

**Position Statement on the
Policy for Prekindergarten/Kindergarten Assignments
(Approved at the Kansas State Board of Education Meeting, August 11, 2015)**

**By
Early Childhood Higher-education Options (ECHO) Consortium***

We acknowledge the dedicated work of those individuals who have made a significant investment of time, effort, and thought in the development of the policy on prekindergarten and kindergarten assignments for early childhood teachers in the State of Kansas. While we recognize this effort, there are a number of concerns that must be addressed for this policy to be acceptable and reflect research-informed practices in the fields of early childhood education, early childhood special education, and teacher preparation. Research has overwhelmingly demonstrated that when young children are educated by teachers who are prepared in evidence-based practices and appropriately credentialed, children are better prepared to enter school and achieve superior life-long outcomes. Furthermore, it is our strong conviction that should the recently approved policy have a lengthy tenure, Kansas would in fact be taking a step backwards from its previous bold actions that resulted in the unified early childhood/early childhood special education license and the recently approved unified elementary license. These licensure programs align with state-of-the-art teaching practices and foster inclusive education for all children.

THUS, as professionals in the field of early childhood/early childhood special education and as teacher educators at Kansas' institutions of higher education, we request that the following recommendation receive careful and full consideration and result in modification to the policy addressing pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teaching assignments and associated credentials.

As educators and members of the Early Childhood Higher-education Options Consortium we recommend:

- the recently approved policy have a sunset date to limit its effect on children. By enacting a sunset, Kansans would be assured of a return to having appropriately prepared and credentialed professionals teaching young learners.

In further support of our position we provide the following:

We believe:

- the classroom setting allowances in this policy are not supported by empirical and pedagogical research and do not reflect best practices for teachers of young children. Teachers for the 21st Century should have the knowledge base, professional skills, and ethos to facilitate the learning of all children, whether with or without disabilities. This is further supported by the state's current unified early childhood license and unified elementary license.
- all teachers of young children should meet the standards of the state's current unified early childhood license or unified elementary license and teach in settings appropriate to their license.
- teachers with the Kansas EC-EC endorsement are lacking preservice coursework and supervised clinical experience to adequately prepare them to teach kindergarten age children.
- teachers with Kansas K-6 or K-9 endorsements are lacking preservice coursework and supervised clinical experience to adequately prepare them to teach four year olds and especially three year olds.
- Teachers with the EC-EC endorsement or the K-6 and K-9 endorsement should be required to take additional coursework (add-on endorsement) addressing the current teaching standards (and functions) relative to the teaching level in order for the EC-EC endorsed teachers to teach at the kindergarten level and the K-6/K-9 endorsed teachers teach at the preschool level.
- if enactment of this policy was based on a perceived teacher shortage for the prekindergarten/kindergarten age, then we want to assure you that sufficient pre-professionals are being prepared to match the need. We believe that our preservice teacher preparation programs can and will prepare adequate numbers of teachers with the unified license both at the preschool and elementary levels.

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*The ECHO Consortium is a collaborative of early childhood college and university faculty that support delivery of preservice teacher preparation programs by individual colleges/universities to address the demand for educators of young children through the unified early childhood licensure in Kansas (echo.lsi.ku.edu).

If the ECHO Consortium can in any way be of assistance to the Kansas State Board of Education or the State Department of Education, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Reference Materials:

Early Childhood Teacher Certification – Position of the National Association for the Education of Young Children

http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/ectc_PositionStatement.pdf

Excerpt:

In recognition of the need for qualified teachers throughout a child's early education (birth through age eight), the Association of Teacher Educators and the National Association for the Education of Young Children recommend the establishment of specialized early childhood teacher certification standards for teachers working with children from birth through age eight. This certification* should be developed exclusively for early childhood education and be distinctive from, and independent of, existing elementary and secondary certifications.

Position Statement on Personnel Standards for Early Education and Early Intervention – Position of Association of Teacher Educators, Division for Early Childhood, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children

<http://dec.membershipsoftware.org/files/Position%20Statement%20and%20Papers/Position%20Personnel%20Standards.pdf>

Excerpt:

It is the position of ATE, DEC, and NAEYC that individuals who work with children in early childhood settings must possess, to a degree congruent with their roles, the knowledge and skills for working with young children with special learning and developmental needs and their families.

There is a particular need to develop personnel standards that support the practice of inclusion, providing services for young children with disabilities in general early childhood programs and other community-based settings in which typically developing young children are also served.

There is also a need to develop personnel standards that support the emerging trend for the development of unified early childhood/early childhood special education teacher training programs and unified state certification.

US Department of Education and US Department of Health and Human Services Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

Excerpt:

The purpose of this policy statement is to set a vision and provide recommendations to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private early childhood programs, from the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS), for increasing the inclusion of infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities in high-quality early childhood programs.