

## **Early Education and Family Studies**

### **Discipline/Program Review**

October 2004

#### **Early Childhood Education**

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Early Childhood Education is a professional technical field that is currently undergoing steady and consistent changes to increase the professional stature and qualifications of those who work in the field. Historically, Early Childhood Education has been female intensive field with low wages, few benefits and little to no training required of the workers in the field. It is a field which includes work in a wide variety of settings: Federally-funded Head Start Center, Privately owned child care centers, child care provided in teen parenting programs, family child care providers (those who care for children in their own homes), and so forth. Regardless of the work setting, early childhood education practitioners play a vital role in the modern economy, caring for the children of the current workforce.

A combination of recent events and efforts has led to changes in the field of early childhood education. These events and changes have been directed at improving the quality of care for children and are therefore impacting the professional status and attainment of those who work in the field. First, recent research in developmental psychology and neuroscience has explored early brain development and its impact on later development and achievement. This research has suggested that early experiences play a critical role in how the brain is formed after birth and has renewed interest in the environments and experiences children encounter at home and in child care (Elliot, 1999). Second, investigations of the impact of the quality of child care on children's development have found that higher quality care (and specifically higher teacher qualifications) resulted more sensitive/responsive care on the part of adults, higher cognitive and language development, and fewer behavioral problems for children (Howes et al., 1996; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Finally, based on professionalization efforts in fields such as teaching and nursing, early childhood education advocates (led by Wheelock College's Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education) have begun to stress the importance of professionalizing the early childhood education workforce as a means of improving status, wages, and benefits, as well as the quality of care provided to young children.

In light of the findings and efforts summarized above, the field has seen state and national changes in the level of required training, education, and credentialing for those who work in the field. At the national level, the 1998 Head Start Reauthorization Act required that 50% of Head Start teachers will have a completed AA degree in early childhood education, child development or a related field by 2003. This mandate has meant increased funding for professional development in Head Start programs and at Community Colleges and increased pressure on those who work in the field to complete a credential at a Community College, College, or University. Also nationally, early childhood professionalization initiatives have been established in nearly every state. These initiatives are seeking to establish career lattices that acknowledge the multiple ways in which people enter and progress within the field of early childhood education. Initiatives in several states (California, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and others) have resulted in increases in the training and education requirements for early childhood education practitioners. In Oregon, the Child Care Division (the office responsible for the regulation of child care centers, group homes and family child care providers) recently increased its training and education requirements for family child care providers. Providers must now have First Aid, Infant and Child CPR, a food handlers' certificate, and Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse as well as an additional 8 clock hours of training and education every two years.

The Program Review of the Early Education and Family Studies Department comes at an opportune time. It allows the department to not only gather information from students (past and present) and employers, but as well, to bring the programs structure and guidelines in line with current national and state efforts to improve the professional status of those working in the field and the quality of care provided to our nation's children.

## **Early Education and Family Studies at PCC**

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PCC's Early Education and Family Studies program includes two Certificates and the Associate of Applied Sciences degree. Coursework in Early Childhood Education and a practicum experience (student teaching) is required for each level of the program. The practicum experience is competency based; that is, a student must demonstrate a specific level of skill with children in order to progress to the next level. A copy of the current structure of and requirements for the program is attached.

The EEFS program is open entry and open exit. Students are generally considered to be a part of the program when they start their Level I practicum.

Once students begin practicum, a student folder is established for them. A student taking 15 to 18 credits each term can complete the AAS degree in two years. Most students take longer than two years typically due to employment in the field or because additional time is needed to meet the practicum competencies.

Due to the program's open entry and exit, the number of students in the program at any one time is variable. Currently, the department services approximately 110 students through the Hispanic Head Start program, plus an additional 100 students from the community at various stages of program completion. The department graduates approximately 15 students each year in the AAS program. An additional 10 - 15 students complete a certificate each year.

Students who graduate from the program with a Level I certificate are prepared to act as aides and assistants in early childhood care and education programs. Students with a Level II certificate exceed the State of Oregon's requirements for early childhood education teachers (30 quarter credits is required by the state). Students with an AAS degree in EEFS from PCC can generally find jobs in NAEYC-accredited child care centers, the highest quality in the area, or in Head Start. These centers generally offer the best wages in the field as well as benefits (a relative rarity). Additionally, students with a completed AAS degree in EEFS can also take advantage of the department's articulation agreement with Portland State University's Child And Family Studies Program. Each year, a number of PCC's EEFS students are admitted into the CFS program.

## **Evaluation Process**

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Over the course of the 2001/2002 school year, the EEFS department convened a series of focus groups with stakeholders in the EEFS program and department. These stakeholders included:

- ✓ Students
- ✓ Students of color
- ✓ PAVTEC teachers
- ✓ Instructors from Satellite campuses
- ✓ PCC Advisors
- ✓ The EEFS advisory committee and local employers

Based on the results of the focus groups, a student survey was developed. The survey was administered by phone and in-class to former and current EEFS students. A total of 59 students completed the survey. Results of the survey are appended.

A number of themes emerged from the focus groups and the survey. These themes included 1) Practicum, 2) Students, 3) Advising, and 4) Classes. During Spring Term 2002 the EEFS faculty met to synthesize the information along with the Dean of Health and Family Students, the EEFS Department Chair, and representatives from the part-time faculty, the Child Development Center staff, and EEFS students. The themes were discussed, strengths and challenges identified, a list of action items generated, and a potential timeline identified.

As a result of a Federal Head Start Grant designed to increase the educational attainment and English language proficiency of early childhood education teachers working with predominantly Hispanic populations, the EEFS department and Child Development Center have undertaken extensive professional development activities focusing on cultural and linguistic competence. The professional development activities have led to work on many of the action items identified in this report. Current work is indicated in italics throughout the report.

The results of the group meeting were presented to the EEFS Department Advisory Committee for further feedback.

## **Practicum**

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Completion of a supervised practicum is a major component of the EEFS program. Students at all levels of the program (Level 1, Level 2, and AA) must complete practicum to complete graduation requirements.

Although students reported a high satisfaction level with the practicum experience (Mean 3.6 out of a possible 4, SD = .61, N= 32), narrative responses and focus group data indicated that practicum accessibility is an issue.

### Strengths

- As a highly intensive experience, practicum provides a great deal of support for students and their individual needs.
  1. Individualizing for Students
  2. Support for students who speak Spanish
- Practicum allows faculty to build connections with students. Beginning practicum is the moment when most students are considered part of the EEFS department.
- Students leave the program with experience in high quality early childhood care and education programs. This experience is considered an asset by potential employers.

### Challenges

- Practicum accessibility is a serious issue. Students who work full-time have difficulty completing PCC's on-site practicum requirements. Currently there is no weekend, evening, or infant practicum. During the summer, because there is no toddler care, practicum is provided at Mentor Graphics in Wilsonville.
- Practicum Advising. PCC's practicum is a competency-based experience. That is, in addition to completing a certain amount of time in the practicum lab, students must demonstrate specific skills with children. Students reported confusion regarding the competencies and what they needed to do to improve their skills or complete their competencies.
- Advanced Practicum. Advanced practicum takes place in the community at a site selected by the student and approved by the department. Students reported that advanced practicum placements did not always reflect the same quality or values as they had encountered at the on-site lab.



Practicum Action Items	Year 1 02/03	Year 2 03/04	Year 3 04/05
<p>Increase Practicum Availability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time Options (evenings and weekends).</li> <li>• Place Options (Washington County Site). <i>Work on increasing the number of places that students can complete Practicum I and II has already begun. Summer practicum is offered at Mentor Graphics in Wilsonville. Beginning Winter Term '03, a limited number of students will complete practicum at a Washington County Head Start Site.</i></li> <li>• Practicum For Experienced Teachers. <i>Revise requirements to maintain essence of the option and yet increase inclusion. Requirements have been clarified and revised providing for a section of Practicum for Experienced Teachers in Fall '02.</i></li> </ul>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	<p>X</p>	
<p>Advanced Practicum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more support for off-campus sites. <i>Communicate PCC goals. With available funding from the Federal Hispanic Head Start grant, a special section of Teambuilding and Supervision (ECE 273) is being offered for Mentor Teachers. This class is allowing the EEFS department to provide support for the off-campus sites, communicate PCC goals, and develop a cohort of Mentor teachers.</i></li> <li>• Develop a better understanding of the goals of each advanced practicum site to be able to communicate to students. <i>This is an on-going effort. Currently, the department is working to draft practicum contracts with each of the practicum sites to clarify expectations and benefits.</i></li> <li>• Revise written competencies/outcomes for Advanced Practicum. <i>The revision of Advanced Practicum competencies will be complete in the 04/05 school year.</i></li> </ul>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>
<p>Re-evaluate the seminar structure to provide more options for students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue online seminar option with discussions, written reflections and observations posted online.</li> <li>• Pursue holding several sections of seminar where students can register for whichever seminar best fits their schedule. <i>Beginning Fall '04, two seminars were offered such that all students had equal access to both seminars.</i></li> </ul>			<p>X</p> <p>X</p>





<p>Complete reform of the competencies – considering cultural applicability, linguistic issues, and the system of competency completion. <i>Competency for Practicum I and II completed Summer '04.</i></p>	X		
<p>Improve links between seminar and practicum. <i>Throughout the 02/03 and 03/04 school year, the EEFS department engaged in extensive, and occasionally arduous, professional development, teambuilding, and mediation. There have been a number of personnel changes within the department which have resulted in positive changes throughout the program. Currently, the CDC staff is seeking a change in job status from classified to Academic Professional to better represent and recognize the work they do in the department.</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve links between classes and what is happening with children. Move to a strength based model of completing jobs.</li> </ul>	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify roles of the classroom teacher and the teacher of record (EEFS faculty) to strengthen the working relationships.</li> </ul>	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team teach practicum and seminar. Classroom teachers included in syllabus development and teaching/grading.</li> </ul>	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve communication between EEFS faculty and CDC staff so as to focus on strengths and common goals.</li> </ul>	X		
<p>Clarify the grading of assignments. <i>Clarification of assignments was completed for Practicum I and II in Summer 04.</i></p>			
<p>Individualizing. Be open about how we are individualizing in order to address the students' perceptions of inequality. We still have to assign grades – subjective vs. objective.</p>	X	X	X
<p>Connections to Students.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make connections to students earlier in their tenure with the EEFS department to help facilitate the transition to practicum.</li> </ul>	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for peer support for practicum students.</li> </ul>	X	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an information sheet for students that describes available supports on campus.</li> </ul>	X		
<p>Practicum Visibility.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Child Development Center classrooms to students in other departments who are taking classes related to work with children (Education, Math/Science, Art, Music Departments, etc.).</li> </ul>		X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish protocols for students in classes so that they can enter the Child Development Center</li> </ul>		X	



## Students

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It is difficult to track the absolute number of EEFS students at any one time given the open nature of the program. It is estimated that in any given year, there are approximately 210 students who self-identify as Early Childhood Education Students.

Although many of the students surveyed reported feeling satisfied with the EEFS program, students of color participating in a focus group requested greater student supports to facilitate their success. More specifically, students reported needing assistance in school-related skills (writing, language understanding) and more opportunities for connecting with their peers.

Full-time and part-time faculty expressed frustration with students who take classes without the recommended writing level as well as those students who take courses out of sequence such that they do not have the foundational knowledge to support the acquisition of class topics.

Student Action Items	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Connect students to PCC language services as needed. <i>The department currently offers strong support to students whose first language is Spanish as a result of the Hispanic Head Start Grant. The department is currently investigating partnering with other departments in the HT building to offer career specific, instructional supports to ESL students or other students requiring writing support.</i>	X	X	X
Develop department wide procedures governing paper guidelines (paper expectations based on writing levels/skills expected in writing classes).			X
Encourage students to take Writing 90 before attending classes. OR flip the writing requirement “switch” such that students who have not completed WR90 will need instructor permission to participate in class. <i>In Spring 04, the EEFS SAC approved writing pre-requisites for courses at the AAS level. These pre-requisites are scheduled to go into effect in the 05/06 school year.</i>			X
Discuss making Child Development (ECE 100 or HEC 226) a pre- or co-requisite for any other ECE class. <i>Not yet approved.</i>	X		
Make certain that all videos purchased/ shown are close-captioned. This will help not only any deaf students in the program, but also students who speak English as a second language.	X	X	X
Recommend that students take Speech 111, as needed.	X	X	X
Conduct an on-going evaluation of the sensitivity and accessibility of the EEFS department’s program options.	X	X	X
Identify or hire an EEFS staff mentor who can help EEFS students develop relationships and negotiate the system (similar to the role currently played by the coordinator of the Hispanic Head Start Project).			X
Take Pacific Oaks’ Bilingual Bicultural Adult Learners class and implement recommended practices. <i>Complete. The Fall 04 renewal of the Hispanic Head Start Grant includes additional professional development funds for more training on teaching content to ENL students.</i>	X		
Pass out or make available EEFS information in classes. Provide information to contracting colleges.	X	X	X
Offer students a place to go for peer support and networking (e.g. a student lounge, a student AEYC chapter). <i>Finding a space for students is an on-going issue.</i>			X
Sponsor EEFS events and speakers to build more of an EEFS community. Give extra credit in classes. <i>In Spring 2002, the department sponsored a Diversity Day on campus. The Day included speakers, events, and information tables in the CC building. Students were given credit for attendance.</i>		X	X



## Advising

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Advising and departmental communication with students emerged as a significant issue in the program review. Currently, faculty are available for advising as requested. Students are encouraged to check in with an advisor as they plan their schedules. Faculty do offer regular information sessions about the department and program. At the information sessions, prospective students are encouraged to stay as long as they would like to plan out a program of study. Recently, the department began to offer and advertise drop-in advising during the week corresponding to the publication of the schedule for the next term. Most departmental communication with students occurs in classes; that is, faculty announce upcoming events and deadlines to students during class meetings.

The department, however, does not actually begin to track students' progress or to take a more proactive role in the advising process until students enter practicum. A major reason for this delay in student tracking is the open-entry and open-exit nature of the program. There are many students who take only one or two courses in the department and then are never heard from again. The department treats the decision to take practicum as the indicator that a student is "serious" about pursuing an EEFS credential. Additionally, there are many students who self-identify as EEFS students because they are interested in Elementary Education, but never take an EEFS course.

In the phone survey (see attached results), students rated advising between fair and good. Narrative responses to the phone survey and information from the student focus groups included many references to the need for better advising within the department and better information about the department.

Advising Action Items	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Support students as they plan their program and register for classes. Make certain that students get the yellow sheet and year-at-a-glance in information meetings and informational mailings. Improve the dissemination of information to students. <i>Following the program revision, all student information was revised. Students now receive individual advising at information sessions, with their practicum supervisors, and in class sessions during registration periods.</i>	X	X	X
Offer a yearly opportunity for students to engage in self-advising.	X	X	X
Spend 15 – 20 minutes in each class, each term on expectations for students in the classes and how the classes fit with the rest of the EEFS program.	X	X	X
Continue drop-in advising and add it to a published calendar. <i>Drop in advising continues.</i>	X	X	X
Make certain that adjunct faculty have the announcement information for the advising sessions. <i>Now, on a term-by-term basis, a calendar is distributed to all PT and FT faculty and to the Child Development Center. This calendar lists advising sessions and practicum information sessions for the term.</i>	X	X	X
Use a student-type person to act as a paid mentor/peer support and general office support (like the students who work in the Women’s Resource Center.			X
Make an advising book for adjunct faculty.	X		

<b>Intra-Departmental Communication Action Items</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
Create Mission and Vision statement for the department. Refer to mission and vision statement in departmental publications. <i>Mission and vision work completed in Winter 2003.</i>	X		
Revise and update simple brochure explaining the EEFS department, courses, and employment opportunities. <i>EEFS brochure and marketing material in creation in Fall 04 with Graphic Design class.</i>	X	X	
Create an EEFS listserv and eventually require students to use it to receive departmental information. Offer an orientation each term. <i>Currently exploring ways in which MYPCC groups feature could be used for the department.</i>			X
Expand availability of information sessions. Offer information sessions in the community or at events that EEFS people are likely to attend.		X	X
Increase contact with Head Start, the EEFS community, and the General Community (High Schools, etc.). Bring brochures to meetings. Take advantage of community events (Week of the Young Child, Stand For Children, Cinco de Mayo, etc.). <i>Ongoing.</i>	X	X	X
Discuss the maintenance of a regularly updated EEFS bulletin board. Post departmental information on bulletin board. <i>Ongoing. Currently, the department is seeking ways to involve students in the maintenance of the bulletin boards.</i>	X		
Advocate to connect the HFS website (on spot) to the main PCC website. <i>In progress.</i>	X		
List spot website on EEFS information sheets. Mention website at overviews and when discussing program expectations.	X		
Develop a portable information display that can be placed around campus.		X	
Create a question/suggestion box where responses can be posted on the bulletin board.	X		
Increase advocacy (networking/communication) for the EEFS department on campus to increase awareness of the EEFS department, program, and offerings.	X	X	X



## **EEFS Course Offerings and Program Structure**

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EEFS course offerings and program structure generated a good deal of feedback. Students generally rated EEFS coursework highly (see phone survey summary), although the frequency with which students use the information from classes in their practice with children averaged between occasionally and frequently with less variation (Mean = 3.6, SD = .88).

Focus group and narrative responses from the phone survey could be summarized as “more classes, more often.” Nearly every type of request for more classes was made (more daytime, more evening, more weekend, more in Washington County, more each term, etc.). It did seem that one of the implications of these requests was that classes were not available when students needed them and at a time that “fit their life.”

Faculty have been discussing the structure of the program for some time. The open-entry, open-exit nature of the program makes it difficult to help students plan their programs of study with absolute confidence. Additionally, the structure of the program does not correspond well to the requirements for EEFS teachers currently at use in the state. Currently, if a student has no experience in the field, the Child Care Division requires 30 quarter credits of EEFS training and education. This does not correspond to either the Level 1 or the Level 2 certificate.

Beginning in Fall '02, faculty and Child Development Center staff began work on a serious overhaul of the EEFS program structure. Results of that work are appended and referred to in the action items below.

Program Structure Action Items	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Add an additional class to our list of summer offerings. One Child Development Class, One Elective, and One Core Class. <i>This may be difficult in the current budget climate.</i>	X	X	X
When creating the year-at-a-glance, be certain to walk an imaginary first and second year student as well as a part-time student through the schedule. <i>The EEFS faculty chair now tracks the offering of core and elective classes in the department from year to year.</i>	X	X	X
Check (and potentially change) the nomenclature of ECE 101 to HEC 201. Fits within description of lower division courses and could bring more students into the department. <i>Complete. Pursue change to transfer course.</i>	X		
Offer HEC 226 on Tuesday and Thursday for 1.5 hours each session to better meet the needs/expectations of a student right out of high school.		X	
Each year, make a list of classes. Indicate whether the class is for Level I, II, or AA, the terms the class is offered, and what the pre-requisites are if any	X	X	X
Make a sample Information Packet and give to office support staff so that the right information is getting to students. <i>Completed Fall '02.</i>	X		
<p>Redesign the entire curriculum with different certificate levels and different requirements configurations for the AA. Consider when important information is offered (creating foundational knowledge). Re-evaluate what information or skills are needed for an entry-level classroom support person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey ECE programs at CCs in state and nation for models/examples. <i>Complete Fall '02.</i></li> <li>• Plan redesign. <i>The bulk of the redesign is complete (see attached). The redesign has been approved by the FT-faculty and Child Development Center staff and has gone to SAC for tweaking and approval.</i></li> <li>• Submit changes to EAC.</li> <li>• Implement changes at the Certificate Level.</li> <li>• Course realignment at the AA Level.</li> </ul> <p><i>Major revision to program Certificate complete and implemented in Fall 03. Major revision to AAS degree complete and implemented in Fall 04. "Clean-up" revisions underway (aligning course pre-requisites to program changes and so forth) and on-target for implementation in Fall 05.</i></p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>

