



Early Childhood Education Model of Success

West Virginia University at Parkersburg

Parkersburg, WV

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A Child Development Career Ladder: Increasing College Completion and Educational Attainment of Child Development Professionals

West Virginia University (WVU) at Parkersburg is beginning a three step Career Ladder Child Development degree program beginning in January 2012. Students can enter the program and in one year earn a Certificate in Child Development. With seamless transition, they can add an additional year to earn an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Child Development. With this requirement completed, they can then earn a Bachelor's in Applied Science (BAS) with an emphasis in Child Development without losing any credit hours. This program will increase educational attainment of child development professionals in the region while improving graduation rates of Child Development professionals from the college.

Implementation Dates

Beginning January 2012

How the Model is Innovative/ Unique

The Child Development program is based on a career ladder model. The goal for the program is to provide a 1+1+2 option for students interested in Child Development with multiple entry and exit points to meet student needs.

Early Care and Education professional preparation is a critical issue in the current context of the field. Research indicates that early childhood teachers' professional development is linked to the quality of the programs they serve (Bowman, Dvockan, & Burns, 2000; Saracho & Spodek, 2006). Children in programs with better educated teachers have better social, language, and cognitive abilities than those in programs with less educated teachers (Saracho & Spodek, 2007). Early childhood teachers with higher

educational attainment use activities that motivate children and provide easy-to-follow instructions (de Kruif, McWilliam, Ridley, & Wakely, 2000) and are able to help children build on their prior knowledge and current abilities (Howes, 1997). Teachers who attended an early childhood preparation program have stronger knowledge of teaching practices and child development (Bowman, et al, 2000).

The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA) and the National Women's Law Center (NWLC), along with other professional organizations including The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), have called for increased professional preparation for early childhood educators. Both Head Start and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources have responded to this push for higher educational attainment for early care and education professionals by raising minimum requirements for teachers in these settings. By 2013, all Head Start lead teachers will be required to have a four year degree in an early childhood field or equivalent. Similarly, teachers in community sites face incrementally increasing preparation and training requirements.

Currently, bachelor's degree options for child care employees in our service area are limited to licensure programs and Regents Bachelor of Arts degrees. College students may pursue a licensure program, which qualifies the graduate to teach K-6 with a PreK endorsement. Licensure programs are generally rigorous programs that require students to pass professional entrance exams and meet other qualifications for teaching in public schools. However, graduates who wish to continue to work in child care settings do not receive the salary and benefits of a public school teacher and often do not find the programs to benefit them enough to pursue these degrees. Regents Bachelor of Arts degrees on the other hand may be less rigorous, providing a great deal of flexibility. For example, students may submit a portfolio to be granted credit for life experience. Most coursework is comprised of electives. For students who do not have a rich professional background, this option does not provide the advanced training they seek in a bachelor's degree and does not carry the credibility and distinction they wish to achieve.

The new curriculum culminates in a BAS degree with an emphasis in Child Development. It is a non-certification degree. Students wishing to teach in public preschools may pursue the existing WVU at Parkersburg K-6 Certification Degree and add a Pre-K/K endorsement. Graduates of the proposed BAS in Child Development degree would be qualified to work as teachers in some early care and education settings, directors, early interventionists, resource and referral personnel, social workers, or paraprofessionals in public schools.

Indications of Success

- A higher graduation rate for students enrolling in Child Development degrees
- Students completing a BAS with an emphasis in Child Development
- Articulation agreements for transfer of NAEYC accredited associate degrees from other institutions into BAS in Child Development program

How the Model is Replicable

WVU at Parkersburg has the unique distinction of being one of only a few dozen community colleges that grant bachelor degrees. For many community colleges, implementing a 1+1+2 career ladder is not possible simply because programs do not continue to the baccalaureate level. However, articulation

agreements can be pursued and forged with four year programs. The use of NAEYC accreditation of associate degree programs as an indication of quality in transfer may facilitate these agreements.

Related Links

- NAEYC
<http://www.naeyc.org/ecada/>
- What are Career Pathways?
<http://www.worksourceoregon.org/index.php/career-pathways/128-what-are-career-pathways>
- Career Pathways Definition
http://www.workforcestrategy.org/images/pdfs/publications/career_pathways_definition.pdf

References:

- Bowman, B., Donovan, M. S. & Burns, S. (Eds) (2000) *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers*. Washington, DC, National Research Council.
- de Kruif, R. E. L., McWilliam, R. A., Ridley, S. M. & Wakely, M. B. (2000) Classification of Teachers' Interaction Behaviors in Early Childhood Classrooms, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15(2), 247-268.
- Howes, C. (1997) Children's Experiences in Center-Based Child Care as a Function of Teacher Background and Adult:Child Ratio, *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 43(3), 404-425.
- Saracho, O. N. & Spodek, B. (2007) Early Childhood Teachers' Preparation and the Quality of Program Outcomes. *Early Childhood Development and Care*, 177 (1), 71-91.