



Early Childhood Education Model of Success

Pulaski Technical College

North Little Rock, AR

<http://cengage.com/custom/Portal/AECC>

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Developing Academic Standards for Early Childhood Teaching Credential Programs

Led by Trude Puckett of Pulaski Technical College (PTC), 11 community colleges in Arkansas with Early Childhood programs began meeting each month after September 2009. The original intent was to develop courses in the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) programs that would be considered for transfer to the state's universities. Some of the faculty of PTC learned about a bill before the Arkansas legislature which would create a Birth through Prekindergarten Teaching Credential. Even though this would not be a teacher licensure, we determined it was a step toward that goal in the future. When this information was relayed to the community college group at their next meeting, it was decided to take the initiative and develop common courses that would meet the requirements for this credential. The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) called a meeting of Early Childhood leaders in the state and invited Ms. Puckett of the community college group to attend. During this meeting, it was decided to allow the community college group to develop the competencies for this credential. The competencies, aligned to National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards and Supportive Skills and Head Start Outcomes, were developed and assigned to nine specific courses.

Each of the member colleges decided to use the same course name, description, and competencies so it would be easy to recognize the courses that would transfer within the community college system as well as the state universities if articulation was achieved. DCCECE also requires that every preschool teacher, whether public or non-public, take five specific professional development trainings presented by qualified trainers. The community college instructors decided to become qualified trainers so the trainings could be imbedded in the appropriate courses. When students successfully complete the courses with the imbedded trainings, they also receive the training certificates. This makes them more readily employable.

Since the courses are common to these 11 community colleges, the group decided to select the same textbooks. After examining textbooks from several publishers, it was decided to use Cengage Learning texts. Keith Tutor, Cengage representative, presented this information to Michael Stranz, Executive Editor of Custom Solutions. Michael asked for a meeting with the PTC faculty and then the group of community college instructors to recommend the development of a website by Cengage Learning for this group. It was then decided to officially form the Arkansas Early Childhood Cohort (AECC). The cohort created a logo, and the website was born. This partnership has been very rewarding for the instructors and the students. It is also good advertising for each of the colleges in the cohort.

Because of the common course objectives, common textbooks and alignment with NAEYC Standards, the quality of education for students who will be working with the youngest children in our state is now standardized. There is still flexibility in teaching style for each instructor, but students across the state are receiving the same content in the community colleges that are members of the cohort.

The Early Childhood Commission of DCCECE approved the competencies created by the cohort as the foundation for the Birth through Prekindergarten Teaching Credential in January 2011. PTC was the first college to submit the new degree plan to the Arkansas Department of Higher Education for approval. It was approved and PTC is now offering the courses that meet the requirements for the credential. DCCECE is in the process of approving a national assessment with a state minimum score which all candidates will be required to pass before being awarded the credential.

Since Head Start and Early Head Start require 50% of their teachers to have a bachelor's degree, Henderson State University (HSU) in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, has created a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood which includes the approved competencies (nine common courses) for the teaching credential. Since the AAS in Early Childhood Development at PTC is NAEYC accredited, students will be able to smoothly transfer to the HSU program. Other state universities and one private university are now developing programs that will include the teaching credential competencies.

The AECC continues to meet and the PTC AAS in Early Childhood Development was accredited by NAEYC in 2007. Since NAEYC accreditation is necessary for smooth articulation with National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education universities, our goal is now to provide assistance and encouragement to the other colleges as they work toward NAEYC Accreditation. Since the cohort began meeting, two other colleges have been accredited by NAEYC. The members of the cohort have realized the professional value of this network and also enjoy the friendships that have developed. The sky is the limit when there is commitment to developing the full potential of each individual. There is more power in many persons rather than one person trying to accomplish a goal.

Implementation Dates

September 2009 – Present

How the Model is Innovative and/or Unique

This model is unique as the group has been completely voluntary. No state agency or foundation has formed this group. One community college faculty recognized a need in the state and called a meeting. This had been tried before but the timing was not right. Several of the early childhood programs have one person who is the director, instructor, grant writer, and program developer. The majority of the courses are taught by part time faculty. When qualified persons are not available, the director must teach the course(s). Our need for collaboration was great. Together we have been successful in the establishment of high standards for the education of caregivers throughout our state working with children from birth through prekindergarten.

How the Model is Replicable

This model is replicable when a small group of faculty recognizes a need for collaboration and takes the lead to form a cohesive group of educators.