

# Transforming Higher Education: Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce



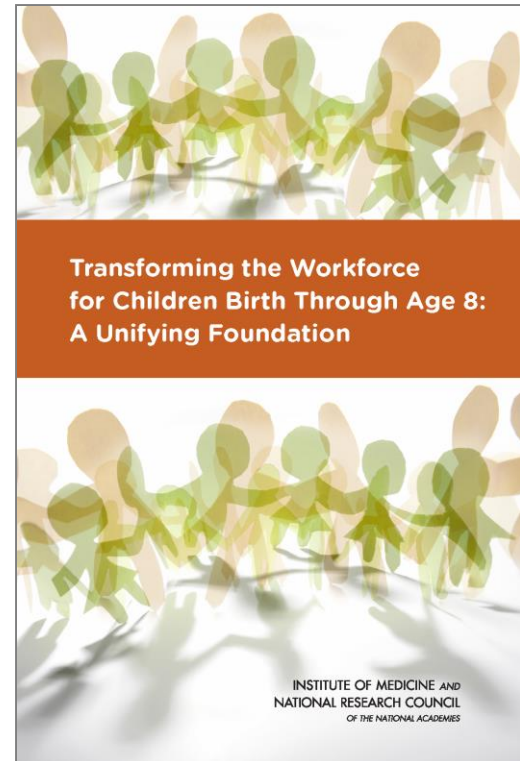
■ University of Nebraska, Lincoln

Marjorie Kostelnik, Ph. D.  
College of Education and Human Sciences  
University of Nebraska, Lincoln

# Abbreviated Statement of Task



How can the science of children's health, learning, and development inform how the workforce supports children from birth through age 8?



# Think of how times have changed....

- It used to be impossible to....
- Now it's not!



# A CALL FOR CHANGE

- “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”
- Nelson Mandela



It always seems impossible until it's done!

# Linking Aspirations and Results

## **Vision:**

A care and education workforce for children birth through age 8 that is unified by a foundation of the science of child development and early learning, shared knowledge and competencies, and principles to support quality professional practice at the individual, setting, systems, and policy levels.

## **As a result:**

All children experience high-quality and continuity in support for their development and early learning.



1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26

-



# Transformation Demands Action

- We have to step up!
- We have to be intentional!
- We have to work together!
- We have to change!



# Practice-Based Qualification Requirement

## ■ Recommendation 3

Strengthen practice-based qualification requirements for all lead educators working with children from birth through age 8

**The recommendations in this presentation are abbreviated; please see Chapter 12 for complete recommendations and implementation considerations.**





# Rationale for Recommendation 3

- Field experiences enable educators to **apply** what they learn to real-world practice settings
- Supervised practice gives practitioners chances to **master** necessary competencies
- Diverse field placements help educators develop **cultural sensitivity** and **competence in working with diverse** populations of **students and families**

# Challenge

- The timing, duration, setting, content and type of supervision in field experiences vary widely by training program and by professional role.
- For example: most states lack specific standards regarding setting, length of placement, or content to be covered in field placements – criteria focus on hours versus other measures of quality
- Many practitioners enter infant/toddler classrooms without the guidance of a field placement as part of their training

# Sample Actions for Recommendation 3

- Agencies and organizations at the national, state, and local levels should develop standards and implement guidance for expanding qualification requirements for all educators to incorporate an induction period with closely supervised practice before final qualification for autonomous practice is acquired
- Develop a greater number and diversity of field placements capable of providing relevant professional learning with appropriately qualified supervisors and mentors
- Differentiate this requirement for experienced practitioners who are acquiring new qualifications

# Higher Education: Interdisciplinary Foundation

## ■ Recommendation 4

Build an interdisciplinary foundation in higher education for child development.

**The recommendations in this presentation are abbreviated; please see Chapter 12 for complete recommendations and implementation considerations.**



# Rationale

- To foster a fundamental **shared knowledge base** and related competencies around child development for professionals in education, social services, and health/allied health professions
- To **improve consistency** of the knowledge base
- To **enhance communication and understanding** among all professionals who work with young children

# Challenge

- Professional silos among institutions, departments, programs, disciplines
- Divergence among preparatory approaches for educators, social service professionals, and health/allied health professionals

Different...

- histories
- philosophies
- literatures
- heroes/heroines
- expectations
- research traditions
- paths to matriculation



# Sample Actions for Recommendation 4

- Enact child development as a cross-departmental, cross-disciplinary foundation for multiple professionals roles in education, social services and the health professions
- Core requirements for coursework, other learning activities, and field-based learning experiences
- Fund initiatives in higher education to incentivize interdisciplinary, core foundation approach for fields related to young children.
- Accreditation and oversight review criteria for educational and research institutions should include an interdisciplinary, core foundation approach

# Higher Education for Care & Education Professionals

## ■ Recommendation 5

Develop and enhance programs in higher education for care and education professionals working with children from birth through age 8.

**The recommendations in this presentation are abbreviated; please see Chapter 12 for complete recommendations and implementation considerations.**



# Rationale for Recommendation 5

- To ensure and document knowledge acquisition and development of competencies needed for quality professional practice with children birth to age 8

# Challenge

- Lack of alignment of content, curriculum and pedagogy with the core knowledge and competencies identified in the science of child development



# Sample Actions for Recommendation 5

- Enhance the content of higher education programs
  - course of study to include and integrate child development/early learning, subject matter content, instructional and other practices, field experiences, and methods to document demonstrated mastery of practice
  - programs differentiated by age range, subject matter specialization, or specialized roles should also ensure adequate knowledge across the birth through age 8 continuum to support consistency for children
- Work with local practice communities
  - contribute a practice-based perspective to the design of higher education programs
  - identify and develop appropriate and diverse field placements
- Establish cross-institutional relationships that bolster the quality, availability, and accessibility of higher education programs for care and education professionals

# Some strategies that would improve workforce preparation are at odds with current higher education practices



## How We Work

- Solo Teaching
- Individual Appointments
- Working within one's own programs
- Creating field placements only in one's own discipline
- Specialized problem solvers

## Report Recommends

- Team teaching
- Joint appointments
- Working across programs/departments/institutions
- Working in community sites not generally associated with the discipline
- Broadly trained problem solvers



# Institutional Challenges

- Lack of vertical alignment among Birth to Age 5 programs, kindergarten and early elementary on campus
- Territoriality among higher education programs/units
- Lack of birth to age 4 expertise among faculty
- Lack of high quality early childhood placements in community programs and schools
- Lack of 'qualified' supervisors in early childhood education to meet state certification standards
- Financial demands of additional/new field placements
- Tendency to 'tinker' rather than revolutionize academic programs (*Good to Great syndrome*)



# Professional-“Cultural” Challenges

- Early childhood education, special education and elementary education tend to function independently (especially at undergraduate level)
  - Programs in different units
  - Lack of shared vocabulary
  - Few common heroes
  - Different scholarly literatures
  - ECE curriculum tends to be dominated by the arts/play
  - Special education tends to be dominated by behavior management and skill development
  - Early elementary curriculum tends to revolve around reading
- Fear of downward curriculum push for children from B - 4 years
- Concern over lack of prerequisite skills in K-3 children



# Academic Constraints

- 120 credit hours for BS/BA
- Push to complete degree in four years
- High demand for school placements at all levels of certification
- Little change in operating dollars (even as courses/demands increase)
- Labor intensive criminal history checks
- Dichotomous view of ECE – Birth-5 & 5 – 8
- Lack of faculty to cover depth/breadth (i.e. 1 person programs, few infant/toddler experts in education programs)
- Lack of faculty with integrated perspective/background/experience



# CROSSING the CHASM



# Sample Strategies

- Establish cross-institutional relationships that bolster the quality, availability and accessibility of higher education programs for care and education professionals
- Develop professional learning communities across disciplines and departments
- Incentivize cross-department preparation
- Use teaching teams from different disciplines to provide core content



# More Sample Strategies



- Educate doctoral students as future faculty to exhibit blended competence Birth to Age 8
- Move beyond token courses/brief mentions in classes to stronger integrated emphases
- Incorporate specific coursework and practicum experiences that address transitions among program levels Birth to Age 8
- Educate school leaders to administer ECE programs Birth to Age 8



# Sample Research Needs/Questions



- How well do BS-level students integrate principles learned on one age group to other age groups (i.e. child guidance, family partnerships)?
- How well do BS-level teachers from blended programs meet the needs of schools and children with special needs?
- What add-on specializations are needed at Post-Bachelor's level to cover the entire age-span birth to 8?

In the academy we need to  
rethink...

**Academic Time**



**Real Time**





# THE TIME IS NOW!

- Can we, will we, dare to be different?
- Will we go beyond talking about risk-taking, to actually doing it?
- Do we have the emotional stamina to withstand people telling us that a new idea is naïve, reckless or just plain can't be done?
- Are we ready to make the impossible POSSIBLE!!





# Marjorie Kostelnik

College of Education &  
Human Sciences  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
233 Mabel Lee  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0234

[mkostelnik2@unl.edu](mailto:mkostelnik2@unl.edu)