

Accreditation: A Strategic Link for Articulation

Webinar Questions and Answers

The following responses were provided by Marica Mitchell, NAEYC, Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation. Please refer also to the Power Point, Accreditation: A Strategic Tool for Articulation.

1. Is it cost and time effective for small associate degree programs with a single full time faculty member to attempt the accreditation process?

There are many accredited associate degree programs with only one or two full time faculty members across the country. While some of these programs may at first find the accreditation process a bit overwhelming, they see it is an important step in improving the quality of the program and increasing the internal/external visibility of the program and a potential marketing tool. During the self-study process, programs often discover resources within their institutions and local community that had previously been untapped. "You are not alone" was the feedback shared by faculty from Alamo College's St. Philip's College.

2. Is there a support group process for help with the self study for ECADA?

NAEYC has a range of tools to support the accreditation process. The range of supports includes online opportunities as well as options for onsite services. See the full range of services at www.naeyc.org/ecada/support. NAEYC staff may also be able to help pair degree programs that have questions to programs that have successfully completed accreditation.

3. Do you know of funding mechanisms to support ECADA?

Every state is different. Funding mechanisms to consider include Race to the Top, the Child Care Development Fund awarded to each state, Perkins funds, private foundations, and local support and service groups. The Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators (ACCESS) also provides accreditation mini grants.

4. Our college requires that we consider the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards in everything that we do. How do the ECADA standards link with the CEC?

A crosswalk highlighting the relationships between these standards is under development. Look for a finished tool in 2014.

5. Other programs in my college division get financial support for accreditation but so far my Dean does not see a need to fund ECADA for my program. Do you have suggestions to sway our administration?

First, accreditation of programs can serve as a third-party indicator of program quality and quality improvement tool. In some community colleges it is enough to let the community college administration know that there is a rigorous system for external assessment of their early childhood program quality. As you have indicated, it is often easier for associate degree programs, such as Nursing, to gain financial support for accreditation when professional licensure is limited to graduates from programs with specialized accreditation.

In instances where more convincing is needed, early childhood programs may need to scan their environment to determine if their lack of accreditation is a detriment to their marketing efforts as the number of accredited programs (online and hybrid programs included) continues to grow. NAEYC is beginning to get calls from prospective students who want to be good consumers of higher education. Their questions include concerns about quality assurance and articulation opportunities in their states.

In February 2014, NAEYC will provide targeted marketing materials to help faculty make a stronger case of accreditation.

6. There has been much discussion about the link between the NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards as used for program recognition under the CAEP (formerly NCATE) accreditation system and ECADA standards. How have programs used this discussion to advance articulation?

There is a direct and intentional connection between the two sets of standards. Both initial preparation programs seeking NAEYC recognition as part of their CAEP accreditation efforts and associate degree programs seeking accreditation from the ECADA Commission must provide evidence of using the 2010 NAEYC Standards for Initial Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs as the framework for their course of study, student learning outcomes, and assessment systems. This critical linkage supports articulation conversations because ECADA Commission-accredited and NAEYC-recognized programs are able to connect learning outcomes across degree programs and rely on the quality assurance of a third-party program review. The focus here is less about inputs and more about outcomes. It is important to note that while these core standards are the same, additional learning outcomes and assessments are needed for state approval and CAEP accreditation. The length of the educational experience for students also varies.

7. The faculty member in charge of our CAEP study indicates that NAEYC is a Specialized Professional Association (SPA) and in order to link CAEP and ECADA we need a separate assessment and that requires an additional fee. Can you explain this process? Is this additional accreditation necessary to help make the argument for two- to four-year articulation?

As a SPA, NAEYC reviews the NAEYC Program Report submitted to CAEP that relates to the early childhood degree program being reviewed. This report requires early childhood programs to submit 6-8 assessments that are aligned with the NAEYC standards and meet additional requirements for state approval and CAEP accreditation. Associate degree programs seeking accreditation from the ECADA Commission are required to submit 5-6 assessments that are aligned with the NAEYC and additional supportive skills. Both initial licensure and associate degree programs use the same NAEYC standards to develop these assessments.

CAEP and the ECADA Commission are two independent and distinct accreditation bodies with separate policies and fees. Programs seeking NAEYC recognition as part of the CAEP accreditation process do not submit fees to NAEYC for this review.

Accreditation is not the articulation magic wand or singular solution. It serves as a tool to support and sometimes fast-track the articulation dialogue.

8. Does NAEYC have examples of states or individual programs that have used ECADA as a means to create or leverage articulation efforts?

The two programs that participated in the webinar, Eastern Tennessee State University, and Alamo Colleges St. Philip's College (Texas) are two examples of such programs. Reviews of programs that are accredited at the associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degree levels are available at www.naeyc.org/accreditation.

9. Our state is pursuing articulation with both licensure and non licensure programs at four year IHEs. Is ECADA only useful when we are discussing teacher licensure program articulation?

NAEYC encourages all programs, regardless of their interest in accreditation, to use the professional preparation standards as the common framework. These standards are publicly available. In an effort to ensure that all eligible early childhood programs have an opportunity to use external accreditation as quality assurance and improvement tool, NAEYC is exploring the scope of existing accreditation and recognition systems to identify opportunities for growth and expansion.

10. What is the renewal rate for programs that receive ECADA accreditation?

As of December 2013, approximately 94% of programs with ECADA accreditation chose to renew their accreditation status. Programs that withdrew from the process at renewal were influenced by shifts in their state policies/priorities and leadership transitions.