

School Readiness Committee

Virginia Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals Update Workgroup

Conference Call - November 14, 2017

Participants: Mark Allan, Irene Carney (chair), Chris Chin, Nadine Fortune, Kathy Gillikin, Bonnie Graham, Teresa Harris, Elliot Haspel, Shelley Lingamfelter, Patsy Moon. Staff: Holly Coy; VECF Staff Kathy Glazer, Karin Bowles, Elliot Haspel, Alison Lutton (Consultant).

Irene Carney welcomed participants to the call and invited people to introduce themselves. She stated the purpose of today's call is to hear from and provide feedback to the expert group working on revisions to the Virginia Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals and to consider additional questions in advance of this group's Dec. 5 in-person meeting. At the December 5 meeting, the group will look in detail at the revised competencies in preparation for providing recommendations to the full School Readiness Committee. Irene Carney invited Dr. Teresa Harris to provide a status update on the revisions process.

Dr. Harris outlined the sections of the standards being revised by the expert team members (see "Revision Outline and Assignments" handout). While each person is working on separate sections, they have met once all together for a writers' retreat where they reviewed the table of contents, introductory material, and current version, leading them to develop some bigger picture questions. The expert group is scheduled to meet this week for another writers' retreat where Dr. Harris will share feedback and suggestions from today's call. They would like help ensuring that any overlap in the sections is complimentary rather than redundant and welcome guidance on what to take out and what to leave in. Feedback today is essential to their efforts.

Dr. Harris called attention to the proposed new names for each section. For example, the section previously called "Health, Safety, and Nutritional Practices" is now proposed to be called "Promoting Children's Health, Safety, and Nutrition". This section has been updated to include a focus on obesity prevention through activity, improved nutrition and reduced screen time. A focus on the impact of toxic stress has been added to this section but will also be woven into other sections such as the sections on environments and interactions.

Irene Carney noted that knowledge of Trauma Informed Care practices and services should be included in this and other sections.

Dr. Harris acknowledged that it is included in other sections such as family and community engagement and is intended to be woven throughout the document.

Kathy Gillikin asked if previously included topics like child abuse and neglect remain in this section. Dr. Harris responded that yes, those topics remain. On a similar note, Dr. Harris commented that during their review, the expert group raised the question of whether or not to continue to include the "Policies/Practices/Procedures" section which covers many details required by licensing (hygiene, injuries). Should we still maintain this section as baseline of competencies?

Kathy Gillikin suggested that this document should focus on best practices and competencies needed for high quality care. Licensing covers the basics but this document should go above and beyond that if we can.

Irene Carney commented that while many providers try to go beyond these requirements, having licensing standards noted is always a good framework and important to have cohesion with state licensing standards.

Dr. Harris moved on to review the next section focused on Child Growth and Development. The authors suggest looking more closely at the relationship with family development and the impact family has on child development. While family development will be raised more explicitly in the revisions, there is also a separate family engagement section so will need to be careful to emphasize and not repeat information. Revisions will also focus more on the neuroscience component and be more explicit in terms of more inclusive language used re: “typical” vs “atypical” development while trying to remain user friendly across all levels.

Alison Lutton wondered if it would be worth adding something about community as well as family in this section.

Irene Carney followed up about how to best incorporate language around typical and atypical development and bring into new framework.

Alison Lutton suggested perhaps looking at resources such as NAEYC and DEC. She also suggested that the authors include a glossary of terms instead of incorporating explanations into the main documents.

Kathy Glazer supported the idea of including a glossary of terms used throughout the Competencies.

Bonnie Graham wondered if it would be helpful to show the connection between understanding inclusion and observation and assessment.

Revisions to the following section on Observation and Assessment focus on a strengths-based approach and family-centered practices, embedding assessment and intervention within the daily routine. This section will look at child observation and assessment broadly but will also drill down into specific topics.

Bonnie Graham said she was glad to see the strengths-based approach as professionals often see things as a deficit (children not ready for school).

Mark Allan inquired if there is a focus on ongoing formative assessment in this section. Dr. Harris responded that she has notes about documenting children’s growth and progress over time and use of multiple data sources for decision-making along a continuum.

Chris Chin noted that the previous focus was about up-to-date assessment. Moving forward, he would like to see assessments happening with regularity over time.

Alison Lutton noted that a difficult consideration for the assessment section is how to address inclusion, diversity and equity. The current standards have a separate section on these topics. Revisions need to

either address these issues within each section or continue to have a separate section focused on inclusion, diversity and equity. While conversations about this can land either way, Alison believes a stronger case is made when the topics are integrated into each section/woven through the document because it forces professionals to think about application of these issues.

Dr. Harris reviewed the next section focused on Engagement with Families and Communities which builds on the foundation that families and communities help shape the child, using new language around building trust, cultural responsiveness, and reflective practice. This section will also push more strongly on continuity of care and using community resources more intentionally.

The next section on environments is broken into two focused parts – both section titles are a bit long and authors would appreciate suggestions/feedback on improving. The first section discusses preparing an environment that facilitates engagement and learning, focusing on preparing materials, play, activities for literacy rich environment and adapting to meet individual needs while promoting diversity. The next environment section focuses on optimizing learning through effective instructional practices.

Kathy Gillikin asked if outdoor/nature activities are mentioned and Dr. Harris responded that both indoor and outdoor activities are referenced. Outdoor activities and play are also mentioned in the health and safety section.

The Effective Interactions section will more strongly address trauma-informed care, responsive interactions and effective instructional practices.

Irene Carney noted that teacher-child interactions were an important topic to include in the revisions based on conversations of the Standards Subcommittee over the last year.

Another section involving effective interactions focusing on behavior guidance which flows nicely from/beyond responsive interaction to intervening with behavior guidance including a stronger focus on self-regulation.

After reviewing the Competency Levels (1-4), questions arose about whether the focus of the competencies/standards should be birth-through-age five (B-5) or birth-through-age eight (B-8).

Irene Carney noted that this question generated considerable discussion and debate within the School Readiness Committee with the conclusion that the revisions would initially pertain to B-5 with the aspiration that as standards undergo revisions issues related to older children (5-8) would be taken into account.

Shelley Lingamfelter said that was how she remembered the discussion. In addition, the legislative mandate for the School Readiness Committee was to address school readiness more narrowly (B-5).

Kathy Glazer noted that the assumption is that the competencies should be focused on B-5. But also noted that the complimentary work of the EC articulation group is B-8. Perhaps consideration should be given to the impact and future use of these competencies to align with coursework of higher ed programs.

Alison Lutton suggested the group consider who they would like to use this document – child care providers, faculty, before and after school care providers? The intended use of the document is the best guide to answer the age range question.

Mark Allan agreed, saying if the end users are higher education folks, the current PK-3 or PK-6 certifications relate to B-8 and we should consider how these competencies integrate into the competencies of PK-3 or PK-6 certifications. Perhaps consider combining workgroups to look at/crosswalk these competencies after revisions completed.

Alison Lutton said the difference may not be too significant, perhaps just orientation of details needed. So far all competencies apply to 5-8 age range.

Irene Carney suggested that the way the competencies are intended to be used could be addressed in specific recommendations made to the full committee. Perhaps we could recommend these competencies be required for programs B-5 and further recommend that the competencies serve as a frame of reference for ages 5-8 as well.

Holly Coy noted that the workgroup could structure recommendations in the way they think works best.

Irene Carney asked Dr. Harris if she had the feedback she needed to move forward with revisions.

Dr. Harris noted that she received clarification on weaving diversity, equity and inclusions throughout the document but wanted more guidance on how best to approach topic of technology – separate or woven through relevant sections, given the length of information.

Alison Lutton noted that it is always a struggle to balance state competencies with other documents. State competencies are developed as suggestions basically, much longer than requirements because no one is held accountable for doing each of these things. So it is typical to have this length and detail.

Another request for guidance from the workgroup was to clarify what settings the competencies are designed for – center-based and family-home care settings? Patsy Moon said she thinks the competencies should be universal and apply to all settings. Kathy Glazer and Kathy Gillikin agreed.

Mark Allan suggested taking another look at the competency levels because they could be confusing for different audiences, especially higher education. Alison Lutton noted that the key to making the competencies broadly applicable is using accessible vocabulary. For example say “group” instead of “classroom.”

Dr. Harris also said the revision group is still trying to understand the audience and intended usage of the competencies. Any additional clarity would be useful, as well as guidance on the preferred level of detail.

Irene Carney thanked Dr. Harris and colleagues for their work on the revisions and invited Alison Lutton to provide an update on NAEYC’s “Power to the Profession” project. Details can be found [here](#). Alison reviewed the goals, participants and process for reaching consensus around standards and

nomenclature for the early childhood profession. National standards should be ready for public comment by spring/summer 2018.

Holly Coy provided an update on transitions following last week's statewide elections. With a new Administration on its way, there will be changes in legislative and Secretarial representation on the School Readiness Committee; however, the School Readiness Committee framework was intentionally crafted to survive these transitions and will continue to operate with new representation. There will be a seamless handoff to the Northam administration and new legislative members will be appointed by the General Assembly. All citizen members are on staggered terms so there will be some new citizen members next summer.

Kathy Glazer gave kudos to Irene Carney for receiving a distinguished educator award from the Virginia Association of Independent Schools.

Irene Carney closed the meeting with a reminder that the next meeting will be on December 5, 11am-2pm at VECF's offices in Richmond.