the future to just play with little children and help them learn. I think we need to bring that joy back to the field, need to raise their wages, make sure they feel like professionals and I think in doing that, we also need to help them remember why you would choose early childhood in the first place. The challenge that we really have is helping them see themselves as professionals who have consistency and stability and then while also bringing back this idea of early childhood being a time of joy, discovery, and curiosity. To do this it must happen simultaneously, it's a paradigm shift as well as a system shift. How do we implement and take action? It's going to take all of us doing things differently and that might feel hard after a really hard two years along with there's a big picture challenge that needs to be addressed. We also need to redefine childcare and be very concrete about what that looks like as we're rebuilding this new system.

Rena Hallam, Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood, Co-Chair Partnerships for Professionals Committee

Four things come to mind to paint the picture of different types of entities that are connected to support the workforce are:

1. **Resilience:** Seeing the resilience of the early learning workforce by going in to work everyday and doing the best work possible with the different challenging conditions that are now present after what has happened that past two years. Making those difficult decisions that we've never has to make before.
2. **Stabilization:** We need to help stabilize the workforce and stabilize the early care in education programs. It's a multi prong effort to be able to do that and we need to acknowledge it as part of the work. Providers are struggling with workforce issues, have classrooms that are closed etc. How can we stabilize programs?
3. **Equity:** Because of the pandemic we've exposed a range of structural and equities that are connected to the early childhood field. Because of this we need to talk about issues of race and injustice and how that impacts our workforce and how we define quality.
4. **Quality:** The three items listed above feed into quality. We need high quality programs along with helping our providers service children and families in Delaware.

Dr. Shelly Rouser, Chair for Education at Delaware State University

This is one of the most important conversations that we can be having in the State of Delaware and that this is the most important work. To paint an actual picture while watching a little friend in the lab school build with her blocks it struck me as a metaphor for the work that we're doing in early childhood education. We stack the blocks, they fall, and we start again. We start over as often as we need to and pull people in to help build these blocks along the way. It is going to require a small team working on different “towers” related to equity, pay, access, educating the workforce, and high-quality programs to achieve what we need to in Delaware.

Talk about some work that is underway, one or two initiatives that your organization has underway now to address these issues?

Lucinda Ross, Moderator and Co-Chair Partnerships for Professionals Committee

With the scholarship and coaching provided by DOE and the Wilmington Early Care and Education Council (WECEC) St. Michael's had three people finish their CDA between March 20 and September 20 and there are another six people who are in the process of completing their CDAs.

Rena Hallam, Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood, Co-Chair Partnerships for Professionals Committee

There are four different initiatives offered through the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC):

1. CDA cohorts for teachers. Right now, there are about 70 people across Delaware involved in a cohort. There are a variety of models where some people have already taken the professional development, and they're just working on their portfolio. Some are doing the online professional development and working on the portfolio at the same time. There are groups that are mixed center and family child care, just family child care, Spanish speaking, etc.
 - a. For more information about the DIEEC CDA cohorts or to sign up for a later cohort, please contact Veronica Commodore at vcomm@udel.edu
2. Family Child Care Networks: The idea is to create an infrastructure for family child care providers to come together as a collective to build some organizational capacity anything from budgeting financial items, software programs that might help communicating to families, and other needs. DIEEC has outreach activities over the past three months and plan on launching the first network summer of 2022. Then will launch three more subsequently in the coming year, one in each county (New Castle, Kent, Sussex) but New Castle will have two total.
 - a. For more information about how to sign up for family child care networks, please email DelawareFCCNetworks@udel.edu
3. Developing an associates degree program in early childhood at the University of Delaware. Hoping to be able to offer this fall of 2023. It will be designed to help early childhood teachers and family child care providers already in the workforce in the workplaces that they're already in and use the online coaching model to support that. This will articulate to the University of Delaware's four-year program.
4. DIEEC is in the process of building on to the online training to provide more tailored coaching and support to new staff to help them acclimate to the early childhood environment. This will help administrators with their new staff and retention.

Virginia (Jinni) Forcucci, Career and Technical Education, Delaware Department of Education

Systems need to change, and we are in the process of leading programmatic revisions with teachers, students, IHEs and industry partners. We are getting ready to pilot a new Level 1 ECE level course, there are 10 districts and 11 educators engaged in this work. We will be going through a three-day retreat to set the stage through an equity lens. We have engaged in six months of anti-racist, inclusion, diversity and equity training with our partners At Delaware Tech. As a result, our teachers are really naming and supporting two intensive goals in this work:

- The need to grow and diversify the workforce
- Future educators must be culturally proficient

Our early childhood education program hasn't been written through a culturally responsive lens so the resources are culturally incompetent. We need to offer teacher academy students actual experiences in the field versus sitting a classroom listening to experts. Prepare our teacher academy students to create relationships with parents, to know the communities they are serving and to honor them. We also want our industry partners to have a stronger relationship with our Teacher Academy teachers and be apart of our advisory boards.

There has been a concern with licensure and certification and the difficulty in navigation DEEDS getting certifications and teacher internship certification. Because of this we are looking at getting rid of some of the gatekeeping/barriers that exist and making the process easier.

If anyone has any questions my email is Virginia.Forcucci@doe.k12.de.us

Dr. Shelly Rouser, Chair for Education at Delaware State University

We know that we have the immediate problem of a teacher crisis hitting at all levels of the system, but particularly early childhood education. I think we need to make sure that our angst around filling vacancies, which is, of course essential, doesn't halt our conversation around elevating credentials for professionals. We need to keep in mind the bigger crisis of the lack of urgency and awareness in general, as to why early childhood education really matters. I think that sometimes our actions and our policies and practices don't show that it matters. We have to do the work statewide to ensure there's deep understanding of the impact of this as an equity issue and the impact of what this means for children in the long run. Once folks understand the need they will understand why we have such urgent work to do to address the inadequate pay, the support for having additional credentials, and elevate the profession as it is doing the most important work. The most urgent thing is that if this work is going to be supported, there has to be a parallel, getting the public onboard where people are championing the effort.

Our degree program at Delaware State University is very much geared towards a district setting. It invites students who want to work in the private or public sector and both areas. We are in the beginning stages of thinking about what it will look like for early childhood education degree to be more suited for both public and private sector. The Early Childhood Innovation Center at Delaware State University was announced in November 2021. This is a new initiative in Delaware it's primarily focused on transforming the early childhood education in workforce. Addressing their needs to access higher education and earn advanced credential that includes the CDA certificate, and also post secondary degrees. The Early Childhood Innovation Center investment is going to help provide that financial support for people to pursue that credential and support the mentorship piece. We hope to transform how people are able to access higher education with the scholarship model that will help support their acquisition.

Caitlin Gleason, Associate Secretary, Early Childhood Support, Delaware Department of Education

We need to be thinking about roles in a different way to address a career lattice that's tied to a wage scale. Looking at the way that we develop program standards and our regulations to reflect any of those changes. So, it's a robust list of kind of foundational elements that need to happen kind of, behind the scenes. Before career pathways are really built out strategically because it's very important to allow all the programs to be competency focused and ensuring that our professionals are leaving these programs ready to apply what they learn. A higher focus on career advisement like a professional registry that is in the works to help professionals chart their own careers, set goals, find professional learning, etc. To incentivize folks to be in this new professional registry there will be a bonus program coming soon.

What do you think is the biggest opportunity for Delaware as we look to the future, especially given our aspirations as a state for K-12 pay parity, a career pathway, and supports?

Rena Hallam, Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood, Co-Chair Partnerships for Professionals Committee

One of our biggest opportunities is to come together and advocate for a more unified system with a solid investment that reflects what we see in K-12. I think we have an opportunity to come together and build a unified approach that meets the needs of children, families, and workforce.

Dr. Shelly Rouser, Chair for Education at Delaware State University

There is a lot of exciting work happening on the horizon that we have heard on this call. We need to pause long enough to make sure that the glue of all this work is a concerted campaign around the public's understanding of why it matters. Need to make sure that the work that's happened and the work that we plan is elevating the profession. Compensation absolutely matters, as we all agree, but uplifting the profession with our words is a great first step.

What does the panel see is the opportunity to prepare early childhood teachers in new ways for innovative child's centered approaches to learning and how will we build alternatives into the pathways for early childhood teacher preparation to ensure that approaches that have been validated over time are available to Delaware's children and families, specifically, focused on ideal learning opportunities for children through Montessori? How might we fit approaches like this that requires specific teacher preparation into our future models to prepare the workforce.

Caitlin Gleason, Associate Secretary, Early Childhood Support, Delaware Department of Education

One of the things that I'm noticing in our language is that we keep saying alternative route to certification. In early childhood, we have the flexibility to have routes and they might be a little bit different than the traditional models that have historically been a part of institutes for higher education.