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Tessa McDonnell

UNH College of Professional Studies

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New Hampshire Preschool Development Grant: Sharing Best Practices

A Report of Workforce Professional Development: Prior Learning

Tessa McDonnell
Consultant

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PDG B–5 Sharing Best Practices: Prior Learning

Activity 3: Identify mechanisms to allow professionals to obtain college credit for participation in in-service PD.

National Context

The National Association for the Education of Young Children is engaged in a monumental project called “Power to the Profession”.

Power to the Profession is a national collaboration to define the early childhood profession by establishing a unifying framework for career pathways, knowledge and competencies, qualifications, standards and compensation. ... In order to receive the significant and sustained public investments that would allow all children to benefit from high-quality early childhood education, early childhood educators and stakeholders must agree on some clear, foundational elements of the diverse, effective, equitable, and well-compensated profession we all want. This foundation is built on the concept that children and families will benefit from having¹:

- a distinct early childhood education profession (Decision Cycle 1)
- with specialized knowledge, skills, and competencies (Decision Cycle 2)
- which are acquired through a primary pathway of professional preparation and deployed with varying depth and breadth, across all states and settings (Decision Cycle 345)
- leading to educators whose compensation reflects the value of their highly skilled work (Decision Cycle 6)
- with accountability structures, resources, and supports in place to build and sustain the profession so it reflects the diversity of the young children it serves and reduces the impact of structural barriers such as institutional racism, sexism, classism, elitism, and bias (Decision Cycles 7 and 8)

It proposes levels of certification, licensure, accreditation of pre-service institutions, and federal funding for increased compensation in parity with public school teachers. Degree attainment for all early childhood teachers is the goal with a new infrastructure for professional development.

A collaborative process lead by a representative Task Force distributes drafts of their research and deliberations to the field at large. In 2019 they designed a unifying framework for preparation, competence, responsibilities, and compensation. In addition to recommendations for degree attainment, **other innovative models and pathways are encouraged.**

*“The Task Force recognizes that there are multiple and flexible approaches in professional preparation programs, and it seeks to encourage **effective innovations** that are, in particular, designed to reach non-traditional students, eliminate the existing barriers to higher education, and maintain a commitment to quality. Examples of these approaches may include competency-based programs, **use of prior learning assessments***

¹ <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/initiatives/profession/overview>

for awarding credit, apprenticeships, cohort models, work-based supervised practicum/clinical experiences, and intensive degree programs with shorter duration.”²

Practices of the Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) in New Hampshire

The institutions of higher education in New Hampshire offer several ways to recognize learning attained outside the formal classroom in degree programs. Early Childhood faculty gathered information on their practices during the summer of 2019. Eight institutions submitted information.

The IHEs that submitted requested information:

- University of New Hampshire (UNH)
- Plymouth State University (PSU)
- Granite State University (GSU)
- New Hampshire Technical Institute (NHTI)
- Manchester Community College (MCC)
- Lakes Region Community College (LRCC)
- River Valley Community College (RVSS)
- Great Bay Community College (GRCC)

All of these colleges and universities have policies on accepting credit for tests administered by the College Board CLEP program. However, there is only one exam that relates to early childhood – *Human Growth and Development* (<https://clep.collegeboard.org/history-and-social-sciences/human-growth-and-development>). However, most ECE programs require Child Development or Child Psychology, not Human Development in their majors. Other subject areas may fulfill general education or elective requirements.

All but one college (Granite State College) indicated departmental tests are available for a few, selected courses in their ECE programs. It is up to the discretion of the departmental chair, and students must petition to take the test. In most cases, this option is for the first introductory course or the initial practicum.

Of the eight colleges who participated in this research, all the community colleges and one of the four-year colleges (Granite State College) offer a portfolio option to matriculated degree candidates. This process includes documentation of learning gained through training and experience and reflection on the learning outcomes. The portfolio is reviewed by departmental faculty and credit recommendations are approved by the academic vice president. Although this option is available, faculty report students infrequently take advantage. The process requires strong critical thinking and writing skills.

One institution (UNH) waives its entry-level course for students who demonstrate meeting the outcomes through their experience.

System-Wide Policies

According to the Department of Community Technical College Systems - “Credit by examination may be earned by a student who, by study, training or experience has acquired skill

² Power to the Profession, Discussion draft 2: decision cycles 345+6, p.13, boldface added for emphasis

or knowledge equivalent to that acquired by the student enrolled in an Institute or College course, provided such skill, knowledge or experience is in the area of the course concerned, and in the opinion of the Vice President of Academic Affairs or other authorized personnel, evidence of such skill or knowledge justifies allowing the student to take the examination. **Students may apply for credit by examination only for those courses for which they are not currently registered.**"³

Some IHEs, under the heading of *Prior Learning Assessment*, show the list of options available for students.

NHTI: <https://www.nhti.edu/academics/requirements-policies/prior-learning-assessment>

MCC: <https://www.mccnh.edu/academics/prior-learning-assessment>

GSC: https://is.granite.edu/?page_id=12

Recommendations

There are research-based guidelines available for use by institutions to evaluate experiential learning and learning gained from non-collegiate sources⁴. Since there is not widespread use of alternative options, the direction NH might consider is creating a dialogue around the benefits of implementing some alternative methods. Decisions on credit for prior learning are often made by Academic Affairs and the Registrar's Office. A seminar format might include representatives from these departments, experts on evaluation methods, representatives from other states who successfully use these alternatives, and faculty from the ECE programs with discussion breakouts to evaluate ways to work together.

Since 1974, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) has created standards for awarding college credit through prior learning assessment (PLA). They have an extensive library of PLA resources. Also, a consortium of New England higher education institutions provide technical assistance to colleges in the region and have guidelines to share credit evaluations for training programs (add Source). Research on and exploration of their experiences will provide frameworks for implementing promising practices. The Roundtable may also conduct a needs assessment of students and providers to determine levels of interest. The group might identify priorities to pursue collectively (ex.evaluate the training for the coaching model.)

Sources Cited

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning

<https://www.cael.org/higher-education-adult-student-success>

National Association for the Education of Young Children

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/initiatives/profession>

³ Manchester Community College Credit by Examination Guidelines, internal form

⁴ <https://www.cael.org/ten-standards-for-assessing-learning>