

Position Paper: A Call to Change New York's Birth-Grade 2 Teacher Certification Extension

The New York State Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NYSAECTE) is dedicated to the development of highly effective teachers of young children. The members of the organization represent New York's early childhood education faculty in both public and private institutions of higher education that provide access to teacher certification programs focusing on children from birth through grade two.

Policy change request: The NYSAECTE recommends that individuals who have earned Childhood Teacher Certification and are then interested in seeking an Early Childhood (*B-Grade 2*) certification be required to earn at least 12 semester hours specifically dedicated to the early childhood years, in the following areas:

- Child development, including a context of families from diverse socio-cultural and economic situations, which focuses on the span of early childhood that starts in the pre-natal stage and extends through age 8.
- The designs of integrated curriculum (including STEM, social studies, literacy, and the arts) and teaching strategies for young children that include positive guidance and classroom organization and management.
- The observation and authentic assessment of young children within supervised field experience (no less than 15 contact hours over five sessions) in an educational setting with children under the age of 5. Further, the inclusion of children with special needs and dual language learners must be integrated throughout each of the areas above.

The Rationale: The nation is focusing considerable resources on establishing programs of excellence for children from birth through school entry, based on the current brain science and research that suggests that the achievement gap is minimized when young children experience high quality early learning experiences. These early learning experiences, including a strong family engagement and support component, occur when specially educated teachers understand and can demonstrate competency in meeting the development and education needs of children from birth through eight years.

The Problem: Current policy makes it possible for a teacher certified in childhood education to extend the certification to include early childhood education with too limited a number of broadly defined courses that may not address the distinct needs of young children. This practice neglects to develop the essential skills of teachers who set out to teach children from birth through grade 2, and places them at risk of failing to meet the well-established needs of young children and their families.

The Solution: Modify the extension of the Childhood Teacher Certification to include Early Childhood Education by requiring at least 12 semester hours that specify the above-recommended subject matter, referencing explicit early childhood education content as the prime focus of each course, as the initial Birth-Grade 2 Certification does.

As the leadership in our cities, state, and country move to establish broader and deeper approaches to early childhood education as a matter of public policy and best practice, New York's teachers should be optimally equipped to ensure every child's success in school and throughout life. The NYSAECTE believes that the recommendations set forth in this position paper will strengthen New York's early childhood teaching force and lead to desired outcomes for young children.