



PLAN FOR CREATING A TRAINING TO COLLEGE PATHWAY FOR LICENSED EARLY LEARNING PROFESSIONALS (HB 2556)



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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Executive Summary

Investing in school readiness and positive outcomes for children requires an investment in the early care and education workforce. The Washington State Legislature passed [House Bill \(HB\) 2556](#) during the 2020 Legislative Session to support the stability and diversity of the early care and education workforce. This bill was established to add an accessible and affordable pathway for licensed child care providers to enter into and grow within the child care industry.

The deliverables of HB 2556 included:

1. **Training Pathway:** Establish a non-credit-bearing, community-based training pathway as an alternative for early learning providers to meet their licensing requirement for the initial or short certificate (HB 2556 Sec. 2).
2. **Training to College Pathway:** In collaboration with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) will develop a plan for implementing this community-based training option to qualify for college credit and submit this plan to the Governor and the Legislature (HB 2556 Sec. 3).

This implementation plan describes how the training to college pathway will be operationalized. College entry is an optional next step for those seeking a college certificate or degree and is not a requirement of community-based training. DCYF and SBCTC worked collaboratively with workgroup members to find ways to leverage existing systems and partnerships.

Implementing the Training to College Pathway

To implement the Training to College Pathway, the following activities will take place:

1. **Establish an Articulation Agreement:** An agreement between DCYF and SBCTC allows early learning professionals to complete the community-based training and to continue on the same path through a credit-bearing certificate or degree.
2. **Expand Navigation Center:** The navigation center will expand to assist early learning professionals with academic and career planning.
3. **Implement an Evaluation and Review Process That Increases Responsiveness:** An approach for continuous quality improvement ensures the community-based training is adaptive and responsive to early learning professionals and workforce needs.

Moving Forward

As we move ahead with implementation, the community-based training pathway to college entry is rebranded to “PACE” (Provider Access to a Community Equivalent).

Background

Investing in school readiness and positive outcomes for children requires an investment in the early care and education workforce. “Well-educated teachers with specialized training in early childhood education have the knowledge and skills to positively impact child outcomes.”¹ Early care and education professionals’ skills, knowledge, and well-being are directly related to the quality of children’s experiences in early learning programs. Yet, the system of preparing, supporting, and compensating early childhood educators in the United States remains largely ineffective, inefficient, and inequitable.

The Washington State Legislature passed [House Bill \(HB\) 2556](#) during the 2020 Legislative Session to support the stability of the early care and education workforce. This bill was established to add an accessible and affordable pathway for licensed child care providers to enter into and grow within the child care industry. HB 2556 states:

The legislature recognizes the value of demonstrated competence that comes with a provider's experience in delivering quality child care. Therefore, in response to our state's urgent child care crisis, the legislature intends to provide relief to early learning providers by building the early learning workforce to meet the needs of working families across our state. The legislature further intends for providers to have a range of options to meet education requirements, including a *noncredit-bearing community-based training pathway*.

The deliverables of this work include:

1. **Training Pathway:** Establish a non-credit-bearing, community-based training pathway as an alternative for early learning providers to meet their licensing requirement for the initial or short certificate (HB 2556 Sec. 2).
2. **Align with Community Colleges:** In collaboration with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) will develop a plan for this community-based training option to qualify for college credit and submit this plan to the Governor and the Legislature (HB 2556 Sec. 3).

About the Workforce

Washington State must increase the number of early childhood educators to support the current early learning program needs and meet expansion goals specific to Washington’s Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Early ECEAP. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the need for strategies and support models that improve early childhood educators' recruitment and preparation. This urgency related to the workforce is expressed consistently by licensed care providers for all age groups and is seen in national trends. The lack of an adequate pipeline for linguistically diverse and community-rooted educators puts additional strain on early childhood programs to recruit staff and fill vacancies. The lack of compensation for early care and education roles puts additional limits on recruiting educators into roles that provide service to young children.

The approach described in this report is designed to support an increase in the number of educators in the early learning workforce by providing a point of entry into college certificate or degree programs that begins with training.

¹ J. Coffman and M.E. Lopez, “Raising Preschool Teacher Qualifications,” Montclair and New York: The Schumann Fund for New Jersey and The Trust for Early Education, 2003.

About the Workgroups

To craft this plan, DCYF facilitated two community workgroups to provide insight and feedback. Each workgroup provided recommendations on their specific area of focus.

1. **Development and Implementation Workgroup:** This workgroup was comprised of various community stakeholders named in the bill who provided consultation to the development and implementation of the community-based training (HB 2556 Sec. 2). (Workgroup members are listed in Appendix A.)
2. **College Pathway Connection Workgroup:** Co-facilitated with SBCTC, this group included members of the higher-education community from early childhood education (ECE) programs to explore how the community-based training could be recognized for college credit. This group used information from the development and implementation phase to help establish a pathway that gives providers an option to continue to additional college certificates or degrees without losing momentum from the training that was completed. (Workgroup members are listed in Appendix B.)

The Development and Implementation Workgroup identified guiding principles to inform the design and implementation of the community-based training. A focus was on a pathway that would be meaningful, accessible, and relevant to the early learning professional. These served as guiding themes throughout the project.

The guiding principles include:

- People throughout the state have access to the pathway, with informed and targeted consideration for rural and linguistic diversity. This means there are a variety of ways to complete this option.
- Consideration will be paid to avoid unintended consequences that may impact those historically furthest from opportunity.
- The model is relationship-based, includes job-connected learning formats, and is not 100% dependent on a traditional “training” approach.
- The state should adopt a fiscal model that leverages resources and does not put the burden of expense onto early learning professionals.

The College Pathway Connection Workgroup reviewed materials from the development and implementation workgroup and expanded with the following recommendations:

1. Early learning professionals can continue into college without added cost accumulated during the transition process to the early learning professional.
2. Early learning professionals are supported with career planning and advising specific to their needs and goals.
3. DCYF and SBCTC ensure cycles of improvement are included to hear from all parties involved, and adjustments will be made as needed to ensure success for students.

In the end, this group helped establish a pathway that gives providers an option to continue to additional college certificates or degrees without losing momentum from the training that was completed.

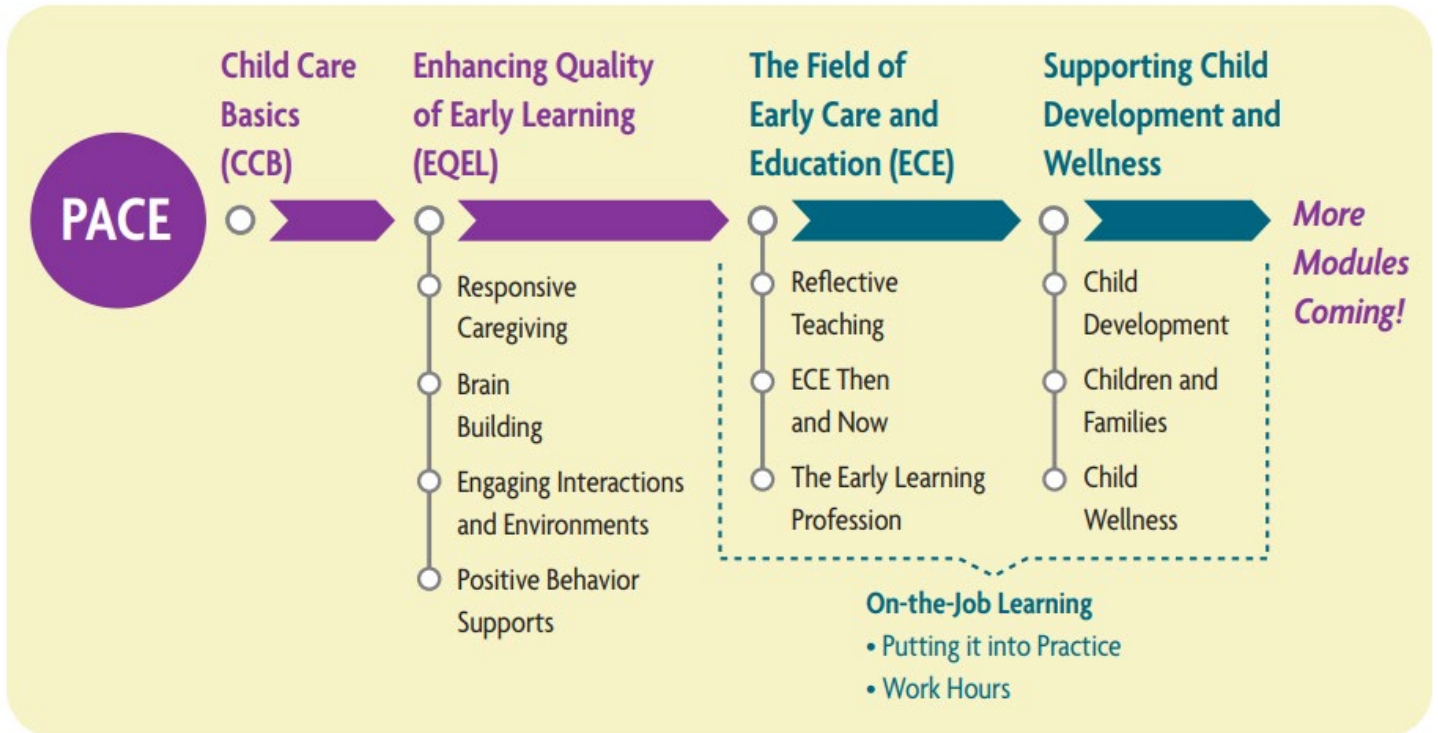
Community-Based Training Design

Community-Based Training gives early learning professionals a jump start by building from required training for licensing qualifications and establishing a pathway from training through college entry. This leverages existing training required by licensing standards (Washington Administrative Code, or WAC) and progresses through additional career pathway options.

DCYF administered a condensed pilot with training partners to inform the first refinements of the community-based training content and pathway.

An overview of the program design shows the way it leverages the time early learning professionals spend in required training and at their place of employment. In figure 1, the purple training (CCB and EQEL) designates part of the community-based training program, PACE (Provider Access to a Community Equivalent), already met with the required training for early learning professionals, allowing for program completion to build off existing knowledge, and training delivery infrastructure.

Figure 1: Provider Access to a Community Equivalent (PACE)²



The program is a great opportunity. I loved the idea of getting my studies through this method. It will only improve or add more to [a person's] learning. This method is a great opportunity for all of us who are dedicated to child care. – Spanish Pilot Participant

Implementation Plan: Training to College Pathway

Implementing a pathway that begins with training (as shown in figure 1) and creates opportunities to continue onto college requires support for the student and infrastructure in higher-education institutions. The following approach outlines the next steps to implement a pathway that builds from training and leads to a credit-bearing certificate or degree for early learning professionals. The implementation steps below were determined by recommendations from the College Pathway Connection Workgroup and reflect the guiding principles of the Development and Implementation Workgroup. DCYF and SBCTC worked collaboratively with the workgroup members to find ways to leverage existing systems and partnerships.

² [PACE Program Overview](#)

Implementation Step 1: DCYF and SBCTC Establish an Articulation Agreement for Community-Based Training

Why This Will Work (Impact)

An articulation agreement provides the foundation for a consistent process for educators to enter college after completing their community-based training and be assured they can continue building on time invested. This prevents “dead-end” pathways.

How This Will Work

- The statewide articulation agreement will ensure all participating colleges recognize the community-based training as the ECE common courses for the initial certificate, creating a sustainable and consistent way to support the acceptance process at the college level.
- This option would leverage the existing partnerships between DCYF and SBCTC.
- DCYF, in partnership with SBCTC, will establish a centralized method for articulation review that will simplify the process for early childhood educators and ensure consistent and reliable acceptance of the community-based training as an entry point into a credit-bearing pathway.
- The articulation agreement established between SBCTC and DCYF will be reviewed every three years and will be informed by data about use and workforce preparation and retention.

What is Happening Now

DCYF is working closely with SBCTC to identify colleges as early adopters to implementing an articulation agreement for the early completers of the community-based training. This will help answer questions to continue making improvements and scaling more broadly as funding for the training permits.

DCYF has worked with the Governor’s Office on the Results Washington goal 1.1 Early Learning – Create accessible, navigable career and educational pathways for early care and education workforce. This includes the early stages of implementing the community-based training program.

Implementation Step 2: DCYF Expands Navigation Center to Include Academic and Career Planning for Early Learning Professionals

Why This Will Work (Impact)

Expanding the navigation center to include career navigators provides early learning professionals with personalized support to identify a direction and make decisions about their next steps. This reduces stress and increases the workforce's morale, increases pathway completion, and optimizes state training and scholarship funding.

How This Will Work

- Through career navigators, the navigation center would provide various levels of technical assistance to listen to the goals of early learning professionals and advise on the various pathways available.
- Cross-system advising is critical to reducing stress and increasing success for the early learning professional. Cross-system career advising includes:
 - Navigating program qualifications and institutions of higher education. This leads to increased workforce preparation and stability.
 - Providing guidance to identify and explore options for current and future goals.
 - Making connections customized to the early learning professional’s learning style, learning language, familiarity with technology, and future career goals.

- Providing introductions to other system contacts, such as training organizations, college points of contact, scholarship opportunities, and more.
- Helping understand the various job roles within early learning, in and out of the classroom or care environment.

What is Happening Now

DCYF is establishing a navigation center that is a cross-policy area focused on supporting early learning professionals. This navigation center includes career planning and will begin evaluating how the state can play a role in the coordination and support of early learning professionals. DCYF will expand this support with the additional career navigator role.

North Seattle College recently received a grant to support non-traditional students. North Seattle College is partnering with DCYF to further explore a career navigator role specific to serving as a liaison with the higher-education community. A grant-funded position will be hired at DCYF to begin this new program.

About DCYF Navigators and Technical Assistance

DCYF's Technical Assistance (TA) model is an adult learning and support strategy that has been implemented for other programs in response to community and provider feedback. This navigation support would expand on that infrastructure and grow to include career planning.

TA generally includes:

- One-on-one or small group supports.
- In-person, virtual (e.g., Zoom), or phone.
- Offered in the primary language of the provider (Interpreter will be used if needed).
- Liaison between the provider, state role requirements, and the colleges policies and procedures.
- Help to understand options for meeting various requirements and continuing to future goals.
- Understand funding streams and how funding can be used.
- Connects providers to resources and triages additional questions.

Additional Information About Role Qualifications

WAC 110-300-0100 states that early learning professionals have time to meet some of their role qualifications and maintain a Professional Development Plan (PDP) to document how they are working toward their education requirements for their role. A career navigator can help early learning professionals set goals as part of their PDP and help the state understand the professional and career goals of the early learning workforce.

Implementation Step 3: DCYF and SBCTC Establish Annual Review Process and Three-Year Evaluation Cycle

Why This Will Work (Impact)

Evaluation of the community-based training ensures our professional development system is intentional in its efforts to advance equity by exploring if this option meets the needs of early learning professionals while preparing and increasing workforce diversity and stabilization.

How This Will Work

- The annual review process will look at qualitative and quantitative data about the number and demographics of individuals who have expressed interest in entering college and the number who successfully use the articulation agreement established.
 - Analysis of data about key milestones including interest, enrollment, completion of the community-based training, and continuation to college.

- Participant, trainer, and college feedback about the successes and barriers related to delivery, completion, and college connection of the community-based training and career navigation support.
- Analysis of potential inequities in the processes and implementation strategies.
- Every three years, an enhanced evaluation process will provide accountability for all partners involved to look at data more deeply and make data-informed decisions to improve the program or articulation agreement.
 - Analysis of workforce data for those who choose this option, including retention, positions, and demographics.
 - Audit of the implementation of the articulation agreement, including an inter-rater reliability process to ensure that each early childhood educator’s entry into college was reviewed and accepted with the same results.
 - In subsequent years, additional workforce recruitment and retention data will help us understand how many choose the training option, what roles they move into, and their retention in the field.

Go at Your Own PACE

The community-based training is now a branded pathway. The release will be under the new name PACE (Provider Access to a Community Equivalent). This name is designed to emphasize that this option is built from the collaborative community work on defining and creating an equivalent option, and the guiding principles of accessibility and flexibility for providers to go at their own pace.

Conclusion

This pathway is designed to serve as a way for early learning professionals to meet the staff qualifications for licensed child care roles and create more accessible entry points into the college learning environment.

An early learning professional may determine to stop at the completion of the community-based training when they meet their education staff qualification, or they may continue in a certificate or degree program.

Collaboration with various stakeholders led to the development of this implementation plan. With this new pathway, early childhood educators in Washington can experience individualized support and multiple ways for meeting their licensing education requirements. This helps to address DCYF goals to ensure all children receive high-quality early learning experiences, establish responsive pathways to professional growth, and make efforts to increase the number of educators that culturally and linguistically represent the children and communities served.

As we prepare to release this community-based training program, DCYF will leverage funding provided within the Fair Start for Kids Act (SB 5237, 2021). This effort will also help the agency to meet the Results Washington goal 1.1 Early Learning – Create accessible, navigable career and educational pathways for early care and education workforce.

Through continued partnership, resources, and funding, DCYF and SBCTC can fully implement and sustain the approach described in this report.

Please note that this report was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix A: Development and Implementation Workgroup Members

DCYF thanks all of the workgroup participants for their dedication, commitment, and time and for providing guidance and recommendations for the training to college pathway. The workgroup demonstrated passion for the early care and education workforce and time considering approaches that would advance equity in early learning by creating more opportunities for access, growth, and reducing barriers.

This workgroup first met in September 2020 and continued with virtual meetings and webinars through March 2021. The workgroup produced recommendations to inform the development and delivery of the Training to College Pathway implementation plan.

Name	Organization
Heather Stock	State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
Meka Riggins	Child Care Aware of Washington
Samantha Stevens	Child Care Aware of Washington – ESD 113
Cate Bridenstein	Imagine Institute
Rena MacKenzie	Imagine Institute
Mumina Hassan	Family Child Care Provider, bilingual provider
Cindy Elizalde	SEIU 925
Nimao Dahir	Family Child Care Provider, bilingual provider
Julie Schroath	Washington Childcare Center Association
Jennifer Thompson	Washington Childcare Center Association
Sarah Loeffler	Voices of Tomorrow
Suzie Hanson	Washington Federation of Independent Schools
Kafia Abdilahi	One America
Nimco Bulale	One America

Appendix B: Training to College Pathway Workgroup Members

DCYF thanks all of the workgroup participants for their dedication, commitment, and time and for providing guidance and recommendations for the training to college pathway. The workgroup demonstrated passion for the early care and education workforce and time considering approaches that would advance equity in early learning by creating more opportunities for access, growth, and reducing barriers.

This workgroup first met in June 2021 and continued with virtual meetings and webinars through September 2021. The workgroup produced recommendations to inform the development of the Training to College Pathway implementation plan.

Name	Organization
Heather Stock	State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
Karen Minnich	Centralia College
Lori Eide	Columbia Basin College
Melissa Matczak	Yakima Valley College
Ninder Gill	North Seattle College
Olga Webstad	Pierce College
Sally Lockhart	Clover Park Technical College
William Belden	State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Appendix C: Background – Progression to Community-Based Training

DCYF recognizes the importance of our early care and education workforce and is committed to providing accessible pathways that are culturally and linguistically responsive for entering and growing in early care and education roles. DCYF has continued to emphasize this work to expand the professional development growth of the early learning workforce. Engagement efforts over the past few years led to the development of the community-based training pathway:

- **2009 Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals and the Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals** – Creating these competencies established consistent standards that identified the knowledge and skills needed for the early learning workforce.
- **2012 Development of the Washington State ECE Stackable Certificates** – This created achievable and progressive education milestones that aligned state efforts within the higher education system.
- **2015 Early Start Act of 2015** – Passed into legislation that led to the alignment of standards in Licensing, ECEAP, and Early Achievers.
- **2017 Negotiated Rule-Making for WAC 110-300** – The community was involved in an in-depth process which concluded in March 2018.
- **2018 Equivalency Workgroup** – Immediately after Negotiated Rule-Making, DCYF (formerly Department of Early Learning, or DEL) began work with the Equivalency Workgroup to determine additional options to meet the new education requirements. It was through this workgroup that the desire for a community-based training option was realized. At the time, community training was considered out of scope, and DCYF did not have the resources to move forward with this equivalent option.
- **2019 Early Planning for Community-Based Training** – Before the passing of HB 2556, DCYF began working with partners from the Equivalency Workgroup to determine what would be required and needed for a community-based training option. See the [Equivalency Recommendations Report](#) from 2019 for more information.
- **2020 HB 2556** – The bill passed, and DCYF began working with the named partners to develop the community-based training option. More about milestones and community engagement can be found on the DCYF webpage about [PACE – Provider Access to a Community Equivalent](#).
- **2021 Community-Based Training Pilot** – Provided feedback to guide revisions for full implementation in 2022. DCYF’s timeline for developing the community-based training pathway consists of two parts of the house bill. The full timeline can be found in this [summary](#).

Appendix D: Education and Equivalent Options

[Early Learning Provider Education and Equivalent Options \(PDF\)](#).

Early Learning Provider

Education and Equivalent Options

Early learning providers have multiple ways to meet their licensing education requirements. The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) has worked with numerous community members to determine the equivalent pathways below.



Training

COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING

- Trainings available online or in-person.
- Available in English, Spanish, and Somali.
- Includes on the job learning.
- Development informed by HB2556 passed in 2020.
- Available for the following early learning provider roles: assistant teachers, lead teachers, and family home licensees.



Experience

EXPERIENCE-BASED COMPETENCY

- Qualified based on prior experience and training history.
- Available for all languages.
- Easy opt-in beginning fall 2021: mark this option in MERIT and let the system do the rest!
- Available for the following early learning provider roles: assistant teachers, lead teachers, and family home licensees.



Education

COLLEGE STACKABLE CERTIFICATES AND ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIALS

- Qualification through certificates, degrees, or credentials.
- Scholarships available.
- Online or in-person.
- Offered in multiple languages depending on college and region.
- College readiness supports (various examples include: emergency funds, tutoring, peer group learning, adjunct with first-hand experience).
- Available for all early learning provider roles.



Who Helped Us Get Here?

- Child Care Aware of Washington
- Cultivate Learning
- Family Home Care Providers
- Imagine Institute
- One America
- SEIU 925
- Voices of Tomorrow
- Washington Federation of Independent Schools
- Washington Child Care Centers Association
- Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

DCYF thanks all the partners who advised, contributed, and helped make these pathways come to fruition.

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