

May 8, 2010

Dear Stakeholders:

At the end of 2009, a project funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (Packard) and led by First 5 California (F5CA) and the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) drew a strong conclusion about ECE workforce development in California. It reaffirmed that California's system must have three inter-connected components:

- (1) Clear professional ECE Competencies;
- (2) A Registry of all the types of people who work in ECE; and
- (3) A Career Ladder based on a revised system of ECE certification.

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. 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. In California, there has been progress on all three components. The California Department of Education Child Development Division (CDD) plans to issue ECE Competencies later this year, building upon a broad public input process that CSCCE and F5CA conducted (with Packard funding) in 2007-8. F5CA is spearheading development of a Registry, again building upon broad input and its experience with CARES databases. And this letter begins what we hope will be a broad and deep public input process about developing an ECE Career Ladder in California.

This public input process is meant to identify the most relevant groundwork done in California and other states; to gather input as broadly as possible from California's early care and education field on the appropriate content and structure for an ECE Career Ladder; and to compile this input for CDE-CDD, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), and the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) -- who have official responsibility for developing a Career Ladder and revising ECE certification. The purpose is NOT to develop an actual Career Ladder or to revise ECE certification.

This process will resemble the statewide survey and input-gathering meetings that CSCCE conducted about the ECE competencies during 2007-8 and then handed over to CDD. Specifically, we will:

- Conduct an online survey and in-person meetings in different regions of the state;
- Be transparent and open to all stakeholders in California who wish to participate;
- Benefit from the expertise and collaboration of CSCCE, which implemented the Competencies feedback process in 2007-2008;

- Keep the official state bodies informed and involved from start to finish; and
- Receive some funding from Packard for meeting facilitation and survey-development.

This effort evolves out of the voluntary, grassroots work of the Early Childhood Professional Development and Education Collaborative (EPEC). This group:

- Consists of individuals from community-based agencies, Child Care R&R, Local Child Care Planning Councils, First 5 Commissions, California Community Colleges and State Universities;
- Seeks 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;
- Has tentatively identified the elements of a Career Ladder, but recognizes that broader feedback from an expanded coalition of stakeholders will improve the outcome;
- Is willing to facilitate the field's discussion, debate, and feedback so that a fair synopsis can be compiled for the state of all the issues, comments, and areas of consensus and disagreement.

The development of a Career Ladder is a critical step in advancing the field of early care and education in California. Preliminary discussions on how to do this are already happening among state agencies and decision makers. All too often in the history of ECE initiatives, a statewide process is unable to dedicate the appropriate amount of time to get significant and broad based feedback from the field, resulting in widespread sentiments and frustrations (e.g. Why wasn't this process started sooner? How come more people were not engaged in the process? How can we as a field present a more unified voice on critical issues?)

We hope that individuals and organizations will join EPEC in this effort to begin a statewide discussion about developing a Career Ladder. Initiating this process at this time will allow our thoughts to be integrated into the state's planning process from the beginning stages and provide an opportunity for the ECE field to begin thinking and discussing the issues related to a Career Ladder at a deeper level. Enclosed with this letter is more information about this exciting project.

If you have any questions about this project please email them to epecinfo@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

The Early Childhood Professional Development and Education Collaborative